Austin Gray

Philosophy 335

Assignment 4

David Hume takes a stance against the social contract with his essay “*Of the Original Contract”.* In this essay Hume takes to describing his objections to the social contract, making a few points that he believes show the error in stating that social contracts come from an agreement/consent of the people. In what follows I will be outlining Hume’s main objection and if John Locke should be persuaded by this objection.

Hume’s main objection to the idea that the social contract comes from an agreement or the consent of the people is that at no point has this consent truly been given. Locke and Hobbes both agreed that the social contract comes from so form of tacit consent, that being the consent through action. Hume claims that the main thing needed in any agreement is willful consent, regardless if tacit or explicit. Hume continues saying that if you were to ask the other subordinates of any government if they had ever consented to the authority they claim to have they would say no. Going further Hume also states that the government’s claim that their power is inherited from a past generation where the consent was given to a specific government and this is what grants them the authority they have.

I believe that if Locke was presented Hume’s objection Locke would be compelled to accept it. Locke uses the tacit consent of the people to answer a points that can be made about the social contract. First, it give a reason that the people should obey the government. Secondly, it explains who has a right to rules. Hume’s objection shows that Locke’s justification for his answers to this have a flaw, and Locke would be compelled to fix those in a way that would change the outcome of his argument.