****

**Occupation**: Scientist, mathematician, and astronomer

**Born**: August 29, 1632 in Wrington, Somerset, England

**Died**:  October 28, 1704 in Essex, England

**Best** **known** **as**: 17th century English philosopher and physician known as the “Father of Classical Liberalism.”

John Locke is known as one of the most influential of Enlightenment thinkers. His writings contributed greatly to the development of the fields of political philosophy, epistemology,and education. His works inspired generations of philosophers to follow, and significantly influenced the likes of Voltaire and Rousseau. As a political theorist, he contributed immensely to classical republicanism and liberal theory which are reflected in the United States Declaration of Independence.

**Childhood & Early Life**

John Locke was born on August 29, 1632, in Wrington, Somerset, England, to Puritan parents. His father, also John Locke, was a country lawyer and a small landowner who had served as a captain of cavalry for the Parliamentarian forces during the English Civil War. His mother’s name was Agnes Keene. He studied at the prestigious Westminster School before moving on to attend Christ Church, Oxford in 1652. As a college student he discovered the works of philosophers like Rene Descartes which kindled his interest in the subject. He earned his bachelor’s degree in 1656 and a master’s degree in 1658. He also developed an interest in medicine and studied medicine extensively, working with noted physicians and thinkers like Robert Boyle, Thomas Willis, Robert Hooke, and Richard Lower.

**Career**

Locke helped to treat Lord Anthony Ashley Cooper, 1st Earl of Shaftesbury, who had come to Oxford seeking treatment for a liver infection in 1666. Cooper was impressed with Locke and appointed him as his personal physician. Locke moved to London to assume this position in 1667. He resumed his medical studies under the prominent physician Thomas Sydenham who proved to be a great influence on young Locke. He was then elected a fellow of the Royal Society in 1668 and graduated with a bachelor’s of medicine in 1674. During the early 1670s he became active in politics and served as Secretary of the Board of Trade and Plantations and Secretary to the Lords Proprietor of Carolina. He wrote extensively during his years of service to Lord Cooper.

The early 1680s was a period of great political turmoil in England and Locke was forced to leave the country under strong suspicion of his involvement in the Rye House Plot. However, there is little historical evidence to prove that he was directly involved. He fled to the Netherlands in 1683 and wrote extensively over the next few years. He eventually returned to England and began publishing the works he had painstakingly composed in the past years.

**Major Works**

In Locke’s three “Letters Concerning Toleration” (1689-92), he suggested that governments should respect freedom of religion except when the dissenting belief was a threat to public order. Atheists (whose oaths could not be trusted) and Catholics (who owed allegiance to an external ruler) were thus excluded from his scheme. Even within its limitations, Locke’s toleration did not argue that all (Protestant) beliefs were equally good or true, but simply that governments were not in a position to decide which one was correct. The work also stated that the Church can gain genuine converts only through persuasion and not through violence.

His “Two Treatises of Government” (1690) offered political theories developed and refined by Locke during his years at Shaftesbury’s side. Originally published anonymously, Locke’s work attacked the concept of patriarchalism, rejecting the divine right of kings and saying that societies form governments by mutual (and, in later generations, tacit) agreement. Thus, when a king loses the consent of the governed, a society may remove him—an approach quoted almost verbatim in Thomas Jefferson’s 1776 Declaration of Independence. Locke also developed a definition of property as the product of a person’s labor that would be foundational for both Adam Smith’s capitalism and Karl Marx’s socialism.

The year 1690 also saw the publication of his work ‘An Essay Concerning Human Understanding’ in which he outlined a theory of human knowledge, identity and selfhood and described the mind at birth as a blank slate which is later filled with experience. To Locke, knowledge was not the discovery of anything either innate or outside of the individual, but simply the accumulation of “facts” derived from sensory experience. To discover truths beyond the realm of basic experience, Locke suggested an approach modeled on the rigorous methods of experimental science. This work is considered a principal source of empiricism in modern philosophy. Several enlightenment philosophers such as David Hume and George Berkeley cited it as a source of inspiration.

In his 1693 publication ‘Some Thoughts Concerning Education,’ he stated that the current curriculum and syllabus in schools and colleges needs to be broadened. Convinced that moral education is more important than other kinds of education, Locke states that the goal of education is not to create a scholar, but to create a virtuous man. More particularly, the aim of education is to instill what Locke calls the Principle of Virtue, namely the ability to subvert one's immediate appetites and desires to the dictates of reason. According to Locke, the goal of education is to create a person who obeys reason instead of passion. The importance Locke places on this quality cannot be overstated: nearly two thirds of the book is devoted to an account of how best to instill this principle. While discussing how to best instill this quality, Locke addresses other related ideas. He says that learning should be enjoyable. There is no good reason, Locke thinks, that children should hate to learn and love to play. The only reason that children happen not to like books as much as they like toys is that they are forced to learn, and not forced to play. Locke sets out to show how learning can be a form of recreation. Among his proposals are that children should never be forced to learn when they are not in the mood; that they should never be beaten or spoken to harshly; that they should not be lectured to, but should be engaged in conversation; and that their ideas should be taken seriously. In addition, the boisterous, loud, and playfully unruly spirit of children should be cultivated rather than curbed. Any mischief that stems from the age rather than the character of the child should not be punished. Not only should the general temperament of childhood be taken into account, but so should the individual temperament of the child. Every mind, Locke tells us, is different, and what is right for one child is not right for another. The goal of education is to guard against any vices to which a child is predisposed. By tailoring children's educations to their characters, teacher not only obtain more effective results, but they also make the experience enjoyable.

**Personal Life & Legacy**

John Locke never married or fathered any children. He had a very close friendship with Lady Damaris Cudworth Masham that lasted till his death. During his later years he was invited by Lady Masham to come and live with her family at Oates in High Laver, Essex. He died on October 28, 1704 and was buried in the churchyard of the village of High Laver.

Adapted and revised from “John Locke Biography.” *The Famous People*. Accessed February 12, 2016. <http://www.thefamouspeople.com/profiles/john-locke-134.php> and “John Locke: Some Thoughts Concerning Education: Plot Overview,” *SparkNotes.com,*  2017. Accessed March 3, 2017. <http://www.sparknotes.com/philosophy/lockethoughts/summary.html>