

Critically analyze the social contract theory of Hobbes, Locke and Rousseau.

Introduction:

Thomas Hobbes, John Locke and Jean Jacques Rousseau are one of the renowned philosophers of their time.

Firstly, Hobbes had given his social contract theory in which he gave all the powers to the state. Then, Locke gave his theory of social contract in which he gave powers to the government but the rights to life, liberty and property are inherent to man. Then, Rousseau gave his social contract theory in which he explained that through 'general will' man gives power to a sovereign body but his rights are inherited and should be protected. The theories of all three of philosophers were applicable at that time.

Social Contract Theory.

In social contract theory, people through their common consent give all the powers to king, who is sovereign. People are obliged to show obedience to king, while ~~king~~ the responsibility of king is to provide protection to the people. Hobbes, Locke, and Rousseau had different philosophies regarding social contract theory which is given below.

Hobbes' Social Contract Theory

1. State of Nature:

Hobbes had drawn a very gloomy picture of man, that by nature man is selfish, cruel, nasty who just thought about himself for his self-interest, he can go to any extent. He may even start a war for his selfishness.

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2. Social Contract is absolute:

According to Hobbes, social contract between king and people should be in a manner that, people should give all the power to the king even their rights, while king would provide protection.

3. Absolute sovereignty of king:

According to Hobbes, king is sovereign and possessed the ultimate power. ^{The} King is considered to be a law and nobody is above law.

4. No right to revolution:

In social contract theory of Hobbes, no right was given to people for any revolution. If their rights are at stake, they had to bear it. They can call for revolution only for self-defence and when king gives life threats.

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5. Freedom and Liberty of individuals:

People were exempted with all kinds of rights to freedom, speech and property. In the social contract theory of Hobbes, they have the duty to obey the government unconditionally.

6. Absolutism:

Hobbes promoted the absolutism by concentrating all the powers i.e. executive, legislature and judiciary in one body i.e. king and absolute powers were vested in him.

7. Critical Analysis:

Hobbes was criticized on drawing a very gloomy picture of man and on giving absolute powers to the king. As, Lord Acton said, "Power corrupts, and

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absolute power corrupts absolutely"

So, he may take the shape of dictator.

Locke's Social Contract Theory

1. State of nature:

About the state of nature, Locke was of the view that man is happy and enjoying as in "Golden Age". They are conducting their duties in a way to help each other and to make themselves happy.

2. Specific and limited contract:

Social contract given by the Locke was specific and limited. State is obliged to provide the basic rights to all the citizens.

3. Limited Sovereignty:

king was ~~to~~ given the limited sovereignty, as he is not

considered above law. He was restricted to provide all the basic rights to people.

4. Right of Revolution:

People were given the right to revolution, if their rights are not being preserved. They can overthrow the king, if he is not obliging to his duties.

5. Freedom and liberty of Individuals:

According to Locke's, it is the inherent rights i.e. freedom, liberty, speech, property, which nobody can take from people. So, all the citizens were granted freedom and liberty.

6. Critical Analysis:

Locke has devised the ideal state of nature, which does not exist in this world.

Rousseau's Social Contract

Theory:

1. State of Nature:

Rousseau had considered the state of nature of human as untended, self-sufficient and equal. He thought that man is not too happy and too sad. He is in the middle stage.

2. Social contract based on general will:

Rousseau had devised his social contract on the basis of general will which is the mutual consent of people to the community, to each other. They surrendered to their collective will and got their improved form.

3. Sovereignty and General will:

Rousseau was of the view that sovereignty is not

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vested with the ruler, but it is vested in the people, based on their general will.

4. Rights and duties of people:

People were granted with all their rights i.e. freedoms, liberty, and the right to have private property.

5. Right to Revolution:

As, people surrendered in front of their general will. It means that if their rights are not granted, people can overthrow the ruler.

6. Critical Analysis:

Rousseau was criticised on his idea of Direct democracy and he had not explained the general will.

Conclusion:

Social contract theory given by Hobbes, Locke and Rousseau were devised to form some kind of government. There were some difference in their social contract. But they were applicable to their times according to the political situation.