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John Locke, The Great Philosopher of The World

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There have been many famous philosophers in Great Britain appearing in world's history.¹ Their ideas create a great impact to the world in many aspects. John Locke is one of them. He lived from August 29, 1632 through October 28, 1704². He is considered as the most influential philosophers of the modern period and also known as Father of Classical Liberalism and regarded as one of the most powerful enlightenment thinkers³. Most of his works have caused a substantial change to the world especially to the development of epistemology and political philosophy⁴. John Locke initiated the idea involving human behaviors under the state of nature, political concept, economic concept, and later influenced many great changes on people attitude and also revolutions of the world, such as, The American Revolution.

John Locke considerably influenced not only philosophy, but also politics, especially on both liberalism and libertarianism. His political theory was founded on social contract theory⁵, one of his works written in 1689⁶, which led to one of the

¹ "Category:English Philosophers." Wikipedia. Wikimedia Foundation, 20 Aug. 2012. Web. 17 Sept. 2012. <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Category:English_philosophers>.

² "John Locke: Natural Rights to Life, Liberty, and Property | The Freeman | Ideas On Liberty." John Locke: Natural Rights to Life, Liberty, and Property | The Freeman | Ideas On Liberty. N.p., n.d. Web. 17 Sept. 2012. <<http://www.thefreemanonline.org/features/john-locke-natural-rights-to-life-liberty-and-property/>>.

³ "John Locke." Wikipedia. Wikimedia Foundation, 14 Sept. 2012. Web. 17 Sept. 2012. <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/John_Locke>.

⁴ "Locke's Political Philosophy." (Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy). N.p., n.d. Web. 17 Sept. 2012. <<http://plato.stanford.edu/entries/locke-political/>>.

⁵ "Internet Encyclopedia of Philosophy." Social Contract Theory. N.p., n.d. Web. 17 Sept. 2012. <<http://www.iep.utm.edu/soc-cont/>>.

⁶ "Social Contract." Wikipedia. Wikimedia Foundation, 17 Sept. 2012. Web. 17 Sept. 2012. <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Social_contract>.

biggest changes of the modern world. Locke pointed out that independent and freedom are the basis of human rights. According to Locke's State of Nature theory, there are two important characteristics of his concept. One is that men are supposed to have a complete freedom under the set of rules while the rights of others are not violated. Another is men are totally equal⁷. In a natural state, as defined, all humankind are equal and free so that everyone had a nature rights to protect his "Life, Health, Liberty and Property".⁸ From these concepts, despite the peaceful natural environment, it also has an inconvenience condition due to the fact that there is no central authority to judge who is right and who is wrong whenever the conflict happens, inevitably bring about violent warfare conditions. This is the major reason why human abandoned the state of nature and turned to live together in one society.⁹ When individuals came along together as a human society, they would have to relinquish their freedom and stay under the central authority. People in the state are implicitly forced to transfer some of their rights to the government in order to secure their stable and comfortable lives, liberty and property effectively. Since government is existed by the consent of people, so they have a power and a duty to protect the rights of people. However, if the government fails to do a proper duty, they can be resisted and replaced with new set of government.¹⁰ Apart from his explanation, Locke also advocated governmental separation of powers. He believed that the

⁷ "Locke's Political Philosophy." (Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy). N.p., n.d. Web. 17 Sept. 2012. <<http://plato.stanford.edu/entries/locke-political/>>.

⁸ "John Locke | Natural Law, Natural Rights, and American Constitutionalism." John Locke | Natural Law, Natural Rights, and American Constitutionalism. N.p., n.d. Web. 17 Sept. 2012. <<http://www.nlnrac.org/earlymodern/locke>>.

⁹ "John Locke: Natural Rights to Life, Liberty, and Property | The Freeman | Ideas On Liberty." John Locke: Natural Rights to Life, Liberty, and Property | The Freeman | Ideas On Liberty. N.p., n.d. Web. 17 Sept. 2012. <<http://www.thefreemanonline.org/features/john-locke-natural-rights-to-life-liberty-and-property/>>.

¹⁰ "Internet Encyclopedia of Philosophy." Locke: Political PhilosophyÂ [J]. N.p., n.d. Web. 17 Sept. 2012. <<http://www.iep.utm.edu/locke-po/>>.

revolution is not only a right but an obligation in some circumstances¹¹. This idea inspired many people in many countries who encounter the unsatisfying conditions caused by government such as, poor, abuse, etc. The Declaration of Independence and the Constitution of the United States of America in 1770s¹² was also influenced by his idea.

The right to private property is the major core of John Locke's political thought. He viewed property as a natural right and contended that it derives from labour. Under the state of nature, men are free to do anything that they want. God provided us with all the materials we need, still these natural resources are of little value or useless until men apply their efforts to them. This is used as supporting evidence for the rendition of Locke's Labour Theory of Property as a Labour Theory of Value¹³. From the above concept, Locke proposed that because all men own their bodies wholly, any product of their physical labour also belongs to them. Therefore, when a man works on some materials, he becomes the owner of that material. The only restriction to private property is that no man can take possession of something if he harms another in doing that so. He cannot take ownership of more than he can consume. It can be regarded as wasting the materials that might contrarily be used by another person¹⁴. The accumulation of property has limitation. Locke intentionally pointed to man's capacity to consume and to produce within those limits. Another significant theory he created for all humanity is about price and value, or later known

¹¹ "John Locke." Wikipedia. Wikimedia Foundation, 14 Sept. 2012. Web. 17 Sept. 2012. <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/John_Locke>.

¹² "United States Constitution." Wikipedia. Wikimedia Foundation, 14 Sept. 2012. Web. 17 Sept. 2012. <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/United_States_Constitution>.

¹³ "Private Property Rights: The Moral and Economic Foundation of a Free Society." Private Property Rights: The Moral and Economic Foundation of a Free Society. N.p., n.d. Web. 17 Sept. 2012. <<http://www.quebecoislibre.org/younkings5.html>>.

¹⁴ "John Locke (1634–1704)." SparkNotes. SparkNotes, n.d. Web. 17 Sept. 2012. <<http://www.sparknotes.com/philosophy/johnlocke>>.

as a demand and supply theory. Locke differentiated between two roles of currency, measured value as a “counter” and laid claim to goods as a “pledge¹⁵”. Moreover, for international transactions, he viewed gold and silver as the appropriate type of money since gold and silver have equal value by people all over the world, where local government control paper money. By overall look, the theory of property in Locke's social theory is absolutely practical and still useful for human both in that certain period and the present age.

Besides Locke's both notable political and economic theories, he also has had an influence in epistemology. In his point of view, all knowledge comes exclusively through experience. He argued that at birth the mind starts as “tabula rasa” or “blank state”¹⁶, which opposes the Christian and Cartecian belief¹⁷ that people have innate ideas. For Locke, humans fill with ideas as they face the world through five senses, forms complex ideas from these simple ideas by processes of division, combination, generalization and abstraction. Since ideas are limited by experience, and we cannot possibly experience every existing thing in the world, all knowledge is further compromised. Nevertheless, Locke affirmed that though our knowledge is unavoidably limited in these ways, we still can be assured of anything. Locke's Empirical Theory of Knowledge became a common sense of many thinkers, the leaders and other latter intellectuals. This theory is widely accepted by the humanity worldwide.

In conclusion, John Locke was one of the most successful philosophers in

¹⁵ "John Locke." John Locke. N.p., n.d. Web. 17 Sept. 2012. <<http://onlinephilosophyclub.com/john-locke.php>>.

¹⁶ "John Locke." John Locke. N.p., n.d. Web. 17 Sept. 2012. <<http://onlinephilosophyclub.com/john-locke.php>>.

¹⁷ "John Locke." John Locke. N.p., n.d. Web. 17 Sept. 2012. <<http://onlinephilosophyclub.com/john-locke.php>>.

world history. His idea was widely accepted and caused a great impact in many aspects of the world. Not only an individual changes which are about giving up individual right and learning from experienced is initiated by his thought, but also public change which are both political and economic concept. Without his idea, this modern world might not go as far as it does today.