

John locke – philosophy

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“ The end of law is not to abolish or restrain, but to preserve and enlarge freedom. For in all the states of created beings capable of law, where there is no law, there is no freedom” - John Locke. What I feel that John Locke is attempting to express in his quote is that society believes that by having laws in place the government is taking away from the freedom they long to endure. However, by having laws in place it actually helps to enforce their rights to freedom. I chose John Locke as my topic for my final paper because I have taken an interest in the life he led, his inspirations and his role in politics.

Read Essay In Westminster Abbey Analysis

John Locke was the first of the classical British empiricists. Empiricists believed that all knowledge derives from experience. He became highly influential to the political world, inspiring government representatives such as Thomas Jefferson, Thomas Paine and James Madison. Locke expressed the radical view that government is morally obliged to serve people by protecting life, liberty and property (n. a, n. d). He explained the principle of checks and balances in order to limit the power of government. He also favored representative government and rule of law.

Locke insisted that when government violates individual rights, the people have a right to rebel. His views on individual rights, life, happiness and politics led Locke to become known as the 17th century English Philosopher of the enlightenment. John Locke was born August 29, 1632, in Somerset, England. He was the oldest son of Agnes Keene and John Locke. His father was a Puritan lawyer who served as a clerk for justices of the peace (n. a. , n.

d). With the assistance of his father's connections to the English government, Locke received an exceptional education.

In 1647 he enrolled at Westminster School in London, where he earned his distinct honor of being named a King's Scholar. This was a privilege that went to only select number of boys and set the path for Locke to attend Christ Church, Oxford in 1652 (n. a. , n. d). Christ Church is considered the most prestigious school in Oxford. During this educational time period, Locke engaged in logic and metaphysics. He graduated from Christ Church in 1656 and returned two years later to pursue a Masters of the Arts. This accomplishment soon led to Locke taking on tutorial work at the college.

In 1668 Locke was elected a fellow of the Royal Society. The Royal Society is a fellowship of the world's most eminent scientist and is the oldest scientific academy in continuous existence (n. a. , n. d.). Locke then went on to study philosophy and medicine at the University of Oxford and graduated in 1674 with a bachelor's of medicine. Locke did not want to commit his life to a religious order and therefore turned down a permanent teaching position from Oxford. This opened the doors to an opportunity serving as a private physician and secretary to Anthony Ashley Cooper, the Earl of Shaftesbury (Kermerling, 2011).

During the summer of 1666, Anthony Ashley Cooper visited Oxford where he met Locke who was at the time studying medicine. Cooper, who was suffering from a liver cyst which threatened to become swollen and infected, requested that Locke be his personal physician. Locke accepted and soon moved into a room at the Cooper's Exeter House mansion in Westminster,

London. Cooper's condition worsened and Locke was in a position of opportunity to heal the Earl successfully. In 1668, Locke supervised a successful surgery and saved the life of Anthony Ashley Cooper, the Earl of Shaftesbury.

This honorable act led Locke to become a valued partner of Shaftesbury. After Shaftesbury's stature grew, so did Locke's responsibilities. He assisted in the Earl's business and political matters and after Shaftesbury was made chancellor, Locke became his secretary of presentations. Locke was involved in just about everything that Shaftesbury did. This included the formation of the Whig party. The Whig party was a political group which consisted of politicians from America, England and Scotland who opposed King Charles I of England. Locke maintained correspondence with the party to assist with influencing Parliamentary elections.

Shaftesbury was imprisoned for a year and on his release he helped pass the Habeas Corpus Act in 1679 which made it unlawful for government to detain a person without filing formal charges. The act also specified that an individual could not be put on trial for the same charge more than once (n. a. , n. d). Shaftesbury was a strong influence to John Locke and helped pave his way for future success through experience - Empiricist. During the reign of King Charles II it was illegal to write, read or have books in one's possession that pertained to any negative press against the government. Although it was risky, Locke continued his mission.

He wrote about his experience with political actions. One treatise attached a claim that the Bible sanctioned tyrants and that parents had absolute

authority over children. A second treatise presented an epic case for liberty and the right of people to rebel against tyrants. He pushed to a radical conclusion which attacked slavery and a defense of revolution (n. a. , n. d.). Locke fled to Rotterdam on September 7, 1683 to avoid legal action (n. a. , n. d.). The English government tried to have Locke extradited for trial and possible hanging. Lock fled to London and assumed the name “ Dr. van der Linden. ” He signed letters as “ Lamy” or “ Dr.

Lynne” (n. a. , n. d.). Locke assumed that the government would intercept mail, so he protected friends by referring to them with numbers or false names. His excuse to friends for moving to Holland was that he enjoyed the local beer. In Holland, Locke began to work on his philosophical masterpiece, *An Essay Concerning Human Understanding* which urged people to base their convictions on observation and reason. His argument was that all ideas, simple or complex, are ultimately derived from experience. He challenged the traditional doctrine that learning consisted entirely of reading ancient texts and absorbing religious dogmas (n. . , n. d.). He maintained that understanding that the world required observation. The essay was published in December 1689, and established Locke as England’s leading philosopher. In the essay, Locke states the nature of his proposed doctrine: “ Let us then suppose the mind to be, as we say, white paper, void of all characters, without any ideas: - How comes it to be furnished? Whence comes it by that vast store which the busy and boundless fancy of man has painted on it with almost endless variety? Whence has it all the materials of reason and knowledge? To this I answer, in one word, from experience.

In that all our knowledge is founded. (Valasquez, 2011)" The book became one of the most widely reprinted and influential works on philosophy. It brought great fame for Locke. So much, that he spent the rest of his life responding to admirers and critics by making revisions in later editions of the book, including detailed accounts of human volition and moral freedom. Locke also published Two Treatise of Civil Government. These writings were published anonymously in order to avoid controversy. The First Treatise is a detailed rejection of the monarchist theories of Robert Filmer.

Locke attacked Filmer's claim that God sanctioned the absolute power of kings. During this time period, such an attack was risky since it could easily be prosecuted as an attack on the King Charles II. The Second Treatise of Government offers a systematic account of the foundations of political obligation. The views expressed within this treatise were so radical that he only released his name as publisher in his will. Locke's writings did much to inspire the libertarian ideals of the American Revolution. This, in turn, set an example which inspired people throughout Europe, Latin America and Asia.

Locke's philosophy had a great effect on American's as well. Thomas Jefferson ranked Locke as the most important thinkers on liberty. He also helped inspire Thomas Paine's radical ideas about revolution. James Madison drew most of his fundamental principles of liberty and government from Locke's writings. John Locke's writings were also included in the self-education of Benjamin Franklin. John Adam's believed that both girls and boys should learn about Locke. Locke's influence even traveled to France where the French philosopher Voltaire called, " Locke the man of the greatest wisdom.

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What he has not seen clearly, I despair of ever seeing” (n. a. , n. d.).

Mathematician and physicist Isaac Newton cherished his company. Locke helped William Penn restore his good name when he was political fugitive, just as Penn had arranged a pardon for Locke when he had been a political fugitive. Locke was described by the famous English physician Dr. Thomas Sydenham as “ a man whom, in the acuteness of his intellect, in the steadiness of his judgment, in the simplicity, that is, in the excellence of his manners, I confidently declare to have, amongst the men of our time, few equals and no superiors. n. a. , n. d.). It is astonishing that Locke’s work has affected so many people around the world. He was an undistinguished Oxford scholar.

He had a brief experience with a failed diplomatic mission. He was a physician who lacked traditional credentials and had only one patient. His first major work was not published until the age of 57. All of this and he is still one of the leading philosophers of all time. In 1691, John Locke is invited to spend his last years with friends Francis and Damaris Masham. Damaris is also a philosopher and is believed to have been romantically involved with Locke during their study years at Oxford. When Locke left for Holland, Damaris was to visit; however it did not work out and she married Francis Masham (Uzgalis, 2012). During his stay with the Masham’s Locke tutored their son Francis, here he begins to work on his treatise *Thoughts Concerning Education*. Locke’s health gradually began to worsen. He lost most of his hearing and his legs began to swell. He could barely bring himself to rise from bed. Around 3: 00 in the afternoon, Saturday, October 28, 1704 he passed away (n. a, n. d.). He was sitting in his study with Lady Marsham.

Suddenly, he brought his hands to his face, shut his eyes and died. He was 72 years old. Locke's focus has primarily been based upon the ideas of freedom and equality as a whole. He believed that citizens should naturally possess the right to life, liberty and happiness, which is portrayed in the constitution of the United States. These undisputable rights or natural rights have derived from the law of nature. The law of nature is a state that relies purely on the law of God, which is also known as moral law. This law gave people the natural right to life, liberty, and happiness without question.

In addition, Locke believed that people also possess the basic right of self-defense if under attack. However, Locke's key aspect of his theories was the basic idea of equality. He said that nobody has the right to rule and that consent is critical because it's based on the premises that all people are equal (Uzgalis, 2012). John Locke is still very much known as a political philosopher in today's modern society. Because much of Locke's philosophy centered on subjects such as natural rights and knowledge, he has in-turn shaped American politics in such a way that it has never been the same.

Locke has challenged many theories that have to do with inalienable rights as a part of natural law; therefore he had much to do with the involvement in the evolution of the American Government. He taught that, men by nature possess certain rights. He had a tremendous influence on all future political thinking. A clear representation of his involvement is portrayed in the declaration of independence. John Locke was, and will always be remembered as a pioneer in modern thinking.