

Hobbes, Locke, and Rousseau: Who Has the Most Scripturally Correct Theory of Government?"

Name of Student

Institutional Affiliation

### **Most Scripturally Correct Theory of Government**

Hobbes, Locke, and Rousseau were European philosophers in early 1600. Hobbes was referred to as a man of the state. Locke was a Democrat while Rousseau was an extreme democrat (Bloom, 1987). The three had different views how the nation should be governed and by who. This research paper will compare and contrast their ideas on natural law, human nature, human law, and the origin of government, the purpose of the government, civil disobedience, revolution as well as government and religion.

#### **Natural Law**

##### **Philosopher Chose: Locke**

These three philosophers had the different argument on the state of human nature. However, Locke ideas seemed to have the most convincing argument.

Locke claimed that men were free and equal in the state of nature not because they were capable of killing one another but because they were all from the same human species and had same capabilities (Locke, 2012). Locke argued that despite the liberty that men possess, they were still under the control of law of nature. The law of nature prohibits harming one another regarding health, their possession as well as their liberty. He further claimed that men had a common maker who did not discriminate people while making them. He gave people all similar capabilities and placed on over the other. Therefore, to Locke, harming one another was against God's will and it was like damaging His property.

Moreover, Locke stated that the law of nature should be placed under the power of each in the society not specific people like government. In his view, everyone should have the power to punish transgression in the society, not just a few individuals who would be reluctant to punish themselves or people from their group (Locke, 2012). As long as men were willing to

abide by the state of nature, people would exist peacefully in the society or a country. This idea is unlike Hobbes who believed without government people would be in constant warfare. In Locke perception, if you give a person your freedom, then you have given out everything including your life (Goldwin, 1987). This means that men live by reason and do not have to find a neutral person to act as the judge to settle their disputes.

Locke argument was convincing because, even if there was a common judge, if people intent to use force against each other without reasoning, no common judge can settle such differences. People would live in a constant state of war (Locke, 2012). This idea can be taken into consideration because people need to use common sense to create an environment for peaceful coexistence not giving a third party their freedom by entrusting them with the duty of settling disputes that might arise between them.

### **First Philosopher Not Chosen: Hobbes**

Hobbes tried to explain how life would be without the government. He claimed that without a government, it would be a war of everyone against each other without finding a common ground to resolve differences. Therefore, by surrendering their freedom to a sovereign, they are sure that their lives would be protected (Hobbes, 2012). He did not evaluate the effects of giving away one's freedom to a state since they would have a right to protect and also take that life. His argument also did not consider the role of reasoning and common sense in the society. People cannot live by giving freedom to a particular group to control them. If they do not bid by the natural law, it does not matter who is in control. There would always be state of war.

**Second Philosopher Not Chosen: Rousseau**

Rousseau ideas of natural law were not realistic and difficult to believe. He did not explain in the society would take care of itself if the no one is given the neutral responsibility of taking care of others (Rousseau, 2012). Unlike Locke, Rousseau believed that setting up the authoritative body in a community needed extra powerful and extraordinary legislators. He also believed that natural laws only work if the human nature has been changed by those in authorities. These ideas were not convincing as compared to those of Locke thus could not be relied on.

**Human Nature****Philosopher Chosen: Rousseau**

On human nature, Rousseau argument can be relied upon. He recognizes the family as the only natural society. Rousseau further argued that society is formed through a natural social contract where each is required to alienate his or her right completely (Rousseau, 2012). The recipient of this alienation of rights would form the whole community but not separate sovereign. This would mean that each would put themselves under the control of the general will (Rousseau, 2012). The whole community will therefore not impose a limit on themselves, not even a constitution. Rousseau stated that the government protection is not necessary since the sovereign is the collective of all the members of the society. It would, therefore, be difficult for the society to harm in anyway any of its member.

The sovereign according to Rousseau is made of all the community members, and it could never have another interest that is contrary to that of the community. This is the best governance because an individual will not have a different interest which is not in harmony with the society because he or she would find it difficult to reconcile such personal interest with the

Society (Rousseau, 2012). It is by being in harmony with the interest of the society that brings true freedom to a person and anyone who did not willingly obey the general will of the community will be forced to obey because the community is bigger than the individual. It is the shared interest that makes the society possible not personal interest. The sovereign rested with the community, and it was not proper to entrust some few individuals in the name of government to make the decision for the whole community and mostly if they are not part of that community. Rousseau ideas were that the decision-making powers ought to be left in the hands of the whole community other than delegating duties to some individuals. This argument is convincing because the people being delegated to make decisions on behalf of the whole community tend to impose their self-interest and only makes the decisions that would favor them or the people they have a relationship with (Rousseau, 2012). Also, this philosopher claimed that sovereign inalienable and indivisible. This shows that the concept of separation of powers cannot work well because there can never be separate powers between the executive and the legislatures. Society can never be divided or its responsibilities on its people.

The general will of the community is the best interest of the society is discerned rightly. The formation of the separate factions of the society would, therefore, prevent the citizens from recognizing the interest of the society. These private factions such as government should, therefore, be removed so that the general will of the community can emerge from the debate of the community. The idea, of the government, according to Rousseau perceptions, therefore will not work if the human nature is not changed (Rousseau, 2012). Spirit of individuality should be replaced with the spirit of cooperation. The general will, unlike the government, cannot become corrupt.

**First Philosopher Not Chosen: Hobbes**

Thomas Hobbes' description of human nature and governance is not consistent with community needs. He asserts that human beings are free, and their activities are not under any constraint. This is not true because human activities are constrained with the general interest of the society. It means that community interest controls how members of that community would carry out himself or herself. People cannot act in their self-interest without taking into consideration if such interest or actions are consistent with the standards or the general will of the community. Rousseau, on the other hand, said that people would not have an interest that is not in line with that of the society where they are coming from.

**Second Philosopher Not Chosen: John Locke**

Locke's idea of running a government by going against human nature is not convincing. Being selfish and ignoring human nature in running the government would only provoke members of the community, and they would react to have their voice heard by those who are in authorities (Locke, 2012). Sometimes some of the reaction turn violent and ends up harming quite some people in the community. One cannot simply ignore human nature and the community interest in the governance. It is also not clear how selfishness can shape the governance of society from Locke perception. This, therefore, makes it not an appropriate idea of governance and should not be accepted (Locke, 2012). When few individuals are given the responsibility of controlling community resources, they will end up being biased in its distribution. They are most likely to share more of it with those who are loyal to their authorities, and those who are rebelling against them will be punished by not getting any share at all or just a small portion of it.

## **Origin of Government**

### **Theologian Chosen: Thomas Hobbes**

Hobbes tried to give an explanation on how the government is formed and the reasons why it is important to have a government. His theories are well-articulated and convincing as compared to his peers (Hobbes, 2012). He pointed how life can be without government. He claimed that lawlessness and immorality would be the order of the day. There was a need for a special group to be given the responsibility of controlling the rest of the community. According to Hobbes, by setting up a common power or a commonwealth, individuals can protect themselves against the dangers that might befall them in the state of nature (Hobbes, 20120). The nature of law is what has the guidelines on how this common power or commonwealth can be created. In the creation of the government, Hobbes said that people in the community have to agree to transfer their freedom to a third party and accept that they would consider the decisions made by the third party as their decisions. This third party Hobbes named it the sovereign. The contract is then signed between the sovereign and the people of the community where all would have to agree to obey the decisions made by the sovereign (Hobbes, 20120). This contract does not place any obligation on the sovereign to reciprocate the respect the community has given it. Sovereign owes nothing to its subjects because he is not a party to this contract. It only has the obligation to the whole community, not an individual.

### **First Philosopher Not Chosen: John Locke**

Locke argued that everyone is free in the society to act and do what pleases them. He claimed that men belonged to the same species, and thus they are all equal (Locke, 2012). He did not explain well how the society can protect others from taking advantage of the weak through lawlessness. His explanation on the governance of the community is based purely on common

sense which cannot prevent other from harming their neighbors (Bible, 2002). These articulations were not convincing and could not be relied on as the best way of formation of the government.

### **Second Philosopher Not Chosen: Rousseau**

Rousseau argued that the decision-making powers should be left to the community as a whole and not be placed in the hands of few individuals. Rousseau did not give a clear explanation on how the community would make a common decision without a third party negotiating on their behalf or moderating the process (Rousseau, 2012). This idea would promote lawlessness as it will be difficult for the society to control them or punish law breaker without engaging an institution that is considered to be neutral. The governing body or process cannot be left to the whole community because they would shy away from some of the activities that need to bring stringent laws to control the behavior of its people (Rousseau, 2012). Rousseau theory can therefore not be relied upon as an option of government formation.

### **Literature Review**

According to Bloom, (1987) the formation of a government must be guided by reason and logic. All these are critical components and tenets that inform what part of philosophical disposition of a society. As such, the general manner and way in which people and governments by extension play politics must be guided by principles of philosophy. Instinctively, it is to say that such approaches should and must be laced by reason and ethics where the best actions would be verified and balanced in the scale of existing realities.

Moral philosophy should form and irrefutable part of the human community and existence (Hobbes, 2012). As such, the community as the body of people who would form the government or would be governed must adhere to the strong philosophical stances and



principles. In essence, the community is critical and so are its morals. This means that the morality of a government would be determined by the moral principles and ideologies of a government would be borrowed from the community and society at large.

The overlying interests of the people should form the priority basis of the formation of a government (Locke, 2012). This means that the common good or the public interest should override and supersede any interest that individuals might have in the process of formulation of a governing body should be sacrificed and negated. In essence, the needs and aspirations of the masses or the majority should be given preference and considered over any other narrow interests and considerations. In principle, whenever there is any chance of conflict of interest between the wants and desires of a person and the group's goals, the former should out rightly win. This is because the common good would benefit many people including the leader in question.

Theoretically, the formation and constitution or the makeup of a government must be is guided by the principles of social contracts or agreements (Rousseau, 2012). This means that the leaders or the body of government and the majority or society should have some rapport and agreement on the things that would happen during their engagement. It is needless for the agreements or social contract to be put in writing, however, the spirit of the agreement should bind all the parties involved. Thus, the leadership should do what is morally proper and right while the society or masses should also reciprocate and offer the maximum support and cooperation. As such, it is to say that the moral guidelines should firstly be social before there are political. In the same line of thought, it is expected that the people in leadership positions should be guarded and led by their human nature and not any other status of authority that they may acclaim or have.

### **Methodology**

The study used a qualitative data to analyze the ideas from various philosophers on the moral philosophy and politics as well as formation of the government.

The study sampled forty political science experts from various international universities. The data involves asking these university dons on who they think has the best explanation of moral philosophy, politics as well as the formation of the government.

The dons were randomly sampled thus everyone was given an equal chance to participate in the study.

### **Results**

The data collected and qualitatively analyzed showed that the three philosophers' ideas were preferred on different theories. On the natural law, Locke ideas were found to be the best explanations among the three. His ideas were found as the most convincing. On the origin of government, Thomas Hobbes theories were favored by more than half the respondents. It was found to be more realistic and convincing as compared to those ideas of Locke and Rousseau.

Consequently, Rousseau was found to have the best explanation of human nature and how it affects the governance of a community.

### **Discussion**

The three philosophers though had different views as far as the research question is concerned. Each philosopher had his area of expertise that he explained convincingly better than the rest. However, Hobbes seemed to have a better explanation for government formation and its importance. Hobbes claimed that the society cannot run without a government (Hobbes, 20120). There is a need for members of a community to surrender their freedom to a third party that is sovereign. This way their security is guaranteed due to the responsibilities that they have

entrusted the third party with (Berns, 1987). Hobbes also said that the sole responsibility of the government is to impose laws that would prevent war among members of the community. This is true because without government or proper laws to control people in the society, there would not be peaceful coexistence

### **Conclusion**

In conclusion it can be said that every philosopher has their own perception of governance, natural law, and the purpose of government. Each of the philosopher bases his ideas on the observations and the biblical stories and their own perception. These perceptions are based on their personal observation and opinions on how the community should be ruled. None of the philosophers has the right explanation on exact way of governance. However some of them like Hobbes have the most convincing explanations that can be believed in. It is right to say, while more study is being done on the proper way of governance, the ideas of these philosophers are used as a guideline to come up with scripturally correct theory of government.

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