

UNIT – II

Theories of obligation

Hobbes · Locke · Rousseau · Hegel · Green · Marx

Explanatory Lecture Slides

Political Science — State and Political Obligations · Minor-I-3 · Semester III

POLITICAL SCIENCE — STATE AND POLITICAL OBLIGATIONS

Topics covered in this unit

01

State Hobbes's case for obedience

02

State Locke's limited consent

03

State Rousseau's general will

04

Place Hegel and T.H. Green

05

Place the Marxist suspicion

06

Table them for a 16-mark

How this unit is organised

01	02	03	04	05	06
Hobbes	Locke	Rousseau	Hegel / Green	Marx	Table

Hobbes

Leviathan: out of fear of death we authorise a sovereign; obligation lasts as long as protection lasts.

- No right to a noisy dissent that returns us to the state of nature.
- Modern echo: security-State arguments. Reply: Art. 21 is not a Hobbesian gift that the sovereign may pocket.

Hobbes

OBEY BECAUSE

- Protection from violent death.

LIMIT

- When the sovereign can no longer protect — even Hobbes leaves a sliver.

Locke

Two Treatises: we enter to protect life, liberty, property. Government is a trustee. A people may resist a tyrant.

- Tacit consent problems remain.
- Indian echo: constituent power, elections, 1977 as a Lockean moment after 1975.
- Property: now Art. 300A, not Art. 31 — still a Lockean ghost.

Locke

OBEY BECAUSE

- Trustee who protects natural rights.

DISOBEY WHEN

- The trustee becomes a thief of those rights.

Rousseau

Social Contract: obey the general will, which is one's own true will. Forced to be free.

- Merit: democracy as self-rule. Danger: a Jacobin reading that crushes the dissenter.
- Indian care: the general will is not a lynch mob — Part III exists exactly here.

Rousseau

KEEP

- Self-legislation.
- Civic virtue.

FEAR

- Forced to be free.

Hegel and T.H. Green

Hegel: the State as ethical life; freedom is realised in institutions, not against them.

- Green: the State removes obstacles to the moral life; obligation to a State that does this.
- Welfare-State theory of obligation — close to Indian DPSPs.
- Danger: deifying the State (Hegel's worst readers).

Hegel and T.H. Green

GREEN

- State as a helper of the good life.

HEGEL

- Sittlichkeit — ethical institutions.

Marx's suspicion

The State is a class instrument; 'obligation' is ideology until the class structure changes.

- A 6-mark: useful as criticism of a smug consent story.
- Not a complete Indian answer: we have a rights-based Republic that sometimes is captured, and sometimes is a tool of the weaker (reservation, labour).

Marx's suspicion

KEEP

- Who benefits from this statute?

DROP

- All law is a fraud.

One table to memorise

Hobbes-protection; Locke-trust; Rousseau-self-rule; Green-moral life; Marx-class; Gandhi-conscience (next unit).

- A 16-mark 'theories of political obligation' is this table + one Indian illustration each for three of them.

One table to memorise

THREE FOR THE HALL

- Locke + Green + Gandhi is a very Indian set.

ALWAYS CRITICISE

- Hobbes (too much fear).
- Rousseau (too much unity).
- Marx (too little law).

Hegel and T.H. Green

Hegel: the State as ethical life; freedom is realised in institutions, not against them.

- Green: the State removes obstacles to the moral life; obligation to a State that does this.
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Cases a KSLU answer should name

CASE

Kesavananda Bharati

(1973) 4 SCC 225

Lockean limits on the legal sovereign.

CASE

I.R. Coelho v State of Tamil Nadu

(2007) 2 SCC 1

Even the Ninth Schedule cannot hide a theft of basic structure — trustee, not master.

CASE

Olga Tellis

(1985) 3 SCC 545

Green-ish: the State that evicts without a livelihood plan fails its ethical job.

Provisions & materials to quote

Art. 21

Locke's life/liberty in Indian clothes after Maneka.

Art. 300A

Property as legal right.

Art. 38

Green's common good as a DPSP.

Art. 368

The trustee's amending kit, limited.

Preamble

Rousseau's 'We' with Part III brakes.

10 / 16-mark frames from this unit

Q1

Discuss the social-contract theories of political obligation.

Q2

Explain T.H. Green's theory of political obligation.

Q3

How would a Marxist criticise the idea of political obligation?

Q4

Compare Hobbes and Locke on obedience and resistance.

Unit recap

- 1 Hobbes: fear and protection.
- 2 Locke: trust and a right to resist.
- 3 Rousseau: general will — handle with Part III.
- 4 Green: State as obstacle-remover — DPSP face.
- 5 Marx: ask who the statute serves.