

Which Philosopher Has the Strongest Argument on Private Property?

Charles Titus, MPA

Political Science 501 – Political Philosophy

Professor: Dr. Adrienne Stafford

9/25/2015

American Public University System

<b>Maximum Score: 100</b>					<b>Your score: 81</b>
<b>Comprehension, synthesis of concepts, arguments: 40</b>	Exemplary 37-40	Competent 31-36	Competent-Beginning 26-30	Beginning 0-25	<b>33</b>
<b>Support and critical thinking/analysis: 30</b>	Exemplary 27-30	Competent 22-26	Competent-Beginning 16-21	Beginning 0-15	<b>24</b>
<b>Writing Standards &amp; citations: 30</b>	Exemplary 27-30	Competent 22-26	Competent-Beginning 16-21	Beginning 0-15	<b>24</b>

Charles - You did some good work on this paper. Your paper opens with a strong thesis and it is organized in a way that focuses on each thinker's proposal and possible criticisms. However there are some serious shortcomings here. Your "areas of criticism" on each of these thinkers contain no scholarly support. They seem not to be areas of criticism but your own views. That is absolutely fine and encouraged, and I appreciate that you are actively thinking about the possible criticisms of each thinker. But you still need support - both philosophical and in some cases empirical support. See my comments on this throughout your paper.

Your concluding thoughts group Plato and Marx and Hegel and Locke. This is a great idea! You

might have organized your paper this way. In that way, you could better address criticisms of Locke and then defend them. For example, you present a criticism that Locke's ideas of property as a "natural right" come from his belief in God. So, what of that? Some follow through on this point would have addressed questions like: If one does not believe in God, does that mean property is not a natural right? And, what of the issue of having the "means" to own property? And, what of "conflict" over property? How does Locke address that?

On Hegel, I had difficulty understanding your explanation of his views and your explanation of the criticism. If you had citations on the criticism, I might have been able to sense where you are coming from. I also had difficulty understanding several sentences.

Nonetheless, Charles, your paper is well organized and demonstrates that you have the basic idea of where the lines are drawn among these philosophers in terms of how they understand property. That in itself is important!

Writing: See my highlighted and underlined areas below. Areas for improvement: Awkward repetitive phrasing. Forget the "when looking at" and so on. Just say it! ☺ Attention to sentence logic with respect to noun and verb coordination and agreement. Needed improvement on paragraph formation. Paragraphs are much too long and contain mixed topics. Every paragraph should have a topic sentence and every sentence in a paragraph should support that topic sentence. If it does not, it does not belong there.

I thoroughly enjoyed having you in the class, Charles! I wish you all of the best in all of your future endeavors! I'll think of you when I go to Lowes! ☺ Adrienne

~~When looking at political philosophy there are many different philosophers and topics that can be looked at and studied. In political philosophy~~ ~~Start sentence: There are many different political philosophers that who~~ discuss property in their theories. Some of the political philosophers that discuss the proper role and place of property in their theories are Plato, Locke, Hegel and Marx. All of these philosophers have great arguments about property in regards to the role and place that property should play. Each philosopher will be looked at in regards to their views on property and then compared and contrasted to one another. After this ~~comma is done~~ one will be able to see that John Locke has the strongest argument because of his views that protection of all property as one of the main goals of government and people having property is an essential part of one's life.

Commented [A1]: Font in papers should be 12 or 11, never 10.

Formatted: Strikethrough

Formatted: Strikethrough

Commented [A2]: Thesis. Good! Awkward sentence.

### Plato on Property

A philosopher that needs to be looked in regards to the role and place that property should play is Plato. Plato lived during the time period of 427 through 347 B.C. and helped shape the field of political philosophy into what it is today (Strauss, 1987). Plato was even the mentor of another political philosopher named Aristotle (Arnhart, 2002). Plato had some very strong views on a few things such as feminism. He felt that females should be treated the same as men (Arnhart, 2002). **When looking** at Plato's work one **can look** at his work the Republic and The Laws. **By looking** at these works one can see that Plato felt that there ~~should not be private~~ property and that the property should be owned collectively (Strauss, 1987). Plato went on to argue in the Republic that ~~the guardian class should not own property~~, because he did not want the guardian class to be distracted from ruling and running the state (Law, 2014). Plato felt that if the guardian class had access to private property it "would turn these guardians into cruel masters rather than allies" (Breen, 2011, p. 7). **NEW PARAGRAPH** Plato also noted that the guardian class should not "handle or be in the vicinity of gold or silver" (Breen, 2011, p. 8). In other words, Plato felt ~~that private property should be rejected~~ because having individual ownership of property would not be good for the community as a whole and thus meaning it should be rejected. Plato felt that private property actually caused a community to be divided rather than a unified community. That is why Plato felt that property should be held collectively because it would cause the community to be unified and act to help one another. **When looking at** Plato it is important to also point out his views on Farmers and workers in regards to property. Breen (2011) noted that Plato stated "farmers and workers have their own distinct role to play in Kallipolis, and that social and political position not only poses no barrier to their retention of private property and ongoing family relations but appears to require it for the sake of economic and political stability" (p. 8). In this view Plato felt that the farmers and workers where important to the community functioning

Commented [A3]: Grammatically awkward sentence structure. Property do not play a place.

Commented [A4]: Good!

Commented [A5]: Yes, but for the guardian class.

Commented [A6]: Yes.

Commented [A7]: Not for everyone.

correctly because they supported the other classes within the community. Thus meaning that the land is still being held in a communal manner because everyone is helping one another. The way that this takes place is because the guardian class is ruling and leading the farmers and workers, and the workers and farmers are helping by supporting the other classes.

### Criticism of Plato

When looking at Plato there is some criticism that be given in his views about the proper role and place of property. The first piece of criticism ~~that could be given~~ is that Plato's views are only one's person view in a utopia. With that said there are some that would say that what one person's view is in a utopia, is other person's dystopia. The reason is because what one views as a perfect society does not mean that another will view as a perfect society. The reason is because everyone has different ideas of perfect. Also, one could argue that Plato's views on property could cause tension between the guardian class and the farmers and workers based upon his views that the farmers and workers have to support the guardian class. Thus meaning that it could cause resentment to come into play. The reason is because the farmers and workers could feel that they are being taken advantage of and only being used because it is better for the guardian class. Plato's views could also be criticized by not wanting people anyone other than the workers and farmers to have property. This could cause a break down in society, because one of the other classes might want to get land. Another area of criticism that can be made by looking at Plato's view is that not allowing everyone in a society to own property could cause people to give up or not care about society any more. The reason this can be argued is because one can state that people have to have a reason to work for something. If people don't have property to work for then they will not do good and end up just giving up on what they are doing. In other words, allowing people to have property gives people a reason to work towards something.

### Hegel on Property

When looking at philosophers that had strong views on the proper place of property was Georg Hegel. Georg Hegel lived between the time of 1770 through 1831 (Hassner, 1987). George Hegel felt that property and economic activity were actually important elements to having an ethical life. Hegel argued that I can only objectify my freedom as a person in a thing by establishing a relation with others in which I declare to them my will that I be able to do whatever I choose with the thing, and in which they are aware of my will and are thereby disposed to act in accord with it; or, as I shall put it from now on, in which I claim, and others recognize, the thing

**Commented [A8]:** That he is one person does not make for criticism. Others may have also thought this. Locke too is one person. Everyone is one person.

**Formatted:** Strikethrough

**Commented [A9]:** This is a valid critique.

**Commented [A10]:** Good!

**Commented [A11]:** I don't understand this criticism.

**Commented [A12]:** Many people don't have property nor do they want property. Does this mean they won't do or work for good?

This section would benefit from some scholarly criticism, such as from Aristotle or other contemporary critics. You need some research here.

as mine" (Chitty, 2013, Quotations need to be immediately followed by a citation that includes author, year and page - or section or paragraph number if website or ebook.). In other words, what Hegel is saying is that anyone can claim property as their own as long as others will agree that it belongs to the person who is claiming it.

**Commented [A13]:** This is a mighty long quote that needs to be in block quote form. See the Writing Center in the Library.

### Criticism of Hegel

Hegel's thoughts on the role of property can be criticized. One major criticism was that Hegel viewed someone could taking something as theirs as long as others said that it is indeed the person's that took it can actually lead to disagreements. The reason is because one would take the chance the other people wouldn't would not agree that the property should belong to that person. The reason is because what if the property that was taken would be better off used for another purpose. Another area of criticism that could come up with this train of thought is that the person that took the item as theirs actually took the property of someone else. If this was to take place then it could lead to conflict between the person that is now claiming the property and the person that used to have claim to the property. In other words, Hegel's views could actually lead to conflict within a community if people are in disagreement over who owns property. **NEW PARAGRAPH** When looking at Hegel's views on property another area of criticism that could possibly take place is what happens when there is nothing left to claim. This could cause people to get upset if everything has already been claimed. Another issue that could stem from people claiming property is what happens when one person comes in and tries to claim too much property under this view. How would that be fair to all of the other citizens? Thus meaning that if someone was to try to claim more than everyone else it could lead to conflict as well. One could also argue that Hegel's views could actually lead to a society in which people are stealing from one another. The reason why this could be argued is that under Hegel's views someone can claim property as theirs as long as other agree with it. What could end up taking place is that people could try to steal things and try to claim that it is their property when in all actuality it is not their property to be claiming. In other words, it seems that Hegel is taking it for granted that property that can be claimed could be another person's property already.

**Commented [A14]:** I don't quite understand this sentence. Also, where does this criticism come from? You need a citation.

**Commented [A15]:** Unclear.

**Commented [A16]:** Are these your ideas or are you interpreting these criticisms from other scholars?

**Commented [A17]:** I'm not understanding the basis for this criticism.

### John Locke on Property

One of the political theorist that needs to be looked at and discussed when looking at the proper role and place that property has is John Locke. John Locke lived from 1632 to 1704 (Tuckness, 2012). John Locke is considered one of the most influential political philosophers in this day and age and had a resounding effect to the Constitution of the U.S. John Locke "argued that people have rights, such as the right to life, liberty, and

property that have a foundation independent of the laws of any particular society" (Tuckness, 2012, para. 1). In other words, Locke felt that man had natural rights which were Life, Liberty, and Estate (Syse, 2004). Locke felt that man was "naturally free and equal as part of the justification for understanding legitimate political government as the result of a social contract where people in the state of nature conditionally transfer some of their rights to the government" that way they could be safer and enjoy life, liberty and property (Tuckness, 2012, para. 1). Now by understanding this comma one can then look at the role and place that property played according to John Locke. Locke held three views in the role and place of property. Those were that man should "only appropriate as much as one can use before it spoils, one must leave enough and as good for other, and one may only appropriate property through one's own labor" (Tuckness, 2010). In other words, Locke felt that the ownership of property by man was fundamentally good for the government and society and that every man had a right as long as they had the means to own property.

### Criticism of Locke

When looking at John Locke and his views on the role and place that property takes within society, there is some criticism that can be said about his views. One area of concern in John Locke's view on property is that he felt that property was a right that was given to man by God. In other words, it seems that Locke is trying to gain support of his idea by using God as a basis for approval. Back ~~W~~ when Locke was presenting his views there was a lot more weight given to the thought of God. However, in today's time there are some that would agree with this notion that God intended land to be owned by man and others that no longer give much weight to the argument that God gives man rights (Thomson, 1976). With that said ~~[[one come]]~~ to another area of criticism based upon the thought of God giving man the right to own property. NEW PARAGRAPH One can look at what Locke wrote which was that "God made of the world to Adam, and to Noah, and his sons, it is very clear, that God, as king David says has given the earth to the children of men; given it to mankind in common" (Locke & Macpherson, 1689, p. 18). In other words, one could claim that Locke was wrong on his interpretation, because one could claim that the line 'to mankind in common' could mean that property is to be split evenly amongst man and not given to man based upon who has the means to owning the land. NEW PARAGRAPH Another area of criticism that one can give towards Locke's views on property is that Locke feels that property is only for people that have the means to own or have it. One can conclude that some would feel that it is unfair for people ~~[[to have land that have the means]]~~ grammar to have property. One could ask who gets to determine who has the means to own property. One could also conclude that someone that does not have property could

Commented [A18]: Good, but this is one view. Where are the other two?

Commented [A19]: Good!

Formatted: Strikethrough

Commented [A20]: So if one does not believe in God, does Locke's view of a natural right to property not hold?

Commented [A21]: Unclear

Commented [A22]: Interesting.

actually get upset and try to do things to the people that do indeed have property. In other words, one could argue that someone having property and another person not having property could lead to conflict between the different people.

### Marx on Property

The philosopher Marx needs to be looked at as well when looking at philosopher's that had strong views on the role and place of property within a community. Karl Marx lived between the time period of 1818 through 1883 (Cropsey, 1987). Karl Marx can be said to have helped shape Russia into what it is today in regards to his views on capitalism. One needs to have an understanding of Marx's views on capitalism in order to see how he felt in regards to the role of property in society. Marx felt that the main fault of capitalism centered around the production piece within a capitalist society, because he felt the person who owned the factory would get richer and the factory workers would get poorer (Cropsey, 1987). **NEW PARAGRAPH** Marx felt that the workers of the factory were being exploited by the rich people that actually ran the factories and as a result would fall deeper into despair. Marx felt that the factory owners would find a way to pay lower wages to the workers and cause the gap between the rich and the poor to grow (Marx, 2014). By looking at production within capitalism Marx felt that the workers would be affected in a few ways. The first way was that in capitalism the wages of the workers was very low (Wolff, 2002). **NEW PARAGRAPH** Second, Marx felt that the work that was being carried out was very hard and punishing (Marx, 2002). Since the work was very hard and punishing it actually meant that the workers had to "accept appalling conditions, leading to overwork and early death" (Wolff, 2002, p. 30). Third, the division of labor was "degraded and one sided" (Wolff, 2002, p. 30). A fourth reason was that labor actually became a commodity, and it was actually easy to buy and sell labor during Marx's time (Wolff, 2002). The last issue that Marx had with Capitalism was that a workers life was very dependent on the wealthy factory owners (Wolff, 2002). **NEW PARAGRAPH** By understanding this one can then look to see what views Marx held in regards to the role that property should play in society. By understanding the views that Marx had on capitalism one can then see that Marx is opposed to private ownership (Brenkert, 1979). Marx felt that property ownership actually created class struggle because the business owners were the ones that held power in a selfish manner. However, with that said Marx was not opposed to property ownership. Marx felt that everyone had natural rights and he felt that property should be owned, but he only supported property ownership in a common manner rather than in a capitalist manner (Chitty, 2013). Marx also felt that private property

**Commented [A23]:** Why is Marx "feeling" something while the previous thinkers are written in terms of their thinking and views. This suggests that Marx ideas are more emotion compared to the others.

**Commented [A24]:** Just to be clear, private ownership of the means of production. Not one's home.

actually alienates workers and to keep this from happening private property has to be dissolved.

### Criticism of Marx

There are some areas of criticism of Marx's ~~that can be given~~ on his views of the proper place of property. The first area of criticism Need citation that can be given towards Marx's views is that not allowing people to own property would cause people to not want to work hard. One could argue that not allowing anyone to have property without restrictions could actually cause people to just not care about what they do and give up. If people have to share property then what is the reason for someone to work hard and try to get ahead. With that said if someone does work hard and gets ahead in a capitalist society they are allowed to buy land and then use that land as they see fit. However, under Marx someone can't = No contractions in academic or formal writing. (e.g., don't => do not, can't => cannot). do this, thus meaning that people could possibly just do the bare minimum. NEW PARAGRAPH Another area of criticism Need citation that could be argued is that if property is limited in regards to production then it could result in items not being produced that people would like to get. This would mean that what is being produced would only be produced because it was good for the community as a whole. If this happens then items that are being produced for enjoyment or to make people happy might not be produced any more. When looking at Marx he felt that private property alienates workers and that it should not be allowed. However, one could argue that when one has private property it causes them to work harder and to work together with others to make sure their property is well taken care of. The last piece of criticism that could be given in regards to Marx's view is that when people don't have the right to have private property they will not be able to form their own identity. What one person wants might not necessary be what another person wants. Each person is different and by not allowing someone to have private property could cause them to lose the identity that they desire. In other words, not allowing people to have private property causes people to all be the same.

Formatted: Strikethrough

Commented [A25]: Is this your own point of view or an "area of criticism" you found in research?

Commented [A26]: I'm wondering if you are confusing private property for one's dwelling with private property for production.

Commented [A27]: How so?

Commented [A28]: This is interesting, but needs to be more specific.

Commented [A29]: Is there evidence for this? This needs support of some kind. Millions of people work there butts off with no hope for private ownership of land or a business or a house.

### Comparing and Contrasting the Philosophers Views on Property

By understanding the views of Plato, Locke, Hegel, and Marx one needs to see how their views are all similar and different from one another. The first major comparison that can be made by looking at the four philosophers is that all of them spent a great deal of time expressing their views on the role and place of property within society. When looking at the philosophers, the four philosophers can be grouped into two groups. Even though there are differences in the views of the members of each group, they have the most

similarities between the other philosophers that have been mentioned. The first group would be composed of Plato and Marx which would be called 'Opposing Property' because both opposed property ownership. The second group would be composed of Locke and Hegel which would be called 'Supporting Property' because both supported private property ownership. Obviously the difference between the two groups is that group 'Opposing Property' opposed private property ownership and the "Supporting Property" was in favor of private property ownership.

The first group of Plato and Marx have some similarities in which both philosophers opposed private property ownership because it would lead to the people owning property having more rights or taking advantage of other people within the society. Plato felt that if the guardian class had property then it would not be good for the community as a whole. Plato also felt that property must be held collectively because it would cause the community as a whole to be better (Breen, 2011). When looking at Marx he felt that allowing people to own property caused class struggle and the workers to become alienated. Marx also felt that property should be held communally and not individually. Thus meaning that both Marx and Plato felt that property must be held collectively because it would cause the community to run better because it would not lead to class struggles and the property owners and guardian class to take advantage of the lower classes. The difference between Plato and Marx is that Marx felt that property should not be owned in regards to production because it would cause the workers to be exploited.

The second group of Locke and Hegel also have some similarities in which both philosophers supported private property ownership. Hegel felt that people owning property was a way for them to express themselves and people had this right because they were free. Locke on the other hand felt that people should be allowed to own private property. However, Locke felt that man should be allowed to have private property as long as they had the means to own the property. The main difference between Locke and Hegel is that they had different views on why and how people should be allowed to own property. Hegel felt that man could claim property and as long as others accepted this it would be the person that claims it. Whereas Locke felt that man should be allowed to have property as long as they had the means to owning the property. Locke also felt that allowing people to own property was good for the government.

Now by understanding the major differences between the two groups and the similarities and differences within the groups one needs to understand a few other things about the philosophers. One is that many have claimed that if Locke would not have come about with his push towards capitalism then Marx would not have

Commented [A30]: Good.

Commented [A31]: Good.

Commented [A32]: Who?

Commented [A33]: How did Locke push us toward capitalism. Locke lived in agrarian society.

had the ground work for his views on the way that government and property should be carried out. The major difference between the two is that Marx felt that the community would work better if there was-were not private property ownership because property was at the middle of all disputes (Brenkert, 1979). However, Locke felt that the community would work better if man owned property as long as they had the means to that property. Another major difference is that Locke felt that man should be able to work for their property, where Marx's felt that property caused people to become alienated between one another and drove the classes of people further apart from one another.

**Commented [A34]:** This link needs to be explained. There are certainly links between Locke and Marx, but I'm unclear on how Locke pushed toward capitalism.

**Commented [A35]:** Good! And not just property but class.

### **Which Philosopher Has the Strongest Argument towards Property**

By having an understanding of each philosopher one can then look to see which philosopher has the strongest argument towards the views of property. Based upon the information presented one can see that John Locke has the strongest argument on the proper place of private property. The reason why is because in Locke's views property was a right that everyone had as long as they had the means. By allowing people to have property if they have the means would make the people within the community work harder because they have something to work towards. If one does not have something to work towards then one will not have a reason to do anything like work, go to school, or anything that they could do to make themselves better. Locke's views on property clearly show that it would actually help build the community into a strong and thriving community. Even though one could argue that Locke's views on property could lead to conflict between the people that have the means of property ownership and the people that don't have the means of property ownership it is still the strongest argument. The reason is because even though there could be conflict the people that don't have the means of property would want to work harder to get property.

**Commented [A36]:** Key.

**Commented [A37]:** This idea has been repeated several times in your paper without any scholarly support.

The reason why Hegel, Plato, and Marx are not the strongest arguments presented is because all three's arguments could actually cause more conflict within the community rather than helping build the community. Hegel felt that people could have property as long as they made claim to the property. However, an issue with this is that it could cause problems in the event that people did not agree with the person that claimed the property. Both Marx and Plato felt that property should be held in a communal manner which could cause conflict and hurt the community because people are not working for what they want. Thus meaning that Locke does indeed have the strongest argument for property.

### **Conclusion**

In political philosophy there are many people that can be studied and looked at with the views that they have on many different topics. When looking at political philosophy it is very important to understand the views that philosophers have in regards to the proper place of property in communities. By looking at Plato, Locke, Hegel, and Marx one can see that Locke has the best argument in regards to the proper place of property within the community because it was better for everyone involved. Locke had the best views on property because he felt that people should be allowed to have property as long as they had the means to the property.

## References

- Arnhart, Larry. (2002). *Political Questions: Political Philosophy from Plato to Rawls*. [Kindle Edition] New York: Waveland Press, Inc.
- Breen, Sheri. (2011). Citizens, Agriculture and Property in Plato's Republic and More's Utopia. University of Minnesota, Morris. Retrieved September 23, 2015 from [http://www.academia.edu/744585/Citizens\\_Agriculture\\_and\\_Property\\_in\\_Platos\\_Republic\\_and\\_Mores\\_Utopia](http://www.academia.edu/744585/Citizens_Agriculture_and_Property_in_Platos_Republic_and_Mores_Utopia)
- Brenkert, George. (1979). Freedom and Private Property in Marx. *Philosophy & Public Affairs*, 8(2), 122-147.
- Chitty, Andrew. (2013). Recognition and Property in Hegel and the Early Marx. *Ethical Theory and Moral Practice*, 16(4), 685-697. doi:<http://dx.doi.org/10.1007/s10677-013-9408-5>
- Cropsey, Joseph. (1987). Karl Marx. In L. Strauss & J. Cropsey (Ed), *History of Political Philosophy 3<sup>rd</sup> Ed.* (pp. 802-828) Chicago: The University of Chicago Press.
- Hassner, Pierre. (1987). Georg W. F. Hegel. In L. Strauss & J. Cropsey (Ed), *History of Political Philosophy 3<sup>rd</sup> Ed.* (pp. 732-760) Chicago: The University of Chicago Press.
- Law, Stephen. (2014). *The Great Philosophers: The Lives and Ideas of History's Greatest Thinkers*. [Kindle Edition], London, UK. Quercus
- Locke, John, & Macpherson, C. B. (1689). *Second Treatise of Government*. [Kindle Edition] Indianapolis, IN. Hackett Publishing.
- Marx, Karl. (2014). *Das Kapital*. [Kindle Edition] Chicago: First Rate Publishers.
- Strauss, Leo. (1987). Plato. In L. Strauss & J. Cropsey (Ed), *History of Political Philosophy 3<sup>rd</sup> Ed.* (pp. 33-89) Chicago: The University of Chicago Press.
- Syse, Henrik. (2004). *Natural Law, Religion, and Rights: An Exploration of the Relationship Between Natural Law and Natural Rights, With Special Emphasis on the Teachings of Thomas Hobbes and John Locke*. New York, NY. St. Augustines Press.
- Thomson, Judith. (1976). Property Acquisition. *The Journal of Philosophy*, 73(18), 664-666.
- Tuckness, Alex. (2010). Locke's Political Philosophy. *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*. Retrieved September 19, 2015 from <http://plato.stanford.edu/entries/locke-political/#LawNat>
- Wolff, Jonathan. (2002). *Why Read Marx Today?* Oxford, NY: Oxford University Press.