

Q. What is the difference of between Rousseau's notion of the state of nature and that of Hobbes, and Locke?

Introduction

Jean-Jacques Rousseau saw man as a noble savage, and favored a constitutional, social democracy in an elected republic where the "general will" of the sovereign people can never diverge from the will of the leader and be legitimate, with government size and climate dictating the perfect mixed form of government for a given "political body", and with voting ensuring consent via free elections.

John Locke said people have natural rights (they are naturally equality and natural liberty, but trade some of this in the civil state via social contract). He favored constitutional monarchy / voter-based representative democracy by consent based on man's natural ^{right} life to life, liberty, health, property, and consent (man's natural and inalienable legal rights).

Thomas Hobbes said that the state of nature is a war of all-against-all. He favored conservative absolute monarchy to enforce the social contract. Unlike Locke and Rousseau, Hobbes says that the people don't have right to

Hobbes Vs Locke Vs Rousseau: The State of Nature

Hobbes (1588-1679)	Locke (1632-1704)	Rousseau (1712-1778)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> o Solitary life o Warfare against all o Life is poor, nasty, brutish and short o No sovereign to provide protection against others 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> o Social life o Not a state of war o Humans possess freedom, equality, and natural rights preserved o No common authority to mediate disputes 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> o Solitary life o Little conflict between humans o Humans possess freedom and do not naturally subjugate others o No common authority.

Humans in State of Nature

Hobbes	Locke	Rousseau
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> o Rational o Fearful o Lack Power o Subjective o Scarcity of Resources o Right of all against all 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> o Rational o Self preserving but usually not other-harming o Selfish when disputes arise 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> o Not rational o No forethought o Not self-conscious o Robust and strong bodies o Driven by desire o Happy

Rousseau State of Nature: In comparison to Locke and Hobbes

1. Human Nature saw humans in the state of nature as inherently good and compassionate. He believed they lived in a harmony with themselves and their surroundings, lacking the artificial desires and social hierarchies that lead to conflict. Hobbes believed that humans in the state of nature were driven by self-preservation and a relentless desire for power. This led to a constant state of conflict and competition. Locke argued that humans in state of nature were rational and capable of recognizing natural rights (life, liberty, Property). Conflicts could arise but could be resolved through reason.

2. Social Contract

Rousseau social contract aimed to restore freedom and equality lost with the advent of society. It involved individuals coming together to form a collective body politic where they are both sovereign and subject at same time, guided by general will. Hobbes saw the social contract as a mean to escape the chaos and brutality of state of nature by establishing a sovereign

authority (Leviathan) that would maintain order through absolute power. Locke viewed the social contract as a way to protect natural rights, and government authority would be limited to preserving them.

3- Inequality

Rousseau criticized inequality, particularly social and economic inequality resulting from private property and unequal distribution of wealth and power. He saw it as a corrupting force that leads to societal conflict and moral degradation. Both Hobbes and Locke acknowledged inequality as a natural consequence of differences in ability, effort and property ownership. They viewed it as manageable through just political institutions.

4- Natural Rights

Rousseau was critical of the concept of natural rights, arguing that they were artificial and derived from society rather than inherent in individuals. He focused more on general will and collective freedom. Locke identified natural rights (life, liberty and property) that individuals possessed in state of nature and argued that government exists to protect these rights. Hobbes did not emphasize natural rights in the traditional sense. He believed

individuals surrendered their rights to Sovereign in exchange for security.

5. Role of Government

Rousseau envisioned a government based on the general will of the people, where individuals participate directly in decision-making to ensure their collective interests are represented. Locke believed in a limited government whose authority is derived from the consent of the governed and is bound to protect natural rights. Hobbes advocated for a strong, centralized Government (the Leviathan) with absolute authority to maintain order and prevent conflict.

6. Freedom

Rousseau viewed true freedom as achievable only through participation in the general will of the community, where individuals find their true selves in the collective decision-making process. Locke emphasized individual freedom and autonomy, protected by a Government that respects natural rights and operates with the consent of the governed.

Hobbes saw freedom as the absence of external impediments to action, achievable only through authority of a sovereign power that provides security.

7. State of Conflict:

Rousseau argued that the state of nature was a peaceful and harmonious condition where individuals lived in equality and mutual respect, free from inequalities and conflicts of civilized society. Locke acknowledged potential conflicts in the state of nature but believed they could be resolved through reason and adherence to natural rights. Hobbes believed the state of nature was a perpetual state of conflict of war due to human selfishness and pursuit of power.

8. Conclusion

In conclusion, in Rousseau's concept of state of nature, life of a man is amoral, asocial and isolation. It was pre-social, and humans were living before emergence of civil society. Locke's state of nature was pre-social without any high political authority. Life was fragile and convenient. Hobbes state of nature was imaginary with historical past. Life was solitary, poor, nasty, brutish and short. Therefore, Hobbes and Locke saw the state of nature as a state of potential conflict necessitating a social contract to establish order and protect rights. Rousseau viewed it as a state of innocence and equality corrupted by social development.