

# JOHN LOCKE ON THE NATURE OF MARRIAGE

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According to John Locke, the obligations of marriage are as follows: to join together in communion of interest, to produce children for the advancement of the species, and to care for them until they are self-sufficient. Locke justifies this assertion by saying that man isn't made to live in isolation, and that in order to prosper, he must be put under strong societal obligations. Additionally he states that our institution of marriage is what distinguishes us as humans from the beasts of the field. For the beasts of the field, the union between male and female lasts as long as the act of copulation; humans are both more dependent at birth and more capable in maturity. This justifies the need for government over a society, according to Locke; although spouses have similar interests and concerns, there will be unavoidable conflicts based on their different desires. A government offers stability and equilibrium; its rules are not subject to our daily changes in desire or feeling. Therefore, for the advancement of society as a whole, it is essential to have a government that is constant in a world of endless variables.

Sadly, the institution of marriage, described in such clear terms by Locke, ends in divorce for one out of every two couples in the United States. People enter into marriage thinking it will relieve them of life's pressures, and they end up disillusioned. Locke, by contrast, believes

that if we were free from such pressures, we would have less of a desire to achieve goals and flourish in all realms of life. This is similar to an old saying of my brother, Micah, “If I didn’t marry Leslie, I wouldn’t have much of a reason to work to get this house, or a haircut for that matter.” Like Locke, my brother suggests that men and women complement each other and bring the best out of each other. From here, one can see why a higher power, secular or religious, is essential to the survival of marriage. It is essential because marriage is not an easy endeavor; there will be human error and things that cause conflict. For Locke, the superseding entity would be the government; it could also be a God or wise elder. All in all, it appears that we naturally know why the institution of marriage is so valuable. If, in addition, we avoid outside distractions, such as gossip, that add conflict and mischief, we can get more out of it and become the best that we can be.

### Bibliography

Locke, John. *Second Treatise of Government*. Indianapolis: Hackett, 1980. *Project Gutenberg*. Web. 14 Jan. 2014.