

Democracy and reason

[History](#)



One of the common threads that have pervaded nearly every aspect of the readings which have been engaged this semester is with regards to the understanding that rationality/reason and democracy are somehow inexorably linked. From the most basic of understandings of democracy that were engaged within ancient Greece, the authors of these have made either indirect or direct references to the overall extent to which rationality is something of a pre-requisite for democracy. Likewise, with regards to the writings and beliefs that grew from the Enlightenment, these were also inexorably linked to the idea that reason and rationalism have given birth to the ability of mankind to set up a better form of government and self regulation of activity. As such, this particular analysis will analyze and discuss the means by which John Locke and the framers of the Declaration of Independence defined the linkages between democracy and rationalism/reason. As a function of such an analysis, it will be the intent of this author prove the fact that a clear linkage exists between reason and democracy as has been evidenced by the writers in question that have previously been discussed and noted. Firstly, with regards to John Locke and his writings, it can be determined that he held the linkage between rationality and democracy at a very high value. Ultimately, John Locke was heavily influenced by the Enlightenment thinkers who placed rational and reason as the god towards which all knowledge must necessarily give respect. Although this movement was in and of itself something of the first evidence of atheism within the modern world, it nonetheless held that reason and equality, even egalitarianism, were the mores and norms by which a good society could be structured. In much the same way, John Locke analyzed the United States and its new republic form of governance from <https://assignbuster.com/democracy-and-reason/>

this perspective. Although believing in the fundamental constructs of democracy and the means by which the people can and should be given the power to determine their own future (self determinism), John Locke held some misgivings concerning the means by which such a system of democracy could maintain itself and continue to support the needs of the majority and the minority. Said John Locke of this reality, “ Nothing is more wonderful than the art of being free, but nothing is harder to learn how to use than freedom” (John Locke 3). Within such an understanding, the reader can come to the clear understanding that John Locke sought to integrate an appreciation with the reader that rationality was the ultimate construct by which an informed electorate could continue to promote their own self interests via the process of democratic activism. Further Locke states concerning rationality and irrationality, “ The germ of dissolution of our federal government is in the constitution of the federal judiciary; an irresponsible body, working like gravity by night and by day, gaining a little to-day and a little to-morrow, and advancing its noiseless step like a thief, over the field of jurisdiction, until all shall be usurped from the States, and the government of all be consolidated into one” (Locke 2). Conversely, one of the founding fathers of the United States, Thomas Jefferson, was influenced by many of the same forms of thinking and schools of thought that influenced John Locke; however, he maintained a hope and innate trust in the system of democracy to a level that John Locke did not. Within such an understanding, the reader can come to understand why the Declaration of Independence holds within it the timeless lines, “ We hold these truths to be self evident that all men are created equal and endowed by their creator with certain inalienable rights” (Declaration of Independence 1). Though <https://assignbuster.com/democracy-and-reason/>

many individuals have long pointed to Thomas Jefferson as the father of modern democratic liberalism, the fact of the matter is that he can also be viewed as something of founding father of libertarianism. Within such an understanding, it is necessary to understand that Jefferson viewed democracy and the link between rationality and reason to be inseparable. Ultimately, both of these individuals sought to create a clear and unmistakable link between the role and importance that a democracy can have and the means by which the citizen voters acting upon it can exercise. Rather than casting democracy as a self-perpetuating process, both of these authors and thinkers sought to present the reader with the understanding that a tenuous and mutually dependent system must exist by which rationalism is the only hope of exercising a level of constraint and uniformity within governance. As such, it is the clear and unmistakable understanding of this particular author that the linkage between these ideas that have been presented is unassailable and quite definitive. Works Cited Locke, John. A letter concerning toleration. S. I: Filiquarian Pub, 2007. Print. Locke, John, and C. B. Macpherson. Second treatise of government. Indianapolis, Ind: Hackett Pub. Co, 1980. Print. Jefferson, Thomas, and Sam Fink. The Declaration of Independence. New York: Scholastic Reference, 2002. Print.