

Social Contract: A Comparision of Hobbes, and Locke

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Abstract

The social contract in political philosophy is an agreement between rulers and the ruled. Man is in a state of nature and is governed by natural laws. Man's nature according to Hobbes and Locke is different. According to the needs of man, and for self-preservation, the man signs a social contract and constitutes a sovereign government. Hobbes constitutes a legal sovereign. Locke theory leads to a political sovereign. The overview of the classical social contract is articulated in their works: Hobbes's Leviathan, and Locke's Two Treatise on Civil Government. The aim of this article is to compare the two social contract philosophers.

Words: Social Contract, state of nature Human nature, absolute sovereign, political obligation, life, liberty, and property, representative form of government.

The social contract theory refers to an agreement amongst men who relinquish the hypothetical state of nature and, enter a civil society by signing a contract. Thomas Hobbes [1588-1679], and John Locke [1632-1704] were the exponents of the social contract theory. Social contract theorists address the following issues: the reasons why individuals do, indeed ought to, consent to the state's exercise of coercive powers; the notion of consent itself as a legitimating condition for state authority; what exactly agents consent to. What differentiates the social contract theorists is political obligation and their attempt to justify and delimit political authority on the grounds of individual self-interest and rational consent. By comparing the advantages of organized government with the disadvantages of the state of nature, they showed why and under what conditions government is useful and ought to be acceptable by reasonable people as voluntary obligation. The theories of social contract differed according to their purpose leading to different types of sovereigns.

Sovereignty refers to the supreme legal authority which is an essential element of the state. It is by the virtue of this authority that a state can make binding laws, command obedience to its orders, punish those who fail to abide by law or obey its orders. Only

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