PPLS 3667 Early Modern Political Thought

**Question:** For Locke, politics aims toward a particular end. What is the chief end for uniting into “political society,” according to Locke? Be sure to include how Locke arrives at this chief end and what recourse individuals have if government violates this chief end.

**Introduction:** John Locke is one of the most influential political theorists of the modern time. He has contributed in several fields of political sciences. In his writings, he has presented the idea about the relation between the state and the individual in a new perspective. In his work titled the two treatises of Government, Locke has identified how the relationship between the state and the individual can move forward in the form of an agreement. He has at various places in his work and also defended that how the man was born free but is also naturally bounded for being a subject for a monarch. Locke argues that in the civil society the governing factor must be the majority.

He believes that the majority will never deliberately choose the ones who can ruin their freedoms. According to him, the time when one enters into the civil society, he submits his allegiance. Similarly, he also submits his will for following properly in an orderly way the rules and the decisions of the majority. For the readers Locke then presents two arguments; at first, he discusses the historical context of the majority rule. For him, the Kings or the Sheiks are all example of such authority as for them, the absolute power resides in the hands of them.

**The Political Society according to John Locke:** Locke’s political philosophy has many strands. The first of them is ‘Consent’. He describes the individual as free. There is no obligation attached to the human being when he comes to this world. He mentions that the freedom is inherent for everyone. The new born, according to Locke is free and is not answerable to any political authority. According to him, the consent of the individuals derives the political mechanism. This is how individuals then joins to form the societies. Societies create an environment that is according to the needs of the individuals who reside in it. In this form, everyone’s presence is in a direct way or in an indirect way is profiting others.

Locke believes that there are some obligations at part of every individual. The obligations are in the sense of preserving one’s freedom. As this is the law of nature that every human is born free. The rights and duties are assigned, when the consent tilt toward one of these two sides. He mentions that every time we take these obligations voluntarily. He differentiates between the obligations we take by our choice and the obligations which comes upon us naturally. The obligations of nature requires no consent. For him, the only way of becoming a part of the society is by expressing consent.

The doctrine of consent by John Locke suggests that if any person is walking on the road, he has already expressed his consent to the government. This makes one to think that why the resident is bound to obey that government. Locke answers by mentioning that his birth on that land, leaves no reason to not obey the government. The reason is as the person own any property, and that is how he has stakes. This then passes to the generations. As the children inherit the same property and this is how they consent their will to the same government.

If any individual inherit the property from his ancestor, he is at the same time accepting the will of their ancestors of obeying the same authority. This brings the acceptance of property as the synonym of expressing one’s consent. This is why the property is actually the interests. Locke has also interpreted this acceptance of property in two ways. On one side he believes that by accepting the inheritance. The person has expressed his consent. On other side, Locke mentions that in this whole process, the one who has inherited the property has not made any declaration about the political obligations.

In summary, John Locke believes that people are born free and independent of every jurisdiction. There are no duties and no rights of the people at the time of their birth. There is natural law, and every new individual is subjected to follow that. According to him, the disturbance starts when anyone grabs the natural rights of others. As described above that after when the land has been acquired, this would be considered as the submission of will to the government. This is also how the one will now be a part of the society and will start managing his affairs within a society. For example, when one has acquired the land, he will harvest some eatable into the land. After when the fruit or the grain is ready, he will bring that to the market and sell. This process is like a cycle and now it has connected the specific individual to the society at large and with the government at particular. At this point of mutual affairs, the natural law has been closed. There is now the society and the individual which will now protect each other.

What is next according to John Locke, after the formation of the society? It is the creation of a justice system. Locke believes that this justice system is a kind of compromise among many people at large. First, they come together to decide, what the law of their land will be. At the second place, they choose from among them who will be the sole authority to decide the affairs of the individuals. Finally, they will start obeying the laws and the authority of that particular person. He opines that this system is good as long as it protects the interests of some particular groups. As according to him everyone in the society does not have the same conditions to follow, therefore this will eventually result in the demise of the system. This is how Locke based his argument on the divine law.

Locke has based his views in relation with the divine law. For him, the divine law is so pure that any changes to it will significantly alter the face of the earth. For basing his argument, Locke has taken the property as a variable. He claims that when one inherits the property, he actually inherits the interests of his ancestors. To explain this he mentions that the large property develops large interests. These interests’ then derives the individual to grab more power. Power for him is actually the protection of his authority. This has been described by him as a vicious cycle.

Here comes the question about one who does not have any property. How will he express his consent? Locke’s explanation to this remains unsatisfactory for many. For example, he mentions that they are the subjects if they have nothing to offer to the state. He believes that the relation to the individual with the state is also based on the presumptions of give and take. If he has nothing in his possession, what is he the offering to the state? Nothing. This is why this one-sided affair will be treated as subjection. This subjection will be the submission to the state and to its every law. This is the reason why the political scientist argue that Locke’s political opinion has revolved around interests.

What after when the consent has been shown, and the government is formed? For John Locke, it is the preservation of that. He calls it as the end product and mentions that the preservation of this system is the next thing that comes at priority. He believes that once the system will get strengthen and will develop into a strong system, it will allow many from the people to build their interests. That is how these interests will lead them to take part in the political process more actively. Some people believe that this idea is presented by him, as he failed to provide an alternative for the ones who have no stakes in some solid form.

Still, after presenting with such a broad idea about the expression of will and creation of the government, John Locke believes that Consent still dominates the entire political system. If the people are happy with the governments they will never think of bulldozing the system. But the day, they will feel that their interests in what so ever form they are, have not been treated properly; they will take their will out of them, in result the whole system will collapse which is the end of the government, according to John Locke.

In between the expression of will, the creation of the government and then the demise of the government; Locke has placed some other political perspectives also. For example, Locke mentions that in order to protect the system or in other words the government, the interests group (the people at the helm of affairs) will use every mean to protect their governments. In doing so, Locke mentions that they will go to any extent. If the rebellion is strong enough to bring those people down, the government cause the violent means also to curb the rebellion. This is how it will go toward the killing of people, which are by every mean unjustifiable.

John Locke's ideas about the creation of government, the preservation of the government and ultimately the demise of the governments are based primarily on the consent or the will of the individual. This will is somewhere in a Meta form, like the property, and somewhere in the form of being submissive. In this way, Locke has created an interests of every person in the state. This is also how the society is like for Locke. The political scientist of this century, however, disagree with any prospect of John Locke ideas. They opine that the evolution of the world at large and the societal aspect in specific has given the excuses for the reinterpretation of John Locke ideas.

**Conclusion:** The end of the government has not been elaborated much expressively as Locke has mentioned about the creation of the society and the interests groups. If one analyzes the ideas of the governments presented by John Locke, it appears evident that Locke has placed not the consent in beneath all, but the interests. For example somewhere the interests are in the form of property protection, somewhere in the form of expressing will, somewhere in the form of protecting the government and somewhere in the form of expansion of one's authority. In the world of ours, the principles of government presented by John Locke remains of significant importance. To this day, the interests exist but are interpreted differently. The governments of today also has the interests of power which is shaken when the people starts gathering against them. The interests today has taken some other forms and so does the will of the people.