

What Makes a Political Authority Legitimate? Essay

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What makes a political authority legitimate? A legitimate political authority, in this essay, will be taken to mean that there is a justification for an individual or a body to have power over other people in determining such things as laws and protection of freedom. To consider this question, three theories shall be looked at – Hobbes', Rousseau and finally Locke and determine which gives the most persuasive account of legitimate political authority. To begin with, their hypothetical starting point, the state of nature, shall be discussed to establish the foundations of their political authority. Secondly, the reasons that shall lead man to get out of the state of nature will be examined in order to see if these logically follow on from the state of nature. Finally, the theorist's versions of political authority will be described and whether or not these authorities are in fact legitimate. The state of nature is a hypothetical state that provides a foundation of the legitimacy of the political authority for without a state of nature, man would not need a political authority. Within this state of nature all men are at liberty. The state of nature differs for each of the theorist. Hobbes' state of nature is that of a state of war. Hobbes' outlines that humans are unsociable, rational creatures who are all equal to each other in terms of mind and strength. This prevents any hierarchy forming naturally as the weakest can kill the strongest. Furthermore, all men have the right to everything and anything as well as having equal opportunity to reach their goals. This is then where conflict arises – as when

two men desire the same end, both will engage in war since there is no one to stop them. Hobbes outlines three causes of disputes: middle of paperws the people to hold that political authority to account, making sure the authority does best by its people. In conclusion, Locke's account of a legitimate political authority is the most persuasive in comparison to Hobbes and Rousseau. Locke's state of nature does not paint a simplistic view of humans such as the other theorists who saw humans as being unsociable or the everyone would feel the same level of fear or compassion. Furthermore, Locke's reasoning that comes from the state of nature as it solves the problems in his version of the state of nature – Rousseau's reasoning is vague whilst Hobbes' problems still continue. Finally, Locke's authority allows for greater freedoms and also for rebellion possible without placing man back within the state of nature. Works Cited Thomas Hobbes Leviathan Rousseau Social Contract John Locke Two Treatises of Government

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