

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

Answer Exordium

Rousseau, Hobbes and Locke presented different views on 'the state of nature'. Rousseau (1712-1778) was a French philosopher, he further discussed the state of nature in his influential work 'on the social contract; or 'the of political law'. Hobbes (1588-1679) give birth to the idea of social contract. He explained his perspective regarding social contract in 'Leviathan' which means 'sea monster'. Lastly, Locke (1632-1704) he criticized Hobbes social contract and state of nature. He highlighted different kind of social contract than Hobbes in his book, 'Two Treatises of Government'. They all explained very different state of nature and

presented three types of social contract.

Background of philosophies

Firstly, Hobbes was born in England in 1588. Before that Spain was powerful and the war between Spain and England brought England as powerful. Then, he witnessed civil war in 1642 when public took king Charles to death. These events presented him different kind of picture of human nature. Secondly, Locke influenced modern day US constitution and he was also from England. He took 'bloodless revolution' or 'Glorious revolution' in 1670s ^{and} 80s. He is the father of revolution in England. Thirdly, Rousseau emphasized on humans as innocent naturally. He witnessed the materialistic pursuit which corrupted the individuals and he based his theory on the same idea.

Here is a detailed analysis of how the Rousseau's notion 'of the nature of state' is different from Hobbes and Locke.

1- Human nature

Hobbes was very pessimistic regarding human nature. He presented man's nature is barbaric and uncivilized. He named his book as same 'Leviathan'. This depicts his view about nature of a human.

Locke was optimistic and he sees human as rational being. He focuses that humans are social and political. He gave references from bible, that 'Adam' the first man is evidence the man is social and political.

Rousseau was with the believe the man is very innocent by nature. The society and material pursuit corrupt him. He idealizes the raw man which was innocent.

2. Natural law

Hobbes defined that under natural law, man was living very difficult life. There was 'war of all against all'. There were chaos and man was fighting with others.

Locke viewed man as living happily. Nature give rights and people divide rights and lived peacefully under natural law.

Rousseau had same view like Locke but even go further that cave man was best. He idealized cave man as they were innocent and selfless. He targeted society to corrupt the innocence of cave man by giving the sense of 'property'.

3. Need of Sovereign

The sovereign was created to protect man from war and to bring peace at any cost.

Hobbes definition of sovereign is to control human from war.

Locke argued that sovereign was created to maintain natural law. Man was living peacefully but he was insecure and to protect natural law, sovereign was established.

Rousseau criticized that society took away the innocence of cave man. Now the selfishness of man bring chaos and to protect society from that chaos, sovereign is among them.

4- Duty of Sovereign

According to Hobbes sovereign must control humans, which are monsters. A state must appoint a big monster to control these small monsters. The duty of sovereign is to maintain law and order.

Locke mentioned the absence of executive, legislature and judiciary. So, sovereign will ~~may~~ interpret and implement natural law.

Sovereign is crucial according to Rousseau because it can convert 'selfish man' into 'love man' again.

5- Power of Sovereign

Hobbes gave full power to sovereign. If the result is peace then any kind of restriction can be put and freedom can be took.

Locke identified sovereign as responsible institution. He gave limited power to sovereign. Also, Rousseau gave very less power to sovereign because he focused on the 'general will'.

6- Social contract

Hobbes argued the individuals have to surrender full liberty to the sovereign if they wanted peace. A social contract where individuals surrender liberty and state will ensure peace for them.

However, Locke criticized the

view that individuals must not surrender their liberty. State must protect natural rights but not on the cost of liberty. Moreover, Rousseau is very bold in his views here. He says that not sovereign rather general will of individuals is a social contract. When they follow general will, it means they follow their own will so, they are free.

7- Right to Revolt

Hobbes did not give right to revolt because it will bring chaos. He favoured the authoritarianism of state.

Locke gave a right to revolt, the public has full right to remove the authority if they threat the natural rights of public.

Rousseau's concept of general will which is the will of individual and did not leave space

the need of revolt.

Criticism

Hobbes idea of surrender of liberty is criticized by Benjamin Franklin. He wrote, those who sacrifice liberty for security, deserve neither liberty nor security. Present day example of North Korea fits the ideology of Hobbes. The public surrendered liberty and one monster is controlling other small monsters.

Locke's views give base of US constitution and they have right to revolt if government did not perform well.

The best example of Rousseau's general will is Switzerland. They have executive to implement law. However, general public holds the power of legislature.

Denouement

The social contract and state of nature explained by

these three philosophers had their own pros and cons. It is evident that the followers of these social contracts are still visible in different states. One is in favour of authority of state to control public and bring peace. Other focused on limited authority and public as rational because they created sovereign to protect their rights. Whereas, one agreed on general will, role of individual as citizen and as subject both. Community surrender liberty to community itself. In short, Hobbes gave authority to state and Locke gave idea of indirect democracy. But, Rousseau gave direct democracy and role of general will.
