

John locke's philosophy: consent of the governed and a social contract



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John Locke was one of the most influential political minds of his time. He has become known in today's society as a political philosopher. Locke's philosophy centered on subjects such as natural rights and knowledge, in turn changing American politics in ways that it has never been the same since. Locke taught that, men by nature possess certain rights and he challenged many theories having to do with inalienable rights as a part of natural law. Locke has also had a major influence on the way that most politicians think. His ideas of natural law were an inspiration for Thomas Jefferson when writing the declaration of independence. Clear representations of Locke's ideas are portrayed in Jefferson's self-evident truths. Although Locke was never mentioned by Jefferson as the inspiration behind his thinking, John Locke was, and will always be remembered as a pioneer in modern thinking (Braunwarth, Stadelmann, 4). John Locke believed in a social contract between those who ruled and those who were to be ruled over. Locke " wanted a judge to make determinations according to this law. And he wanted an executive to carry out these determinations. " However, Locke did not wish to lose all of his rights, he wanted to emphasize the importance of a man's natural rights and thus, he expressed that " though men when they enter into society give up the equality, liberty, and the executive power they had in the state of nature into the hands of society, to be so far disposed of by the legislative as the good of society shall require, yet it being only with an intention in everyone the better to preserve for himself, his liberty and property; (for no rational creature can be supposed to change his condition with an intention to be worse) the power of the society or legislative can never be supposed to extend farther than the common good; but is obliged to secure everyone's property by providing against

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those three defects above mentioned that made the state of Nature so unsafe and uneasy" (Richards). The current political climate shows that politicians, especially congress, have low approval ratings. Political parties such as the Tea Party are advocating social revolt by becoming involved in the political process. In my opinion I do not believe that the government is living up to its end of Locke's social contract. Locke advocates lesser government involvement. To me it seems that this day in age, politics and government are becoming more and more dominant in the lives of everyday people. I think that the current Health Care bill is a perfect example of this. The government is saying that now you MUST have insurance otherwise you will be fined. To me this is an example of complete power over those who are being ruled over by the rulers. If the government were living up to Locke's social contract, people would have the choice to buy health care or not to if they didn't want it. Although I am not a Tea Party supporter, I do think that the people's involvement in the political process could result in a social revolt that would be good for today's government. Like Locke, I believe that people are entitled to natural rights, and the government shouldn't have more power over us than we have of ourselves. Works Cited Braunwarth, J., and M. Stadelmann. Open to debate: An introduction to government and politics. 3. National Social Science Press, 2010. Richards, James O. " The Proper Basis for Society: John Locke (1632-1704)." http://www.gdn.edu/PT_Faculty/j_richards/lectures/Hist1122Locke.htm. N. p., n. d. Web. 2 Feb 2012.