

## **IDEAS 5 (Set 1)**

### **Analysis: History - Locke**

#### **ABSTRACT/SUMMARY:**

This paper has a strong depth of understanding but the overall analysis is not insightful. There are no new and exciting ideas for me as the reader or teacher of the course, no true “a-ha” moments of genuine insight. This prevents it from scoring higher than a 5. There isn’t a clear counter argument that needs to be addressed, so that does not affect the paper’s score.

#### **CRITERION 1: QUALITY**

A few key nuances are introduced (social contract theory, the seemingly contradictory nature of freedom and safety and execution of laws) but are not fully incorporated into the argument. For example, the social contract theory needs to be more clearly interwoven into body paragraph three and the conclusion. The paper also shows a strong depth of the nature of Locke’s ideas by virtue of the accurate detail listed, and the fluid movement from specific details to larger interpretations.

However, a lack of truly insightful ideas prevents this paper from scoring a 6. One example of a lack of insight occurs at the end of body paragraph three:

- “Thus, if the legislative abuses its power or does not preserve the people’s property, the government must give up their power, and give it to the people so they can change it.”

This sentence implies that the government has the power and must give it to the people if they break the social contract theory. In fact, the government only has power because they people have given it power. The reader recognizes that this may be a phrasing issue, as a more insightful sentence must be carefully worded:

- Thus, if the legislature abuses its power or does not preserve the people’s property, their power, established by the social contract, is void as the social contract is broken, and the people once again possess the authority to create a new government.

#### **CRITERION 2: SUBSTANTIATION**

Opposing viewpoints aren’t ultimately needed in this paper. This essay lives within a single text ; incorporating Hobbes’ view is not part of this paper. Additionally, this author’s position is defensible because he or she argues a non-obvious truth -- that beneath the surface, Locke ultimately believes that humans are rash and untamed. The most simplistic argument is that Locke believes that humans are reasonable. This author goes beyond that more surface level interpretation to argue that while reasonable, humans are rash and wild at their core since they act in rash and wild ways.

## Essay: History - Locke

*Prompt: The most prominent social contract theorists include Thomas Hobbes and John Locke. This paper asks you to examine Locke's musings on the social contract track the logic of his argument. Locke draws certain conclusions about the structure and purpose of government; this deduction is based on his analysis and assumptions of human nature as well as the state of nature. Your task is to develop a thesis that speaks to the logical development of Locke's ideas. Your response should consider his formulation of the following:*

- *Human nature*
- *The state of nature*
- *The purpose and structure of good government*

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### Locke's View on Humanity

During the time of the Enlightenment, John Locke, an English philosopher, wrote *The Second Treatise of Government*. This essay was written in response to Thomas Hobbes's essay called *The Leviathan* in order to convince society that a government with limits was needed instead of a disorderly state of nature. Ultimately, Locke asserts that people enter into a binding social contract so that the government can preserve the people's natural rights. Locke comes to this conclusion by inferring that humans are naturally wild and out of control: if humans were to govern themselves, then the end result would be chaos and destruction. In addition, Locke believes that the state of nature is too dangerous, and therefore a systematic government, determined by the people, is essential for society.

Locke describes humans as rash and untamed beings who are driven by their desire to preserve their liberty and property. According to Locke, humans are naturally independent and free to do as they please. As a result, "every one, as he is bound to preserve himself, and not to quit his station willfully, so by the like reason, when his own preservation comes not in completion, ought he, as much as he can preserve the rest of mankind" (Locke Sec.6). Humans are completely independent and must learn how to preserve themselves. Since humans have to preserve themselves, they will go to far lengths and do whatever it takes to reach this goal; this goal leads humans to invade other's liberty and property. Naturally, humans have laws, but they do not always follow them, which demonstrates that they are similar to animals in that they are free and subject to their own whim. Locke declares that "for all being kings as much as he every man is equal and...the enjoyment of the property he has in this state is very unsafe, very unsecure" (Locke Sec.123). Here, Locke implies that humans act as "kings" as a result of being allowed to govern themselves. This ultimate freedom causes these uncontrolled people to invade each other and make the state unsafe because they have the same desires as "kings": they have the desire for more land and for more power. In conclusion, humans are audacious beings who are motivated by their desire to preserve their rights, liberty, and their own lives.

Since rules are not enforced in the state of nature, Locke believes that humans are unstable and unsafe; furthermore, the state of nature is the reason for fear because of its lack of a higher authority, which causes people to break the law of nature. Some people suggest that the state of nature has no flaws. In addition, these people wonder, "If man, in the state of nature, be so free, as has been said; if he be

absolute lord of his own person and possessions, equal to the greatest and subject to nobody, why will he part with this freedom? Why will he give up this empire and subject himself to the dominion and control of any other power?"(Locke Sec. 123). In the state of nature, humans possess complete freedom and control; therefore, they are not subject to anyone else. Thus, people wonder why humans would relinquish this great opportunity and privilege just to then be put under a government. There are, however, negative outcomes in the state of nature. At some point the state of nature gets out of controlled and too dangerous for people to live in. According to Locke, "...the enjoyment of the property he has in this state is very unsafe, very unsecure. This makes him willing to quit a condition which, however free, is full of fears and continual danger: and it is not without reason that he seeks out, and is willing to join society with others..." (Locke Sec.123). The state of nature contains the ability to become "unsafe" and dangerous, and as a result man gets a desire to surrender the way he lives so he can join a society. Since man has the freedom of choice, they decide to not obey the laws of nature, which leads people to make bad decision and create violence. Hence, the state of nature is something that will eventually get out of control to the point where it will need to be destroyed. In return for its destruction man can come a join a "society" and work together to make a stable government and civilization. Locke, however, does not believe that there should be any type of government.

Locke suggest that the purpose of government is for the "mutual preservation" (Locke Sec. 123) of the citizens' property by submitting human will to a systematic government with limits. According Locke, men do unite into a commonwealth just for peace like Hobbes believes. Locke states, "The great chief end therefore, of man uniting into a commonwealth, and putting themselves under government is the preservation of their property" (Locke Sec. 123). The main reason why men want to join a society is so that mankind can "preserve" their property. This will cause them to not take extreme measures like taking over other people's land just so they can protect their lives and rights. However, Locke does not mean any type of government. Instead of a monarchy or absolutism, Locke believes in a systematic government that has a limited amount of power that can also be changed. Locke's opinion is that if the government is not doing its job, the people can change it. Locke writes, "they forfeit the power the people had put in their hands for quite the contrary ends and it develops to the people, who have a right to resume their original liberty, and by the establishment of a new legislative (such as they think fit)" (Locke Sec.222). Thus, if the legislative abuses its power or does not preserve the people's property, the government must give up their power, and give it to the people so they can change it. By having a good structure, specifically a structure that can be changed, society is able to run smoothly and the people's goals and desires will be gained.

Thanks to the ingenious philosopher, John Locke, everyone was able to see why human nature and the state of nature was negative, and why a temporary systematic government was needed. This idea inspired the American colonies, which is now the United States, to go against the British and make their own government that is restrained by limits. This way there is a *Locke* on the amount of power government can have.