Bossuet, Hobbes And Locke’s Views On Human Nature, State Of Nature And Government

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Introduction

All three authors lived in the 17th century and played vital roles in society. Considering that the mentioned century was marked by many major events, including civil wars between some of the most powerful nations in the world, the three authors sought to address such issues in their writings. The authors sought to look into the nature of the problems facing society from all angles and tried to connect them in an attempt to explain their cause and give recommendations about how the problems could be avoided. Among the perspectives from which the authors viewed these issues were human nature, state of nature and government.

The State Of Nature

Bossuet, Hobbes, and Locke all hold the view that the state of nature is one of absolute freedom, where the expression of human beings is not restricted by anyone or anything. For Bossuet and Hobbes, this state is dangerous, and it needs to be suppressed. Locke, however, divides the state of nature into six rights that God gave and says that only one of those rights should be regulated, although conditionally (Bossuet, Hobbes and Locke). Locke is of the view that this right has the potential to cause trouble if expressed independently by every individual, which is why it is best for its expression to be conditionally designated to a single power.

Human Nature

By definition, human nature refers to the default way human beings react to different situations in their day-to-day lives. There is a similarity in how the three authors perceive human nature. They all view humans as selfish beings whose actions need regulation. The selfishness of human beings is best seen in their desire to have more power, especially regarding possessions (Joe). All human beings yearn to make their lives better every day. Where, then, do we get the idea of better living? The

answer is simple; it is from others (Joe). Even though all humans are equal, their thinking is not equal. This means that different persons could use different mechanisms to do the same thing. This led to the invention of different types of equipment, which made work easier and life better. When another person sees that the other person is doing better than him or her, it is human nature to want that which is better. If he or she becomes better than the day before due to the motivation of the person he or she saw on that day, on the next day, he or she will see another person with different things which he or she would desire to have (Joe). This confirms Hobbes's view of human beings as having desires that never end (Bossuet, Hobbes and Locke).

Government

All three authors feel that if the freedom of expression of a human being is not limited, it can lead to a series of disasters due to a conflict between one human being and another. This would be due to the infringement of one person's rights through the exercise of another person's rights. For example, if everyone were to be free to do what they want without regard to anything, the world would be a very disorderly place. This is because whenever someone felt like he or she needed something which he or she did not have, he or she would forcefully take it from whoever had it. Considering that no one can allow someone else to take what belongs to them, a fight would erupt. These fights would be unending because it is human nature to desire what we do not have. In the quest to satisfy their desire for power, there would be unending war and conflict, making life very difficult.

All this considered, it is then clear why all three authors explain the importance of a government in any society. All three authors agree that for there to be order in society, a government must be created and be given the mandate to regulate the expression of freedoms. There is, however, a big difference between the three authors concerning the extent of the limits imposed by a government on freedom. Bossuet is of the view that government should exercise absolute powers over the people to the extent that it determines each citizen's religious affiliation (Bossuet, Hobbes and Locke). Hobbes is of almost the same view as Bossuet, but when it comes to the religious affiliation of the citizens, he is mildly lenient. On the other hand, Locke holds a very different opinion from the two. His view is that government should not have absolute powers over the people. He says that the government's control should be limited to the right of reparation and restraint (Bossuet, Hobbes and Locke). He goes further to say that this power should be conditional, in the sense that if it is violated, the people have the right to remove the current regime from power (Bossuet, Hobbes and Locke).

Conclusion

The starting points of the three authors lead to their different conclusions about the most appropriate form of government. On the one hand, Bossuet and Hobbes end up concluding that absolute power is the best type of government and that the best society is that which submits to its government without questioning (Bossuet, Hobbes and Locke). On the other hand, Locke concludes that the best

type of government is a government with limited power that can be taken away while the best society is one that questions and holds its government accountable. It is, therefore, true to say that the difference arises from the dogmatic starting point of Bossuet and Hobbes and the pragmatic starting point of Locke.

Works Cited

Joe, Comrade. “The State of Nature: Thomas Hobbes vs. John Locke.” Owlcation (2017).