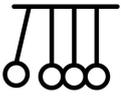


TURKEY'S UNHEARD VOICES

Modern Democracy Through the Eyes of John Locke and the Social Contract

POLITICS

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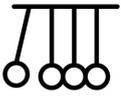
Abstract

This article examines John Locke's views on the legitimacy of the state and the justification of governmental authority over the people, as developed in his work *An Introduction to the Nature of Government*. Locke argues that the state must be based on the consent of the people and emphasizes that the primary purpose of government is to protect individuals' rights to life, liberty, and property. From this perspective, the idea emerges that a government can be overthrown if it violates the rights of the people. The article evaluates Locke's social contract theory's contributions to modern liberal thought while questioning its compatibility with contemporary democratic systems. Additionally, it discusses the practical validity of Locke's ideas in addressing issues such as social inequality and injustice. In this context, the conclusion is drawn that Locke's ideal state concept has limited applicability in today's realities.

Introduction to the Nature of Government

John Locke, in *An Introduction to the Nature of Government*, explores fundamental questions regarding the legal standing of the state and the justification of governmental authority over the people. He addresses the question: "What is the basis of the legitimacy of the state, and how can a government's authority over the people be justified?" Locke, as a key philosopher shaping modern liberal thought, structures his views on the state around his answers to this question. He emphasizes that the state must be based solely on the will of the people or public consensus and that the protection of natural rights is essential. According to Locke, the government exists to safeguard individuals' rights to life, liberty, and property—not to rule over them.

In this work, Locke responds to his own philosophical dilemmas with great clarity. Beyond highlighting the significance of the people in relation to government, he explains the



necessity of public consent and the order that emerges from it. Locke argues that the fundamental purpose of government is to protect individuals' rights, particularly life, liberty, and property. Consequently, he asserts that if the government fails to achieve this purpose or violates these rights, the people have the right to overthrow it. He states, "Government is a contract established to protect individuals' natural rights, and its authority depends on the consent of the people." This response clearly underscores the necessity of government approval by the people and defines the functionality of the state.

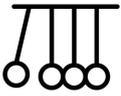
Locke's Arguments

Locke structured his reasoning logically and based it on a strong philosophical foundation. His first thesis asserts that people are born free and equal. He explains that in a world where individuals lack fundamental rights, the state cannot function properly and directly violates the rights to freedom and equality. He argues that to secure these rights, a social contract must be established. This contract necessitates the formation of a government to protect individuals' security and rights. Since the purpose of government is to safeguard these rights, Locke emphasizes that the people should show understanding and support toward it. These ideas illustrate that the government is based on rightful consent and exists to protect the rights of the people. The rights of the people and the purpose of the state shape Locke's reasoning process.

Thought-Provoking Questions

After analyzing the text, some of Locke's answers may raise questions, including:

1. Can it always be expected that the social contract will function fairly? Or could there be instances where this contract is flawed?
2. Where do natural rights come from, and who defines them?
3. Can a government rebuild itself and remain loyal to the public after losing the people's trust and consent?



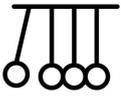
4. In today's democratic systems, is it always possible for the legitimacy of a government to rest on the consent of the people?

Different Perspectives

Philosophers such as Thomas Hobbes, Jean-Jacques Rousseau, and Karl Marx, who, like Locke, wrote essays on the nature of the state, have also provided answers to many of Locke's questions. In contrast to Locke, Hobbes argues that the state must be entirely based on authority. In *Leviathan* (Hobbes' work on religion and the state), he states that, due to humans' inherently selfish and chaotic nature, a strong government is necessary to maintain societal order. According to Hobbes, the people, through the social contract, give up all their freedoms and accept absolute authority. Rousseau's views are somewhat closer to Locke's in this regard. In his work *The Social Contract*, Rousseau emphasizes that the state must be based on the general will of the people. For Rousseau, the collective will of the people should guide the governance of society. He focuses on the equality of individuals and argues that the state should only act in the best interest of the people. Marx, from a 20th-century perspective, argues that the state is a result of class struggles and functions as a system that defends the interests of the ruling class. According to Marx, class relations and the economic structure determine the state's order. He contends that the state's purpose is not to protect the sovereignty of the people, but rather to safeguard the interests of specific classes.

The Applicability of Locke's Thoughts

In his work *An Introduction to the Nature of Government*, John Locke's ideas form the foundation of modern liberalism, emphasizing the concept of popular sovereignty. Locke argues that the state should be based on the consent of the governed, and the primary purpose of government should be to protect individuals' rights to life, liberty, and property. This idea underpins the legitimacy of government, asserting that if a government fails to protect these rights, the people have the right to overthrow it. Locke's ideas provide a strong foundation for the protection of individual rights. However, when considering the political systems of modern societies and the economic laws promoted by capitalism, we may conclude that Locke's theories are far removed from both reality and idealism. While systematically and



beautifully articulated, as Hobbes suggests, human beings' inherently greedy and selfish nature makes these ideas difficult to implement.

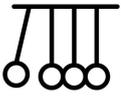
At the same time, Locke's belief that the state should be based on the consent of the governed holds a significant place in democratic systems. However, like other theories, we cannot apply this principle in the same light today due to the inherent injustice that exists in contemporary democracies. While modern governments strive to align with public opinion, they are often influenced by hegemony, political interests, and decisions made without genuine public consent. This demonstrates that Locke's ideal state and the concept of popular sovereignty can only be applied in a limited manner in today's political landscape.

Can Locke's Theories be applied in today's society?

Locke's Social Contract theory makes a significant contribution to the idea of government based on the will of the people, but can it always be expected to operate justly? Specifically, is the social contract applied equally to every individual in society? While Locke's social contract theory was developed to protect individual freedoms, its implementation can sometimes exacerbate social inequality and injustice. As a result, rather than strengthening the foundation of natural rights, it may weaken them.

Although Locke defends the natural rights people inherently possess, he does not specify the source of these rights or who should define and protect them. Locke's theory relies on the idea that freedom is inherent and natural, but for these rights to be adequately protected, a concrete legal framework must be established. The challenge lies in determining whether these rights will actually be protected and how such a framework would function in practice. The theory itself leaves open questions about the fairness and effectiveness of enforcing natural rights across all members of society, especially in a world marked by social and economic inequality.

Summary



In summary, while many of the ideas and political frameworks proposed by Locke were applicable in his time, they are not realistically applicable in the realities of today's world. When viewed from a broader perspective and comparing it to Plato's Theory of Forms, we could describe Locke's envisioned system as Ideals in the context of modern society. In this sense, although Locke's policies aimed to significantly improve the world, their applicability is nearly impossible due to the complexities of human will and behavior.