

Locke's philosophies on toleration and state of nature

[History](#), [American History](#)



Before the American Revolution, preachers and philosophers like John Locke developed many ideas that would influence American colonists to question Britain's intentions. Born in 1632 in Wrington, Somerset, Locke was born as a son of a lawyer. Later on, he was a student at Christ Church, Oxford from 1652- 1667.

In 1666, Locke met Anthony Ashley Cooper, later known as the Earl of Shaftesbury. Shaftesbury, a minister to Charles II and founder of the opposing Whig party, worked alongside John Locke, in attempt to stop the Catholic duke of York, later known as James II, from succeeding the royal crown in the exclusion campaign of 1679. When that failed, Shaftesbury planned an armed resistance, forcing him to flee to Holland in 1682 for a year with John Locke. Locke would return back to England in result of the appointment of Protestant William III during the Glorious Revolution, where he would publish his most significant works. Over time, two of his ideas transpired into the ideologies of toleration and State of Nature.

On a religious perspective, Locke believed in toleration. Although he was a devout Christian, he believe that the use force was not the righteous way to convert people. Locke preached that the government should not be able to use oppression or intimidation to try to bring people to the true religion and that religious societies should not use power on members, or outsiders.

Locke's support for this claim arose from ideologies by Jesus of Nazareth and the New Testament of the Bible, both not indicating the use of coercion to convert those of a different religion. The idea that true religion consists of

genuine persuasion of the mind, supports the fact that force, especially government force, is incapable of true conversion.

Locke's idea of toleration influenced the structure and foundation of which the United States was built on, producing a free nation. In today's society, the First Amendment of the U. S. Constitution ensures that the right to free expression of religion is protected. Us as individuals, are able to reside with any religion we prefer. In our day-to-day lives, we are morally obligated to treat each other with respect and dignity. Locke's ideas on toleration created a draft on which direction the United States should head into into the future.

Upon the limit of government in the perspective of religion, Locke also believed in a State of Nature. In this ideal fantasy, all forms of government would be absent, but mutual constraints would still exist. Additionally, all people would be obligated to the rights of life, liberty, and property. Locke's idea of natural rights' led to colonists realizing that Britain had become too authoritarian as a government. Later on, multiple taxes and duties would be enacted on the colonists by Britain, sparking outrage and riots within the colonies. However, Locke's central ideologies, along with prominent figures who further developed his ideas, would justify the need for the American Revolution.

The theory of State of Nature still affects philosophers today, posing the question if a good government can be legitimate, even if it does not have the actual consent of the people who live under it. In result, the development of a social contract system emerged, where people could replace the

government if it did not abide by the people's guidelines. Consequently, the United States government implemented a checks and balances system between three branches of government and a re-election process of government officials. In order to satisfy citizens who live under a government, the relationship must be mutually beneficial. Without Locke's opinion on this subject, the United States foothold as a global superpower would have never been possible.

In conclusion, Locke's philosophies on toleration and State of Nature have impacted our everyday lives. As a predominant nation, the United States have adopted and evolved both ideas in order to form a successful government that both satisfies the people living under the system and keeps the country in order. In our First Amendment of the Constitution, toleration of different religions and opinions are respected in order to support being a free nation. Therefore, if a government does not respect, appeal to, or support their citizens, then they are obliged to replace those in authority. John Locke's influential ideas of toleration and State of Nature have left an everlasting mark on how our society runs today.