Hobbes’ Theory on Authorities and Rules

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1. Introduction

Hobbes based the theory of social contract on political obligation. People must have a political obligation to conform to authorities and laws of their countries or states. Nonetheless, the challenging question is rooted in how people acquire a political obligation to obey laws and rules. This question has been a source of contention among political philosophers who think that the political obligation theory is incomplete. Later, philosophers like Hobbes derived theories to explain why individuals should obey the rules and laws of their authorities. This paper discusses why Hobbes thinks people create societies with rules and authorities. Moreover, the paper discusses how self-protection and fear play a role in establishing such societies.

1. Why People Create Societies with Rules and Authorities

In the theory of social contract, Hobbes argues that people create societies with authorities and rules to acquire a political obligation. Hobbes argues that the lack of government and laws in society except for the laws of nature can result in a state of war because everyone would be naturally independent of authorities (“Political Obligation,” n.d.). Moreover, everyone would be capable of wielding and acquiring power so the fight for power by everyone would cause instability and restlessness in society.

Essentially, the fear of such a dreadful situation in societies causes people to establish societies with authorities and rules. As such, people have to surrender their power, independence, and superiority by consenting to obey sovereign authorities, which will enact, enforce, and also interpret rules and laws. Also, people have to acknowledge either acquired or instituted authorities to prevent mass destruction due to civil wars. Consenting to the acquired sovereignty is meant for self-protection because the subjects are not forced to obey rules and authorities when there are no dissenting groups. “To escape so dreadful a condition, people surrender their independence by entering into a covenant to obey a sovereign power that will have the authority to make, enforce, and interpret laws.” (“Political Obligation,” n.d., para.13).

1. Conclusion

In conclusion, people establish societies with authorities and rules to avoid dreadful situations such as war. The fear and the need for self-protection are also possible reasons why Hobbes thinks people establish such societies. Indeed, fear and the need for self-protection make people consent to both instituted and acquired sovereignties.

References

Political Obligation. (n.d.). Retrieved from https://plato.stanford.edu/entries/political-obligation/