

# John locke v thomas hobbes



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Locke and Hobbes both had detailed accounts as to what the state of nature is. I will start with Hobbes and what he felt the state of nature is made up of. Hobbes believed in defining the state of nature as what it is instead of what it ought to be. So he focused in on the nature of people and came to a very descriptive conclusion as to how survive in this particular state of nature. He stated that man was equal in ambition, cruelty, and treachery, which in turn makes humans equal in the ability to kill each other. This is important because he believes that people can not live in peace in the state of nature because of those reasons. Also because of this he states that there are three principals of quarrels; competition, diffidence, and glory. Hobbes feels that because of human nature these three reasons to fight would take over and make the state of nature a state of war. Locke also has an opinion to the state of nature. He feels that men would respond to things and people around them with reason and rationality. Therefore he feels that a state of nature for the most part peaceful and pleasant. He also states that the natural law would guide humans in a state of nature. He thinks that people know right from wrong and are capable of doing both but it is upon the individual to carry out these values. In order to deal with the state of nature each of the two suggests a social contract. Whatever the contract is should be the obligations placed upon the people. They both believe in this particular agreement they just differ as to who it should be between. Hobbes speaks of the Leviathan and believes that the contract should be between the ruled and the ruler. He states that a strong ruler is the only way to enforce the social contract. He says that all me are born with three rights: the right to property, liberty, and life. He believes that the only important right is the right to life because without that right you cannot have a chance

to enjoy the other two. So his contract consists of the subjects giving up the other two to the Leviathan so that he can ensure the right to life. Locke's social contract differs in many ways. One of them is Locke does not believe that individuals should not give up liberty, but instead give up the right to punish people who commit wrongdoings and leave that up to an overwhelming force, in this case the popular sovereignty. His belief of the state of nature which is that man would use their reasoning and be rational when dealing with other people. So his contract is between the elected and the people. Locke and Hobbes social contract may be different but in ways they are similar. They both believe in revolt if the contract is broken, but they state it differently. Hobbes believes in the monarch so the revolt against him would be different than Locke's society of popular sovereignty, but in short it both of them called for persecution in such case. Still the case that called for persecution would naturally be different because of the different types of governments these men called for. For example Locke says it is time to revolt when a ruler tries to get absolute power of the people; but Hobbes states that the Leviathan needs to have absolute power and the only time to revolt is if the monarch is not able to protect the people he rules over.

Hobbes explains the relationship between the subjects and ruler as do what you told and you will not be killed. This means that these people could not say anything about the way the sovereign is running the kingdom or you are subject to death. This is so in the way Hobbes looked at it because the only way to control the people is a state strong enough to persecute someone for this particular reason. The monarch that Hobbes feels is the only way to govern should not be questioned by anyone as so long he is able to protect the people of the land. Locke's view of the relationship is really different.

Based on the concept of popular sovereignty the sovereign are the people; so the relationship is more give and take or democratic. This is a very important concept to Locke's ideas because this is what differs him the most from Hobbes. His democracy is broken down into three branches; executive, legislative, and federal. The elected officials in these positions are an extension of the people so the people who make up the state serves the people until the people are tired of them. What Hobbes and Locke say about people moving into a political society from a state of nature is pretty similar and all most the same. Both say that contracts between people were necessary, but the dilemma in that is that in a state of nature there is no one to enforce the contracts between people. Both of them thought about this concept and figured that in order to move in to a political society someone was needed to enforce these contracts. Hobbes believes that the only one strong enough to force contracts is the monarch. Locke believes the same thing about someone being strong enough to force the contracts but he thinks it should be the elected doing so. Locke's two treatises limited sovereignty more so than it has before. Locke called for a separation of powers. He broke it down into three sections and combined it with the popular sovereignty; therefore the many limitations were in place. I believe Locke included this idea into his first and second treatise because he wanted to not allow the abuse of power that is so evident in a monarchy. This is important because this is what our American system of democracy is based upon. Hobbes system of government there is very little limitation. The only limitation I can see is when the monarch does not provide for the security of the people and they revolt. Though that limitation is called upon by Hobbes the rest of the terms of the monarch have no limitations. The monarch is the

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ruler and no one can go against him because he is the divine and going against him is going against god. So the limitations of a monarch are pretty much nonexistent in Hobbes's *The Leviathan*. The rights of the subjects according to Hobbes are the right to live and that is it. The other rights now belong to the Leviathan; this is needed according to Hobbes to ensure security. A monarch that gives too many rights to the people is too weak to defend them. This is so because if the monarch is questioned a lot it takes away the fear of the ruler. Hobbes says that fear is needed to keep the people in check. Therefore a sovereign must practice a policy known as shock and awe. Without this strategy someone would feel that they might be able to challenge the monarch. So rights that the subjects hold on the sovereign are limited to the right to revolt if the monarch fails to protect them. Locke thinks that people should hold more rights to the elected. The subjects have the right to put people in the state and take them out. Locke gives people the right to liberty and property. This is different from Hobbes because Hobbes said to give those rights up. Locke says that you can have rights that Hobbes said would not work in transforming into a political society. Hobbes says that subjects cannot ensure that the sovereign rules for the greater good. Because if they are alive it is the greater good according to Hobbes; so what can they do to ensure that the ruler is operating for the greater good? According to Hobbes nothing because you cannot go against the Leviathan on how he is ruling, and to do so can result in you getting killed. So once again the subject has very little to say in the Hobbes ideology. Locke also has a conflicting view with Hobbes on this ability to check the sovereign to make sure he is operating for the good of the people. The main thing that allows them to ensure what the government doing is right is the

ability bring charges against any wrongdoings. This is powerful because it does not only kick those people out of office but also brings persecution to them. Another powerful way to make sure government is doing the right thing is the ability to vote or not to vote for people who make up the state. Both Locke and Hobbes are modern political philosophers with different ways of reaching the same objective. Their objective is to transform a state of nature into a political society. Though they disagree on what a state of nature is and they disagree on which is the better political society, but both were apparently right. This is so because both of the philosophies can be applied to life today, which is in a whole different context of their time.