

Research Paper

## From Progressive Radicalism to Democratic Degeneration: The Trajectory of John Locke's Political Theory

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**Abstract:** As an organic intellectual of the emerging propertied class in 17th century England, John Locke has made an enduring contribution to the prevailing ideas shaping the socio-political order in Western societies and beyond. Through invoking the law of nature and natural rights which were nothing more than what he had abstracted from the socio-economic conditions of the seventeenth century and had projected back into the state of nature, Locke assiduously embarked on justifying the separation of civil society from the state, naturalizing class inequalities identifying the preservation of property as the fundamental function of the state, and rationalizing the subordination of propertyless classes to the emerging liberal democratic political order geared to preserve the interests of economically hegemonic classes.

**Keywords:** Agrarian Capitalism, Class Inequality, Political Obligation, Political Theory, Propertied Class.



## 1. Introduction

During the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, England became the site of a profound alteration in social relations of production that heralded the looming of agrarian capitalism which in turn became a prelude to the gradual emergence of capitalist social relations in the eighteenth century. By the early decades of the seventeenth century, the gradual centralization of the state manifested in the emergence of the crown as the sole locus of legitimate power, the concentration of landed property and an unprecedented social dislodgement accompanied by the gradual extirpation of customary rights triggered waves of political turmoil in England. From the political ferment of the seventeenth century England, John Locke emerged as an intellectual weapon of the propertied class to embark on a theoretical campaign to alter prevailing politico-philosophical assumptions that had sustained absolutism [1]. In his assiduous attempt to launch a theoretical raid on the absolutist arguments, Locke simultaneously endeavoured to circumvent and curtail the democratic ramifications of his political theory that had been conducive to menacing the interests of the large propertied class. Through utilizing and extending the natural rights and the law of nature that he employed to counter absolutism, Locke theorized both the naturalization of class inequalities and the obligation of marginalized strata to political power that he had translated into a defensive mechanism to protect the social position of the emerging hegemonic propertied and commercial class.

This paper is divided into five parts. In part one, there is a brief discussion of methodologies. Part two deals with the development of agrarian capitalism and the rise of propertied class. Part three discusses Locke's development of his political theory on transition from state of nature to civil society. Part four reflects of Locke's attempt to naturalize class inequality. Part five discusses Locke's utilization of his political theory to justify the subordination of propertyless class to political order geared to protect the interests of economically dominant class. Finally, main findings and enduring implications of Locke's political theory for democracy will be highlighted in the concluding part of this paper.

## 2. Mythological Notes

Prior to analyzing Locke's utilization of his political theory to rationalize the interests of rising propertied and commercial classes, it is imperative to reflect on the strengths and weaknesses of various methods of investigation that have been used to diagnose political ideas. Within the domain of academic studies, there has been an inveterate contention over employing an appropriate mode of interpretation to dissect and analyze bequeathed political theories [2]. The philosophical and historical approaches are the two systematic procedures that are being resorted to as methods to evaluate promulgated political ideas by the past philosophers and political theoreticians [2]. Within the parameters of the philosophical approach, emphasis is excessively placed on concepts, the logic of argumentation and the consistency of structured propositions. In contrast to ubiquity of the preponderant force of abstraction inscribed in the structure of the philosophical method, the historical approach is intended to situate bequeathed political ideas in a specific socio-political context [2]. It is crucial to note that resorting to a purely philosophical approach to study the theoretical legacies runs the risk of being susceptible to slip into the pitfall of abstraction which is bound to encounter a climate of controversy. Formulated political ideas by the past theoreticians and philosophers cannot be comprehended in abstraction independent of social, economic, and political forces of the time during which those ideas were developed. Social and political ideas of the past are not the relic of extraterrestrial collision that can be analyzed in abstraction. As Marx pointed out "the idea has always been a fiasco when divorced from interest." [3]. Social, economic, and political assumptions constructed by past thinkers were consciously formulated cognitive reactions to rationalize or impugn a specific set of social relations [4]. As Ellen and Neal, has suggested "political theory has been a historical legacy constructed in a specific historical context and responding to specific historical condition" [5]. It should be clarified that historicizing bequeathed political theory does not constitute an overweening rejection of theoreticians' contemplation on the past events or their projection of the future social order. Putting the political theory in a historical context only implies analyzing and relating the very constructed theory to a specific historical condition during which those ideas were formulated.

It is therefore essential to dissect the political ideas of John Locke in the light of socio-economic shift in the seventeenth century which provided the basis for Locke to construct his political theory. More specifically, apprehending the political theory of Locke necessitates taking into consideration

Locke's social position within the social order in the seventeenth century, alteration in social class relations and the conflict between the crown and parliament that culminated in the "Glorious Revolution" of 1688. Situating Locke in the historical condition of the seventeenth century England requires unraveling the underlying forces behind the political turmoil of the time during which Locke had emerged as an organic intellectual of the propertied classes [6].

### 3. The Rise of Propertied Class

During the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, the centralization of the state and a specific pattern of agricultural production became the two significant politico-economic developments in England [5]. In contrast to the continental Europe particularly France where the dissemination of politico-judicial jurisdictions had remained intact as the striking feature of the feudal order, by 1600, in England, the centripetal tendencies had led to the consolidation of the state power in a unified entity [5]. The seeds for the gravitation of the fragmented politico-judicial powers towards the centre were sown by the Norman Conquest that had brought to England a class of rulers already organized in a cohesive politico-military unit [7].

The centralization of the state in England was further strengthened through the nationalization of the common law and the emergence of a national church subjugated to and sustaining the unified state. The subordination of the church to the supremacy of the crown culminated in the neutralization of a significant locus of power within the state which in turn provided an ideological ammunition for the centralizing project had had been set in motion under the reign of Tudor-monarchs [5]. The consolidation of fragmented administrative and legal jurisdictions in a unified institution of the state was accompanied by a gradual removal of the extra-economic powers at the disposal of the landed class to appropriate surplus labor. The eclipse of non-economic measures from the process of surplus labor appropriation was not equivalent to the dispossession of landed class from its leverages over the social relations of production. Despite the depersonalization of the politico-judicial power, the landed aristocracy continued to exercise its domination through property ownership which contained a purely economic power [5]. As Wood has pointed out, the removal of extra-economic powers from the realm of surplus labour expropriation and the reliance of the dominant class on the mere economic power to extract surplus labour was a process conducive to "the privatization of the political power" [8]. Subsequent to this politically expedient shift in the means of surplus labor expropriation, landed aristocrats came to be directly dependent on rent that they acquired from tenant farmers who under the intensified force of competition began to operate as capitalists [9]. The direct dependence of the landed aristocrats on the rent and the growing proclivity of tenant farmers to increase their profits led to the confluence of interest between producers and appropriators to improve productivity through technological innovations which heralded the emergence of the agrarian capitalism in England [10]. Alteration in the means of surplus labor appropriation and the convergence of interests between tenant producers and appropriators led to the recasting of social relations of classes along the triad of landlords, tenant farmers and wage earners [11]. The gradual shift from the feudal social relations of production to agrarian capitalism did not constitute a threat to the social location of the landed aristocrats within the social order because they continued to receive an increased rent that ensued competition and technological innovations in agricultural production [8]. More specifically, the gradual development of agrarian capitalism that began to loom in the sixteenth century implied an internal restructuring of the landed aristocracy without being disarmed from its economic power. As Robert Brenner (1978) has meticulously elucidated, it was the self-transformation of the landed aristocracy that manifested itself in a decisive shift from feudalism to agrarian capitalism which became a prelude to the swaying motion of capitalist social relations [9].

It should be noted that the separation of extra-economic powers from private appropriation did not imply that politico-judicial measures were not indirectly employed by the ruling class to consolidate its position within the social order and tighten its grip of power over social relations of production. Despite this alteration in social relations along the capitalist lines which E.P Thompson (1991) has characterized as the "predatory phase of agrarian capitalism", land continued to remain as the "jumping off point for power and office, and the point to which power and office returned" [12]. In spite of this ostensible disentanglement of the extra-economic powers from surplus labor appropriation, it was through the institutions of the state that the propertied class invoked common law and parliamentary measures to trigger waves of enclosure which decisively shifted the balance of power to an already powerful ruling aristocracy [12].

It was thus through political and judicial means that customary rights of peasants were extirpated, and the poor were destined to "became estrangers in their own land" [12]. As Karl Polanyi (1944) meticulously pointed out, enclosures that engender a climate of perplexity for the marginalized strata, was "a revolution of the rich against the poor" [13]. The eclipse of customary practices from the realm of social relations of production and the exposure of smallholders to the force of market competition gradually generated compelling momentum to propel the vast majority of peasants towards the blackhole of wage earning labor [11] [12]. Even though the depersonalization of extra-economic power accompanied by the centralization of the state did not pose a threat to private appropriation, the monopolization of the legitimate use of force by the centralized state allowed the crown to emerge as the only legitimate and authoritative source of governance that created a condition within which the ruling class could only preserve its interests through state institutions [9]. The concentration of political power in the hands of the crown which was equivalent to the neutralization of disseminated centers of non- economic powers, generated a structural paradox for the ruling class because of the degree of autonomy that the crown had acquired. It was due to the persistent quest of the propertied classes to control and limit the power of the state that England became the scene of political confrontation between parliament and the crown which ultimately culminated in the "Glorious Revolution" of 1688. Even though it is beyond the scope of this paper to exhaustively explicate the forces behind the Civil War of the seventeenth century, it is sufficient to state that the fundamental aim of the parliamentary front was to circumscribe the power of the crown and subjugate it to the will of the parliament which had functioned as the national protector of the propertied classes. Despite the religious colouration of the Civil War, the forces that intensified the political conflict had in fact emanated from the discord within the ruling class [14]. In order to elicit concession and frighten the crown into submission, the radical members of the ruling class countenanced and utilized the growing social resentment within the lower layers of the social order. On the other hands, the conservative members of the hegemonic class were anxious with growing involvement of the masses in the affairs of the state which in their view had the potential to undermine the long-term interest of the ruling class. Due to their preoccupation with the political mobilization of the lower strata, the conservative members of the ruling aristocracy inclined to crawl into the bosom of the king [14]. It was thus due to the differences within the dominant class that the Civil War was initiated and consequently culminated in the triumph of the parliamentary camp without the fulfillment of democratic demands that had been aspired by the marginalized classes.

#### **4. Locke's Development of His Political Theory**

As explicated earlier, it is in the light of the socio-economic shift of the seventeenth century England and the political confrontation between the crown and parliament that the underlying interests beneath the political theory of Locke can be comprehensively unravelled. Locke, who had descended from a family at the periphery of the lesser gentry, came into contact with Anthony Ashley Cooper, the first Earl of Shaftesbury, who had emerged as the most overpowering and astute political figure in the seventeenth century England [15]. The first Earl of Shaftesbury was a wealthy capitalist landowner who was also an active figure in colonial trade and investment. Shaftesbury was known for his political dexterity and opportunistic maneuverability that he manifested through his shift of allegiance from the royalist to the parliamentary camp [16]. During the political campaign projected to prevent the accession of James II to the throne which came to be characterized as the "Exclusion Crisis" of 1679-81, the first Earl of Shaftesbury acted as the main architect to instigate and countenance an alliance between the parliamentary Whigs and popular radicals [5]. In his surreptitious activities to rally the forces against the crown, the first Earl of Shaftesbury engaged in a close political deliberation with John Locke [17]. Due to the degree of confidence that he had acquired within the circle of Shaftesbury's family, Locke clandestinely acted as an "assistant pen" and "ideologist in residence" to his master [18]. The secret political consultation and exchange of views between Locke and the Shaftesbury, and latter's encouragement of the former to turn his intellectual attention to the political affairs of the state was conspicuously revealed by the first Earl's grandson.

Mr. Locke grew so much in esteem with my grandfather that, as great a man as he had experienced him in physic, he looked upon this but as his least part. He encouraged him to turn his thoughts another way... He put him upon the study of religious and civil affairs of the nation. He entrusted him with his secret negotiations, and made use of his assistant pen in matters that nearly concerned the

state, and were fit to be made public, to raise that spirit in the nation which was necessary against the prevailing Popish party [15].

Until 1667, during which a tenacious association was developed between Locke and the first Earl of Shaftesbury, Locke had exclusively concentrated his intellectual energy on moral philosophy and the study of medicine [19]. It was under the tutelage of his patron that Locke shifted his interests to political theory which was intended to justify the limitation on the power of the crown and simultaneously legitimize the supremacy of parliament that were congruent with Shaftesbury's publicly promulgated political position [16]. To enervate the position of the crown and subordinate the power of the state to parliament, Locke was required to reinterpret the prevailing philosophical, economic and political assumptions which in turn necessitated him to counter and impugn two lines of absolutist argument that had been conducive to countenancing the omnipotent power of the king. The first line of absolutist interpretation that had been handed down from the Middle Ages was the divine rights of kings which characterized kings not only as the shadow of the God but also as God's representatives on the earth. During a speech before parliament in 1610, James I of England conspicuously invoked this theory by enunciating that "kings are not only God's lieutenants upon earth and sit down upon God's throne, but even by God himself they are called gods" [20]. Locke had to confront this patriarchal theory of divine rights of kings that was forcibly elaborated by Sir Robert Filmer, who asserted that kings are and should be conceived as beings the direct heirs to Adam [21]. It was Filmer's patriarchal argument that the final determination of political question cannot be left to the individual members of society and that there is no sovereign unless the king who is the source of laws, would stand above the laws [21] [22]. The second line of argument in the support of absolutism that Locke had to tackle had been formulated by Thomas Hobbes. Unlike Filmer who had grounded his theoretical justification for the full sway of monarchical absolutism on biblical accounts of "fatherhood and property", Hobbes had rested his theoretical argument for absolutism on human nature and the rational calculation of individuals to yield to the yoke of an absolute sovereign who can provide a secure environment within which individuals could pursue their activities [5]. Hobbes's preoccupation with the exigency of stability and social order had persuaded him to call for a self-perpetuating sovereign to whom individuals would surrender their individual rights in return for a collective order. Hobbes assumed that rational and egoistic individuals are constantly driven by an urge for personal gratification which is bound to position each individual in a constant state of war with others. It was Hobbes's conviction that in the absence of an absolute sovereign who could restrain the competitive pressures among individuals, anarchy would prevail, and the social fabric of society would be born asunder [5] [18].

In his intellectual endeavour to refute and undermine the philosophical and theological arguments that had been deployed to sustain absolutism, Locke confronted Filmer in his First Treatise and reformulate his line of attack in the Second Treatise which without any specification was directed at the argument that Hobbes had constructed in Leviathan [15]. Based on his interpretation of the Scriptures, Locke asserted that no comprehensive theory of obligation to the king can be extracted from the premises upon which Filmer had rested his Patriarchal theory of divine rights of king [16] [21]. Contrary to Filmer's general argument that the absolute exercise of political power by the kings was an inherent right which emanated from the power that God had granted to Adam, Locke maintained that there was no textual warrant that could corroborate the transfer of such power to anyone else:

If God by his positive grant and revealed declaration, first gave rule and dominion to any man, he that will claim by that title, must have the same positive grant of God for his succession. For if that has not directed the course of its descent and conveyance down to others, nobody can succeed to this title of the first ruler [16].

To theorize the limitation on the exercise of political power by the state and therefore undermine the philosophical and theological edifice upon which the arguments for absolutism were rested, Locke like Hobbes, grounded his theoretical explanation on natural rights and the law of nature. Unlike Hobbes, who had depicted a chaotic and frightening picture of the state of nature which in his view necessitated the presence of a powerful sovereign with absolute authority to restrain inevitable contention and pugnacity among individuals, Locke inclined to provide a peaceful scene of the state of nature. Like Hobbes, Locke sketched the natural condition of mankind not in an historical condition existing before the emergence of political society but as a logical deduction from the essential nature of man and the purpose of creation [23].

In his second Treatise of Government which marked the separation of civil society from the state that has continued to be the striking dimension of the capitalist social order, Locke theorized the transition of civil society in the state of nature to political society. Locke maintained that in the state of nature, individuals have inalienable natural rights to "life, liberty and estate" which are the gifts of nature bestowed by the omnipotent God [24]. Locke illustrated the state of nature as "the state of perfect freedom" within which individuals without being subjugated to the dictates of others have natural rights within the bound of the natural law to "dispose of their possession, as they think fit." [23]. On the basis of his interpretation of natural law and Scriptures, Locke deduced the ubiquity of the principle of equality in the state of nature. Locke asserted that the earth and its fruits were originally given by God to mankind in common and that there is a natural equality for all individuals to enjoy what they have received from their creator [25]. According to Locke, the prevalence of equality in the state of nature emanated from the natural limitations on individual acquisition. First, everyone can appropriate only as much as he can leave "enough" for others [18]. Second, appropriation must be proportional to self-reproduction and any amount beyond that would constitute spoilage and the destruction of the fruits of earth [18]. Third, the rightful appropriation is limited to the amount that an individual could procure with his own labor [25]. Locke conspicuously emphasized the prevalence of the state of equality among individuals in the state of nature within which "all power and jurisdiction is reciprocal, no one having more than another" [23]. Locke did not equate the state of nature with the state of anarchy because in his view individuals are bound by the duty to God and governed by the law of nature. According to Locke, individuals can discern the law of nature through their rationality which would propel them to respect each other and eschew infringing upon one another's liberty [24] [26]. While Locke asserted that individuals are generally reasonable enough to inflict on themselves individually the necessary moral codes to stifle their contentious appetites, he simultaneously declared that natural rights in the state of nature are susceptible to encroachment. Thus, in parallel to Hobbes's depiction of the state of nature as the terrain of warfare, Locke inclined to concede the inevitability of bellicose confrontation among individuals that he attributed to the "inconveniences" in the state of nature [24]. Even though Locke assiduously strove to depict a peaceful picture of the state of nature, he also maintained that when the enforcement of law is left to individuals, there would be many judges and hence ensuing conflictual interpretations of the law of nature. It was Locke's conviction that in the presence of these inconveniences and in the absence of "a common superior to appeal", the state of nature is bound to culminate in "the state of war". According to Locke, it is to prevent the transition of civil society in the state of nature to the state of war that individuals leave the state of nature and form a political society:

To avoid this state of war (wherein there is no appeal but to heaven, and wherein the least difference is apt to end, where there is no authority to decide between the contenders) is one great reason of men's putting themselves into society, and quieting the state of nature [23].

What is conspicuous from Locke's characterization of the transition from the state of nature to political society is that civil society does precede the establishment of political society or state and that the latter is solely created to surmount conflictual interpretations of the law of nature which prevail in the state of nature. In other words, the absence of political authority in the state of nature that could regulate the exercise of natural rights and punish violators is the fundamental force behind the natural predilection of "equally free men" to construct a political order [24]. More specifically, Locke envisaged the formation of the state as "a proper remedy to the inconveniences of the state of nature" [23]. It should be emphasized that the creation of a political authority within Locke's theoretical framework does not signal the transfer of all individual's right to the state. Even though within the paradigm of Locke's theoretical analysis the authority of law making and the power of its enforcement are ceded to the state, the whole process is contingent upon the adherence of the state to its essential purpose which is the preservation of life, liberty and estate [27]. Since within Locke's theoretical justification of the transition to political society natural rights are prior to the establishment of the state, these rights cannot be circumvented or restricted without the consent of those possessing them. The state is thus born out of an agreement among individuals and the consent will be withdrawn whenever government fails to provide an auspicious atmosphere within which people can enjoy their natural rights. Thus, in a sharp contrast to Hobbes's notion of the subordination of individuals to an absolute sovereign without their involvement in political processes, Locke located the locus of ultimate sovereignty in people [24]. Even though Locke endeavoured to resuscitate and restate the

ancient political ideas of government as a political entity which emanates from community and is subjugated to the laws authorized by citizens, he eschewed explicating direct democracy as a mechanism to administer political society. Despite this conspicuous deficiency that ran counter to his attempt to revive the traditional political ideas, Locke's initial characterization of the transition of the state of nature to political community was bound to theorize society as a community of equals where no individual is permitted to live at the expense of others. It would not be a far-fetched claim to suggest that had Locke refrained from extending his Second Treatise beyond the third chapter, he would have gone down in the history of political thought as a prominent socialist theoretician.

Locke's initial assumptions of the earth as a gift of God, natural restrictions on individual appropriation and the absence of power differentiation were not only conducive to fulfilling the demands of Levellers but were also geared to legitimize the radical aspirations of Diggers who had launched a political campaign for the communality of property :

The beginning of Locke's Second Treatise of Government sounds almost as if it has been written by Winstanley and his discussions of property begins with something very like Winstanley's assertion that God gave the earth to humankind to be a common property [5].

Had Locke inclined to restrict his theoretical explanation of the transition from the state of nature to political society within the first three chapters of the Second Treatise of Government, he would not have only become an intellectual weapon of the popular masses but he would have also provided an intellectual momentum to reinforce the radical demands of Levellers which were bound to threaten the domination of the large propertied class. The radical aspirations of Levellers which reflected the interests of small independent proprietors were conducive to menacing the predominant position of the ruling propertied class within social relations of production. Even though Levellers had not projected their struggle to put an end to the institution of private property, they strenuously deprecated enclosures and the eradication of customary rights which were bound to precipitate the concentration of property in a few hands [5] [25]. Levellers were outrightly opposed to the association of privileges and political rights with large property which was an egregious pattern of politics in the seventeenth century England. In their struggle to curtail the concentration of land, Levellers advocated the reassertion of liberty for small men to acquire property and identified the power of accumulation by privileges as a real threat to both liberty and property [8]. Furthermore, on the contention of the boundaries of suffrage which reached to its apogee in Putney Debates, Levellers persistently endeavoured to extend franchise beyond the parameters delineated by the ruling class. Despite their adherence to the institution of private property, Levellers' call for religious freedom and the extension of franchise was construed by the ruling propertied class as a propagation for anarchy. Even though Levellers had adopted an ambiguous stance on the scope of franchise and were oscillating on their radical demands, they nonetheless held the conviction that no free man can be subjugated to political power without his consent [28]. In a sharp contrast to Ireton and Cromwell who during the Putney Debate vehemently strove to confine suffrage to free holders, Rainsborough, as a spokesperson for Levellers, unequivocally stated that "the poorest he has a life to live, he also possesses the right not to be governed except by his own consent" [5]. the overriding force behind the radical demands of Levellers to extend suffrage laws was a strong conviction that not government or parliament but "people as popular multitude were sovereign" [5]. In other words, Levellers had intended to replace the emphasis on the supremacy of parliament with the power of people as a mechanism to regulate the social order. Levellers' remonstrance with the eclipse of customary practices from the realm of social relations and their call for the supersession of parliamentary supremacy by the power of people constituted a direct threat to the domination of the large propertied class to which Locke had committed himself to defend and rationalize its interests.

## **5. Justification of Class Inequality**

In order to curtail the democratic aspirations of popular radicals and therefore preserve the interests of the ruling class, Locke had to circumvent and tarnish the democratic corollaries of his theoretical argument against absolutism. Deflecting the democratic menace impended on the hegemonic position of the large propertied class and anchoring its position within social order necessitated Locke to justify both class inequalities and the political obligation of propertyless strata to the rules of political society. The justification of social class inequalities emanated from unlimited individual acquisition required Locke to restructure his postulated natural restrictions on individual appropriation in the state of nature. As explicated earlier, in the beginning of his Second Treatise of Government, Locke

theorized natural limitations on wealth accumulation which had accordingly secured the equality of power among individuals in the state of nature. The extension of natural limitations on individual appropriation to unlimited individual acquisition was sine qua non for the rationalization of class inequalities that Locke had to justify. According to Locke, the invention of money in the state of nature not only rendered natural limitations inoperative but it also triggered the trends towards unequal holding [2] [18] [23]. It was Locke's theorization that the introduction of money as both the medium of exchange and as the stored wealth provided the possibility for individuals to enlarge their possession without violating the spoilage limitation [2]. In other words, money permitted individuals to convert any amount of perishable goods into money which could not be spoiled. Furthermore, the extension of commerce as a corollary of the usage of money made it profitable for individuals to appropriate more land and therefore leaving none for others [23]. On two interrelated grounds, Locke justified the concentration of land in few hands. First, Locke postulated that in the state of nature all individuals had consented to the introduction of money which has had the potential to facilitate the concentration of land [18]. Second, Locke attributed improvement to private ownership which he theorized as an impetus to make privately owned land more productive than the land held in common [2] [25]. As Macpherson has pointed out, it was Locke's assumption that the productivity ensued private appropriation of the land would offset the lack of availability of land for others because living condition of all would be much better under private appropriation than under condition of holding land in common [25]. Locke's notion of improvement echoed the voice of large property holders and agricultural reformers in the seventeenth century England for whom "God's injection in genesis was a favorite justification in their call for enclosure and utilization of waste land" [2]. In other words, Locke's enormous accentuation on improvement and the alleged economic inefficiency of uncultivated land corroborated the crusade for enclosure and the removal of customary laws that had been waged by the landowning class in the seventeenth century England. It is also crucial to note that Locke's exaltation of improvement provided an ideological justification to encourage and legitimize colonial expansionism in North America which consequently culminated in the dispossession of the Indians from their hunting grounds [29]. Furthermore, as Birdal [30] has pointed out, though Locke developed his political theory during pre-industrial revolution, his philosophical discussion of property and natural rights dominated the political thought of nineteenth century liberal thinkers who rested their interpretation of new form of property under the emerging capitalist mode of production. In line with his justification of class inequality, Locke also provided a rational justification for propertyless class's subjugation to the rules of liberal state.

## 6. Justifying Political Obligation

Within Locke's theoretical interpretation, it is conspicuous that the introduction of money has also transcended the rightful appropriation limited to what an individual could procure through his own labour. Accordingly, the appropriation of land facilitated by the usage of money would leave many individuals without property who are required to sell their labour for wages in order to survive [2]. Tully [31] has argued that Locke did not relegate labour to the status a commodity that can be sold on the market. Contrary to Tully's assertion that the alienability of labour had no place in Locke's theoretical vocabulary, Locke conceptualized labor as a commodity that can be sold and its produce could in turn be appropriated by the buyer [2] [25]. Despite the logical plausibility of his theorization of the appropriation of the labor of others which contradicted his original notion of the equality of power relations in the state of nature, Locke conspicuously eschewed unraveling the explicit coercion inscribed in the structure of free wage contracts. In the absence of land and capital upon which labor could be projected, propertyless individuals would have no choice except subjugating to the yoke of voluntary contracts through which the produces of their labor would be appropriated by buyers [25].

Subsequent to his attempt to naturalize socio-economic inequalities that he imputed to the tacit consent of individuals to both the usage of money and accepting its consequences, Locke endeavoured to justify the political obligation of the propertyless classes to the rules of governmental authority. Locke's attempt to identify propertyless class as an object of the state policy can be discerned from his hypothetically constructed social contract and his ambiguous notion of consent. It is suggested that Locke's social contract involves two consecutive stages of the formation of civil society and a subsequent establishment of the common superior [32]. In the first stage, Locke's formulated inconveniences which are nothing more than conflicts emanating from unequal socio-economic relations that have allegedly compelled individuals to voluntarily leave the state of nature behind,



enter political society and commit themselves to a bond of political obligation [27]. What can be comprehended from Locke's first stage of social contract is that individuals have unanimously endorsed the patterns of unequal distribution of power relations. But Locke did not elucidate why there should be a confluence of interest between propertied and propertyless individuals to commit themselves to a bond of political obligation which has sustained the domination of the former over the latter? The first stage is a prelude to the second stage within which individuals choose their representatives and cede their power to the legislative branch which is mandated to preserve the ends of civil society. Locke's differentiation of these stages was designed to theorize that the locus of power lies in civil society and that the essential task of government is to preserve property [33]. It is within the context of the second stage of social contract that Locke's binary interpretation of consent can be vividly construed as an overt attempt to justify the political obligation of non-franchised strata to the laws of the state that was prevalent in the seventeenth century England. To Locke, political obligation emanated from either express consent reflected through voting and taking an oath to abide to the authority of the state or tacit consent which implied an unspoken agreement to obey the laws of political authority by non-franchised individuals who have voluntarily remained within the territorial jurisdiction of a given state. Locke's depiction of consent along the axis of express and tacit reflected the political reality of the seventeenth century England during which voting and political rights were confined to the propertied classes whereas the propertyless layers of the social order had been ostracized [2] [25]. Ashcraft [16] has impugned the identification of express and tacit consent with the propertied and propertyless classes because in his view there is no class differentiation contained in Locke's concept of tacit consent. But as Wood [2] has pointed out, nothing can be extrapolated from Locke's political theory that would have gone beyond the Whig's obstinate stance to eschew endorsing the vertical extension of franchise in the seventeenth century England (pp. 83-85). Locke's justification of political obligation and his judicial conceptualization of the state as an "umpire" to maintain the natural rights were conducive to preserve and consolidate the interests of the propertied class within the institutions of the state [25]. The radical departure of Locke from the classical conception of democracy and his overt attempt to secure the domination of the ruling propertied class has been meticulously elucidated by Wood [2].

His [Locke's] egalitarianism, nevertheless, might be described as bourgeois egalitarianism, a mentality - in opposition to the traditional aristocratic *Weltanschauung*- that came to typify the outlook of many capitalist and would be capitalists. Although he described human inequality to differences in education and social environment, he accepted as desirable those differences and social division of labor and property differentiation that produced inequality his attitude was very much in keeping with the typical bourgeois egalitarianism that attached the dominance of aristocratic birth...but had no intention of undermining the sovereignty of the propertied classes in general over the laboring poor. Locke therefore was by no stretch of the imagination a democrat [2].

## 7. Conclusion

As has been demonstrated throughout this paper, apprehending the political ideas of Locke, and unraveling the underlying motives beneath the edifice of his political theory necessitate taking into consideration the historical condition of the seventeenth century England during which Locke formulated his politico-philosophical assumptions. The centralization of the state accompanied by the gradual removal of the extra-economic powers at the disposal of the propertied classes as means of surplus expropriation that led the emergence of the crown as the sole locus of the legitimate center of governance, engendered a climate of consternation for the propertied class which controlled the parliamentary branch of the state. The preoccupation of landowning class with the accumulation of power in the hands of the crown and its incessant attempts to employ parliament as an institutional means to curtail the power of the king led to a political conflict between the two camps which ultimately culminated in the triumph of the parliamentary side and the emergence of parliament as the supreme branch of the state. It was within the context of the political turbulence of the seventeenth century England that Locke emerged as an intellectual weapon of agrarian capitalism. In his commitment to justify the supremacy of parliament and anchor the hegemonic position of the propertied class within the social order, Locke launched a theoretical campaign to alter the traditional and philosophical assumptions prevalent in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries England. In his assiduous endeavours to preserve and consolidate the interests of the propertied class, Locke not only countered absolutist arguments but he also circumvented the democratic ramifications of his political

theory. Through invoking the law of nature and natural rights which were nothing more than what he had abstracted from the socio-economic conditions of the seventeenth century and had projected back into the state of nature, Locke endeavoured to justify the separation of civil society from the state, naturalize class inequalities and identify the preservation of property as the fundamental function of the state. By embarking on the extension of the state of equality in the state of nature to unlimited appropriation and his subsequent attempt to subjugate the propertyless strata as an object of the state policy, Locke neutralized the democratic corollaries of his radical political ideas. Despite his theoretical assaults on absolutism and his glorification of liberty, Locke's ideas which formed the basis for eighteenth and nineteenth century classical liberal theorists, circumvented the classical conception of democracy and superseded it by the bourgeois notion of democracy that has continued to remain as a striking and controversial dimension of capitalist societies. Locke laid the foundation for the development of liberalism which despite its fusion with democracy reflected through the gradual adoption of universal suffrage, has remained faithful to Locke's political theory. The congruity of liberal democracy with Locke's theoretical postulates can be comprehended from former's elevation of private property to the status of a sacrosanct law and its inveterate stance to fortify the economic sphere from being permeated with democratic norms. Locke might have been successful in resorting to casuistic and desultory arguments to justify social class inequalities, but he also sowed the theoretical seeds of contradiction for liberalism which has manifested itself through the irreconcilability of liberty and equality in a class -based society that Locke sedulously endeavoured to rationalize.

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