

Hobbes and lockes legitimate political authority

[Science](#), [Social Science](#)



Hobbes's and Locke's legitimate political authority based on the consent

Introduction Hobbes and Locke have contributed significantly to the field of political science. Both theorists tend to have similar views with regard to where power emanates in the society. They both support the constitution or popular contract as an avenue where the people give the power to rule.

Hobbes and Locke reiterate that the people have the power to grant authority to govern and that authority belongs with the people. However, between the two theorists, it is Locke who is recognized to have a greater influence on the modern political science. Conversely, Hobbes's influence is evident on what the people can do to change their government (Sigmuid, 1971)

Similarities and differences between Hobbes and Locke

Both Hobbes and Locke agree that the government is a necessity. As reiterated by Hobbes, people form government for purposes of self-preservation. In any society, the creation of government is often perpetuated by fear. However, Hobbes is against limited government and supports absolute sovereignty since limited government is not sufficient in terms of safeguarding citizen's right to self-preservation. In essence, absolute power as addressed by Hobbes arises when citizens give power to an individual or group of individuals. Consequently, the sovereign has the mandate to, for instance, wage war, impose taxes or declare peace. Hobbes further believes that establishing a government is necessary resorting to the state of nature. Hobbes also maintains that a government plays a role in preserving citizen's lives (Hobbes, 1994). Locke believes in a government that is established by the people and works for the people. However, such a government does not

create absolute sovereignty as posited by Hobbes. Locke also asserts that the people have a right to change a government that does not respect natural laws and human rights. On the other hand, while Hobbes and Locke recognize the importance of having a government, they differ on the amount of government and ruling respectively (Dunn, 1969).

With regards to rights and equality, Hobbes believes in the right of self-preservation. He also reiterates that men are equal in terms of their physical and mental capabilities. As such, the weak in the society can establish confederacies to defeat the strongest. Similarly, Hobbes also suggests that each man is in a position to agree to be governed and make their choice based on survival instincts. Conversely, Locke believes in inalienable right that include, for instance, right to life, property ownership and liberty that allows man to pursue happiness. On another note, while Hobbes considers humanity in individualistic terms, Locke views humanity to be more communal. The inalienable rights as posited by Locke ensure that governments respect the natural laws (Dunn, 1969).

Conclusion

While Locke's views tend to be similar with Hobbes, he appears not to accept man's nature (pessimistic and egoistical) as described by Hobbes. In essence, the governments described by both theorists appear to be similar, but in actual sense, they are different. Further, Hobbes and Locke also differ with regard to their view of sovereign power. While Hobbes is against mixing of the power, Locke allows for mixes between different forms of government, for instance, tyranny, anarchy and oligarchy.

References

<https://assignbuster.com/hobbes-and-lockes-legitimate-political-authority/>

Dunn, J. (1969). *The Political Thought of John Locke: An Historical Account of the Argument*

of the Two Treatises of Government. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Hobbes, T. (1994). *Leviathan*. Cambridge: Hackett Publishing Company

Sigmuid, P. E. (1971). *Natural Law in Political Thought*. Washington, D. C.:

Winthrop

Publishers, Inc.