

Social contrast essay



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Social contract defines a broad category of philosophies that explains ways by which people strive to establish states with the aim of upholding social order. The idea here is that individuals resign power to a government in order for social order to be established and maintained through the rule of law.

It can be viewed as a consensus by those that are being governed on regulations by which they should be governed (Jenson, p. 22). This theory established a key pillar in the idea that governance be based on the agreement of those that are being governed. This is the idea of ' the government by the people for the people.

The initial point for most of these philosophies is a heuristic view of the human nature without the prearranged social order. This is what is referred to as the " state of nature. " When a person is in this kind of state, his acts are only regulated by his own individual power, controlled by conscience. It is from this basic state that different theorist come up with explanations aimed at understanding the reasons why people give up this power to a structured government in order to benefit from social order. Two of the most famous theorists who dealt with this topic were Thomas Hobbes and John Locke. Despite of beginning from the same point, the philosophers came to different conclusions.

While Hobbes was an advocate for authoritarian monarchy, Locke was in favor of a liberal monarchy (Jenson, p. 28). This paper provides a comparison of social contract theories of Hobbes and Locke. The ideas of Thomas Hobbes and John Locke have influenced governance from their time to date.

They have shaped government structures all through history and continue to do so even in the modern time. The two philosophers view governance from very different perspectives but on a similar foundation. The two of them employ reason in their ideas instead of divine right. Despite the fact that the two of them acknowledge the existence of a God, He played a very minor role in their thinking. Each of the philosophers influenced the world in his own unique way. The US Declaration of Independence, the American Constitution and the Federalist papers were influenced by the philosophy of Locke.

Hobbes ideologies disproved England's parliament. The two were in agreement that some forms of leadership would be essential, whether it is totalitarian or democratic. There is no society that can exist without a form of governance. They both agreed to the fact that social order cannot be achieved within a society without a form of governance (Jenson, p. 72-74).

Despite the fact that the two philosophers were in agreement concerning some aspects, the ideas differed greatly. One of the differences is evident in the type of government and ruler that a state required for social order to be achieved. As already mentioned while Hobbes was an advocate for authoritarian monarchy, Locke was in favor of a liberal monarchy. Hobbes held the belief that a leader with absolute power was necessary.

Locke on the other hand held to the belief that people should have a part to play in how they are governed. Locke was a strong advocate of human rights. He argued that it was the right of the people to overthrow a government that did not fulfill their needs. The leader was supposed to be

for the people and by the people, and not any other way. On the other hand Hobbes was more negative.

He held that once the people gave up their power to a leader, there would be no turning back. The leader earned total power and would not be overthrown. He believed that this relinquishing of authority was the only way that people were able to come out of the 'state of nature' and create societies. He advocated for totalitarian, where the ruler in the absolute end and people had to contend with the style of leadership chosen by the leader.

In this kind of governance there is no respect for human rights and freedoms. This is unlike with the ideas of Locke, where fundamental human rights would be respected in governance (Jenson, p. 138). The views of the two on the human nature were different. Hobbes believed that human nature is typified by a continuous drive for felicity.

He held that human beings always desire something and it is only after the fulfilling of these desires that felicity can be achieved. The desires act as a force that drives human beings. Power is thus as a result of the need to gain what a person desires. In his description man is a free individual whose major concern is himself. Locke on the other hand does offer a clear elaboration of the human nature.

For him, there is a God who is the maker of the earth and the human life. He claims that there is no way this creator would only . make man who is purely egoistic. There are aspects of morality towards other as a way of preserving humanity. Hobbes claims that in the state of nature people lived a solitary,

deprived, nasty and a short life. In this state the lack of rights and contracts is what accounted for the lack of social order (Jenson, p.

90). Locke was also a believer in the social contract and the state of nature, but his ideas were different from those of Hobbes. He believed that it was possible for people to live in the state of nature. The reason why this was possible was because in that condition people were equal and their conscience would control them.

He believed that the state of war and the state of nature were the same. This is another area that Locke differed with Hobbes. He believed that individuals could exist without a ruler by using reason. The state of war in this case would take place where people forced things on one another.

He claimed that in such a point it was the right of the people to start a war a means of self defense (Jenson, p. 83). Locke has an optimistic perspective. He viewed humankind as a good, independent and equal from the time he is born. His theory is strong in that he believed that people could comprehend things from experience. The theory also holds that people are beings who are able to learn from their mistakes and interact with one another to improve their lives.

The theory also holds that there is morality in every person and that they are not inherently as evil as held by Hobbes. The theory is also positive for advocating for democracy. The weakness of this theory comes out where Locke believes that it is possible to live without a ruler. Regardless of the reason and conscience it is not possible especially in a complex society to live without a leader (Jenson, p.

112). Hobbes held that human beings just like other animals, were fearful and predatory. The weakness of the theory is the belief that man was evil and that he is always in opposition with those of his kind. Despite the fact that there are some aspects of evil in humanity, it would be wrong to conclude that this is the basic aspect of humanity. It is true that human beings have desires, but it is untrue for the Hobbes to claim that these desires are constant.

In this theory, there is no respect for human rights. The theory also advocated for war as a defense mechanism. Both theories are strong in that they provided a justification for the availability of different forms of government in the world (Jenson, p. 102).

Conclusion The social contract theory has influenced governance for a long time. Theory can be applied even today in the formation of government. Social contract explains why it is not possible for a state to be without a government. Social contract justifies the strictures of government available in the world today. All the forms are among those put forward by the founders of the theory.