

In the realm of political science, the ideas and concepts introduced by the philosophers hold great value. Philosophers such as Thomas Hobbes, John Locke, Jean-Jacques Rousseau have introduced new notions about governments and how institutions should work to provide for the ordinary people. In this lure, their ideas become fundamentally important to students of political science, as they not only give a glimpse into the minds of the ordinary folk but also provide solutions for social problems. While their ideas may contrast with one another at some points, it cannot be denied that these ideas are worth pondering over as they can provide many solutions for prevalent modern problems. As such, it is significant to analyze the theories proposed by Hobbes, Locke, and Rousseau in their books *Leviathan*, *The Second Treatise on Government*, and *Basic Political Writings* respectively.

First of all, Thomas Hobbes and his writings in *Leviathan* must be considered. Hobbes wrote *Leviathan* after the beheading of King Charles I and the book was written in defense of the authority held by the monarchs of old. Thomas Hobbes was of the view that a singular figure of authority is necessary to impose peace on all people. He said that in any state, all human beings are equal creatures which means that everyone was free to take any means necessary to survive. This creates a condition where mankind is stifled with “continued fear and danger of violent death; and the life of man [was] solitary, poor, nasty, brutish, and short”¹. Thus, according to him, it is important to have a supreme authority that maintains peace over the people. Hobbes argues in *Leviathan* that a social contract is formed between a sovereign and the people. According to this contract, the people of a state give up their right to the monarch, and in turn, the said monarch would make laws and ensure that these people coexist in a peaceful manner. Thus, Hobbes believed in the supreme power of the monarchy since it would help maintain peace among the people.

¹ Hobbes, *Leviathan*.

However, these ideas were not appreciated by philosophers like Locke. While Locke generally agreed about the nature of human beings as described by Hobbes, he still did not agree that absolute monarchy was the only way to maintain peace and much preferred a representative form of government such as the Parliament. In *The Second Treatise on Government*, Locke argues that all people are equal and they have been given the rights of liberty and life by nature itself. Thus, these rights are not objects that can be surrendered to a king or even a parliament. In fact, Locke believes that these rights can never be surrendered to anyone, and thus any form of government, whether it be a monarchy or a representative government, only acts to give the rights of life and liberty to the people. As such, Locke argues that sovereignty should be placed in the hands of the people. He says that if a government fails then, "the people have a right to act as supreme, and continue the legislative in themselves; or erect a new form, or under the old form place it in new hands, as they think good"². Thus, it is the people who hold the ultimate authority.

This idea is seconded by Rousseau, who is described as the ultimate democrat in history. However, despite the fact that both Locke and Rousseau advocated for the rights of the people, Rousseau did not believe that the social contract was an unspoken contract between the government and its people. Rather, Rousseau considered the social contract to be a fraud that had been concocted by the rich to ensure that the poor people would accept the privileged elites as their rulers. This is exactly why Rousseau mentions that "Man is born free, and everywhere he is in chains"³ meaning that the nature of a man is linked with liberty and freedom, but the rich have enslaved the poor by means of the social contract. Thus, here, Rousseau proposes a solution where the people do end up giving up their rights but not to a monarch. Rather, here, freedom will be

² Locke, *The Second Treatise of Government*.

³ Rousseau, *Basic Political Writings*.

given up to “the whole community”⁴ in the form of a democratic system where every person must vote to create the laws of the land. Any person who goes against the will of the majority is set free from that land and is no longer considered to be a citizen of the said community.

In conclusion, it can be said that the ideas presented by Thomas Hobbes, John Locke, and Jean-Jacques Rosseau do tend to overlap with one another despite being fundamentally different from one another. Hobbes advocates for the rights of the monarchy, while Locke is in favor of a representative government. Rosseau, on the other hand, firmly believes in democracy.

Nonetheless, Hobbes and Locke agree on the hostile nature of human beings and the social contract is seen as an unspoken rule between the state and its people. On the other hand, Locke and Rosseau advocate for the rights of the people even if they cannot agree on the nature of the social contract itself. Thus, it can be seen that Hobbes is fundamentally a monarchist while Rosseau is a democrat, and Locke acts as a bridge between the two diverging ideas of Hobbes and Rosseau by suggesting a unique and mixed approach to governance.

⁴ Rousseau.

References

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Rousseau, Jean-Jacques. *Basic Political Writings*. Hackett Publishing Company Indianapolis, 1987.