

The and he wrote: "i
put forth



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The concept of equality is significant in the discussion of liberty, property, and the role of government in the lives of people.

This is seen in tribal groups as well as in oppressive societies wherein political leaders treat the people under them as if they were mere objects. Thomas Hobbes and John Locke are two of the best philosophical minds during the Age of Reason and they both had differing opinions with regards to the subject of equality. Hobbes argued that there is no practical application to the concept of equality. He said it can only lead to chaos.

Locke on the other hand can only envision a prosperous and stable society when all men are treated equal.

Hobbes

Thomas Hobbes was born into a continent embroiled in a bloody civil war. The brutality of war led Hobbes to the conclusion that men are like animals that needed to be controlled.

Hobbes went even further and said that there was a need for some form of coercive power that should force people to do what is right. Equality

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according to Hobbes is seen in the equal use of power needed to force men to do the right thing. Hobbes was clearly bothered and terrified by the prospects of war that he was willing to justify whatever coercive action that a leader needed to impose on people. This is for the simple purpose of creating a stable government and the creation of a prosperous nation under the rule of law.

However, the use of a compelling force means that men and women must be prepared for coercion and the loss of freedom. They have to accept the fact that a superior power has to rule over them. This absolute power has the authority to do what it pleases in terms of deciding the fate of a town, community or individual. In other words the judgement is final. There can be no appeals. It is therefore a system that can easily produce a dictator. Aside from that there is the danger of increasing the power of the dictator and he can no longer remain as the arbiter and guardian of the people. He will become the absolute ruler of his domain.

Hobbes even made a clear argument that the people who are under this regime must not do anything to upset the balance of power. The citizens must learn to submit meekly and without question because this is the only assurance that peace and stability can be achieved. Freedom of expression and creativity is stifled for the greater good. Equality according to Hobbes is all about the equal distribution of man's capability and propensity to destroy one another.

This form of equality Hobbes accepts to be the main reason why men and women must not be allowed to do as they please. According to Hobbes

equality among men is seen in their common desire for destruction and power and he wrote: " I put forth a general inclination of all mankind, a perpetual and restless desire of power after power that ceaseth only in death" (Hobbes, p. 58). In Hobbes' mind men are equal only in their ability to destroy and subdue one another.

Locke

When Locke began to write down his ideas, the world has undergone a tremendous transformation as it tried to break away from its mediaeval past. Locke and his contemporaries are therefore more confident to go against established ideas about politics and social life.

While Hobbes preferred to surrender human rights and offer people freedom under an absolute ruler, Locke on the other hand made his disagreement known. Locke cannot accept the fact that kings and queens are given blanket authority over people's lives. Locke said it is against the natural order of things that men should become the slave of another. Locke was one of the first to elucidate that there is no such thing as a divine right to rule, no one was born to be a king and rule over others with an iron hand. Locke could not accept Hobbes proposition that only absolutism can establish a progressive and stable government. Although Hobbes and Locke differed in their perspective of equality both men are in agreement when it comes to the necessity of a State. They also agree that man should be under the authority of a just ruler. The only difference is that Hobbes did not give provide an avenue to resist against acts of despotism.

Locke is in agreement only as long as the government's role is limited to the management of the collective rights of people for the establishment of an egalitarian society. Hobbes' fear of chaos and utter destruction due to incessant warfare is matched by Locke's fear of dictatorship and abuse of power. Locke also argued that absolutism as a form of government can easily lead to the corruption of the government. It is therefore important that Locke is able to shoot down the argument that monarchs have the divine mandate to rule. In the 21st century Locke's view has been proven to be closer to the ideal form of government needed to create a stable and prosperous society. It is therefore interesting to note that when Locke completed his treatise there was no other form of government that he could have used to prove his point. European societies are only familiar with the monarchical form of governance.

Absolutism is the main feature of European governments. It is therefore important to point out the source of knowledge that Locke utilized to help him arrive at his conclusions with regards to equality. It is not surprising to know that part of his understanding of politics has a theological basis. Locke used the Bible to prove that even in the very beginning there was nothing that could provide any basis to the claim that there are those who are born to subjugate others and that there are those destined to be under the control of another human being. Locke argued the following points and he wrote: "Adam had not, either by natural right of fatherhood or by positive donation from God, any such authority over his children, nor dominion over the world, as is pretended... That if he had, his heirs yet had no right to it" (Locke, p. 1). It was an idea that did not take effect soon enough but later on it became

the basis for freedom loving people who found a way to prove that indeed all men and women are created equal (Burke, p. 347).

The conceptual framework that Locke presented is easy to grasp. He was referring to the basis of traditional lineal authority and his writing proves that there is none. A present day King does not have the mandate from heaven. He does not have authority to rule over another person. It must be made clear that Locke did not talk about a leaderless society but a society governed by laws and the King himself is under that law. Locke made a clarification that rules are not changed based on the caprice and whim of the ruler but it is based the rule of law. Everyone is under the law and no one is above it. This is the only way to live under a society with rules and yet never in danger of someday being under the absolute control of a despot.

Conclusion

It would be impossible to understand Hobbes' and Locke's assertion regarding equality without considering the context of the times. Hobbes was justified in his understanding of equality because he saw people killing each other on a regular basis. The destructive nature of war was so real that Hobbes sought a way out of it.

For him a life under absolutism is better than a life of constant warfare. Locke on the other hand lived in a time when rulers and powerful monarchs are so corrupt that it spurred him to write against their abuses. Locke's arguments were way ahead of his time because for centuries, absolutism has been accepted as the only method to effectively govern men. Thus, the

modern world and democratic governments are indebted to Locke and his treatise.

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