

# Political and economic liberalism assignment



**ASSIGN  
BUSTER**

Political liberalism emphasizes the social contract, in which citizens make the laws and they all agree to abide by those laws. It is supported on the belief that individuals know what is best for them. Political liberalism grants political representation to all adult citizens regardless of sex, race, or financial status. It highlights the “ rule of law” and favors liberal democracy. It works on the principle that individuals are the foundation of rules and civilization.

Furthermore, society and its organizations are created and subsist to advance the goals and achievements of individuals, devoid of additional support to elite members of society. Economic liberalism supports the individual rights of personal property and independence of agreement, without which, the implementation of other freedoms is not possible. Economic liberals believe in laissez-faire in which private proposals and production are preeminent, if economic interventionism and taxation by the state beyond what is necessary to maintain individual liberty, peace, security, and property rights, are kept to a bare minimum.

It is the idea that the value of goods and services should be set by the free choice of individuals which is influenced by market forces. In addition, it recognizes and accepts the economic differences that occur from imbalanced negotiation positions as being the expected outcome of competition, provided that no force is used. Neither Jean-Jacques Rousseau nor John Locke would agree with a statement declaring that political and economic liberalism have not made us better off, rather they have worsened our situation.

Rousseau and Locke both believe that while the government should implement laws, it is their job to only implement laws that the civil society as a whole have agreed upon and by doing so, allows individuals to both protect themselves and remain liberated. Since the definitions contained in their individual writings are distinct from one another, this essay will explore Rousseau and Locke's respective theories in Social Contract and Second Treatise, on political and economic liberalism. While Rousseau argues that sovereignty should be in the hands of the people, he also makes a sharp difference between sovereignty and government. p. 113-114) The government's duty is implementing and enforcing the general will and is made up of a smaller group of citizens, known as magistrates. Rousseau's main social, idealistic, and political objectives were the promotion of liberalism. He suggests that only a contract freely accepted by all allows each to bind himself to all while holding on to his free will. In order to prevent laws from profiting solely the wealthy, the stipulation in which everyone has something and no one has too much must exist.

The conclusion resulting from this was that the people alone are sovereign and that they apply their sovereignty by use of a government that they may reject themselves from at any time. Rousseau also argued the importance of the social contract. He rooted this in the nature of the individual and asserted that each person knows their own interest best. Rousseau says it is important for society as a whole to make a distinction between private will and general will because that is the hardest distinction for people to make.

(p. 16) I think the reason he tells his readers this is because he felt it was the first step in building a civil society. According to Rousseau, man's first step in

building a civil society was when men claimed stake to property that was not his to begin with. (p. 60) In order for men to form a civil society, they must all agree to a social contract. This is important because if a government is built upon the will of a select few, people would not want to follow it and it would be easily defeated. When people as a whole agree to a certain set of laws, this allows them to feel free with in certain constraints.

Rousseau's Social Contract explains how while it is natural for men to be free, it has developed into men being dependent upon each other. We cannot survive without a social contract. There would be constant war because of the development of men's acquirement of property. Rousseau summarizes this in his Discourse on Political Economy. " You need me, for I am rich and you are poor. Let us come to an agreement between ourselves. I will permit you to have the honor of serving me, provided you give me what little you have for the trouble I will be taking to command you. " (p. 34) He explains the negative aspects of personal tax and why political and economic liberalism benefits society. When people feel they are treated well by their governments, they are more likely to be civil to each other which is why it is necessary for governments to make sure they maintain individual liberty, peace, security, and property rights, and their interferences are kept to a bare minimum. John Locke believes there is a natural law, a moral standard that is intrinsic in the origin of human nature. Humans, being basically good by nature, are born equal and free, with out the ties of government. Because humans were in essence good, there was no need of a government.

However, as time passed, the need for the benefits of civility became necessary. It is at this point that people agree to leave the state of nature,

and thereby give up their absolute freedom. Locke focuses mainly on the lack of any natural moral authority of one person over another. No one is born master, or captain, or chief, of any other man. With John Locke in his Second Treatise of Government, he also reiterates the idea that free individuals could form the foundation for a stable society.

John Locke established two fundamental liberal ideas: economic liberty, meaning the right to have and use property, and intellectual liberty, including freedom of principles. Locke developed further the earlier idea of natural rights, which he saw as life, liberty and property. However, to Locke, property was more important than the right to take part in government and civic decision-making. He did not support democracy because he feared that giving power to the people would wear away the importance of private property. This is where Locke and Rousseau differ.

Locke believes that the labor one uses in acquiring property is what gives men the right to it (p 20) whereas Rousseau believes that although men acquire property, in reality, have no right to it for in nature; everything belongs to everyone including animals. Locke dedicated substantial consideration to the distinctions between the power of a master over a servant (p 45), the power of a master over a slave, paternal power (p 32), and the power of a husband over a wife, all pertaining to political power. None of those domestic powers clarify the character of political power, which was valid if the governed sanctioned it.

That power was to be intended for the public good, limited by its purposes and regulated by established law. This formation of limited government has

been in the center of liberal concerns. This includes separation of powers, with emphasis on civil liberties. Locke argued for popular sovereignty, the right of revolution against tyranny, and toleration of religions. According to Locke, the state exists to serve its citizens and to guarantee their life, liberty, and property under a constitution. He viewed government more conservatively than Rousseau but still viewed it as a means to an end.

In article 90, Locke says that it is evident that absolute monarchy, which by some men is counted the only government in the world, is indeed inconsistent with civil society, and so can be no form of civil-government at all. He states that it is necessary from every man's being judge in his own case, by setting up a known authority, to which every one of that society may appeal upon any injury received. I think he is saying here that although monarchies are the most popular type of government of his time, they are not consistent with civil society which goes against the state of nature.

He reiterates that men are their own judges and only they know what is best for them. Locke has a more restricted view to political and economic liberalism. Yes, it is necessary for men to govern themselves ultimately, but in the state of nature, he is constantly exposed to the invasion of others. In article 123, Locke states that " for all being kings as much as he, every man his equal, and the greater part no strict observers of equity and justice, the enjoyment of the property he has in this state is very unsafe, very unsecure. He emphasizes that it is indeed important for economic and political liberty but at the cost of other liberties. In order for men to preserve their property, they must be united under a common wealth and put themselves under government. John Locke, who wrote The Second Treatise of Civil

Government, and Jean-Jacques Rousseau, who wrote, *The Social Contract*, both have unique views of nature and “social contract.” After their time they each made individual impacts on the way society thinks. The idea of approval is a key element in the works of John Locke and Jean-Jacques Rousseau.

While both writers agreed that before civilized society man existed in a state of nature, that is, humans lacked structure, they disagreed on what constituted freedom. Differences in their opinion on freedom stems from their disparity on what the State of Nature consisted of. Rousseau argues that this state was and still is the perfect state for man, where he is free, autonomous and virtuous. Locke agrees with Rousseau, that man is free naturally, but also adds that people are entitled to three undeniable rights: life, liberty and property. I think both writers show the importance of political and economic liberalism.