

Hobbes

Introduction of Hobbes as a thinker.

Relevance of Hobbes as a thinker

- The most important aspect of Hobbes' work is that he tells about the principles & practices governing modern political systems as emerged in western europe & introduced to non-western world by colonial masters.

★ In Hobbes we come to know about.

- that state is sovereign
- law is command of sovereign.
- state has monopoly over the use of force.
- Private armies can't be allowed.
- Political system is a result of our will & not the will of god.
- ~~By~~ the law of state will have primacy ~~why~~ over international law.

Hobbes belonged to the troubled phase of British history. He has witnessed 'Puritan Revolution' of 1640's. England was under civil war betⁿ catholics & protestants, Royalists & Parliamentarians. England became vulnerable to external invasions. His mother gave him premature birth out of befean of Spanish Armada. In this context he makes a statement "I & fear were born together".

• same time stability will come under threat if
• there are glaring inequalities in the society.
• While explaining that property should be in the
• private hands, he explains the weakness of human
• nature. He suggests that it is difficult for men to
• live together & to be partners in human actions
• on their own. Hence there should be a state.
• without state our life would be like the life
• of beasts/animals. It is a teleology of man to be
• a member of the state. Aristotle may not appear
• as consistent as Plato or Hobbes or Hegle. He
• is a thinker of common sense. His suggestions
• are based less on ideas & more on practical
• reasoning.

The statement is linked to his political theory. People require state because without state there is no security of their life & property. Thus the main function of the state is to provide security.

Hobbes belonged to the school of social contract thinkers. According to them, a state is not created by god but state is created by man. A state is not imposed on us by god but it is the product of our free will. It is a product of rational deliberation.

Hobbes belongs to the time when capitalism was on rise. Hence we see Hobbes' theory are influenced by capitalism. Every thinker or political ideology represent the interest of particular class or community. Hobbes is also the thinker of Bourgeoise class or capitalist class.

Theory of Hobbes represents the needs of the emerging Bourgeoise class / capitalist class.

Hobbes was influenced by scientific revolution of his age. He tried to develop political theory by applying the principles of physics. He built the understanding of human psychology on the understanding of physics & application of this understanding to built political theory.

Hobbes is known as utilitarian thinker.

What is utilitarianism?

Utilitarianism has its origin in Greek thinkers. Later on developed by Hobbes & Locke & emerged as a systematic school of thought in the works of Bentham. Utilitarianism was a dominant philosophy in Britain uptill the end of 19th century.

Utilitarianism suggests that man is by nature pleasure seeking. Pleasure & pain are the two principles guiding all human actions. Utilitarianism is materialistic in nature. They talk about having pleasure by experiencing the material goods rather than sacrificing them. Utilitarianism is individualistic in nature because pleasure & pain are experiences of individual. Hobbes believed that man is extremely individualist.

Man has a capacity to understand only his pleasure & pain, not of others. He is a first person to establish that all human beings are same, there is nothing like inferior & superior soul. Everyone ~~de~~ seeks pleasure.

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Hobbes is also a supporter of state absolutism.

Meaning of absolute state

- All powers lying with the state. Individuals having no rights against the state. It is believed that all rights come from state. They do not believe in theory of Natural Rights, i.e., rights existing before state.

Hobbes believes in legal theory of Rights.

Hobbes keeps only 1 right with individuals, i.e., Right to Life. A state can not take away life of any person, in an arbitrary manner or except according to the procedure established by law.

Methodology of Hobbes :

Hobbes is treated as 1st Modern Thinker for 2 reasons.

- He was the first person to give the theory of modern state, its institution & practices.

- In terms of methodology also he tried to apply scientific approach to built theories of politics.

Rather than philosophy, religion or history, he preferred Physics, Psychology & Geometry to produce his theory.

Hobbes was influenced by Galileo as well as Descartes (French Thinker). Descartes has shown how scientific method can be applied in social sciences. He suggested following steps.

- Observe the complex phenomenon
- Find out the elemental parts
- Establish the correlation
- Produce hypothesis
- Provide generalizations

Hobbes has applied above approach as well as principles of Physics (Mechanics) to build the Theory of Politics.

- Observe the complex political phenomenon
- Human beings form the elemental part
- Human behaviour shape political institutions & processes
- Hence human behaviour has to be understood.

Human behaviour is guided by human brain.

Hence understanding of human brain is required.

- He applied principles of Physics & explained the features of human brain through 2 concepts

Matter & Motion

- Like all things in universe, human brain is also made up of matter.
- Matter can be further divided into particles.
- Particles are in the state of motion in human mind so long person is alive.
- He applies the principles of psychology to explain human behaviour. Human behaviour is response to external stimulus. All human behaviours can be classified into 2 types
 - Either a person does something or
 - avoids something

- These 2 behaviours are produced by the motion of particles in human mind. It also depends upon the stimulus.
- We do something because in response to a stimulus particles in human mind get inclined towards that stimulus.
 - We avoid because that stimulus has resulted into the movement of particles in opposite direction.
 - Human beings have 2 basic emotions: Love & Aversion.
 - Things which give you pleasure, human beings are inclined towards them & things which give you pain we have aversion against them.
 - Thus all human actions are guided by pleasure & pain. Man is utilitarian by nature. Man is individualistic by nature because experience of pleasure & pain is because of movement of particles in one's brain. Man cannot comprehend motions of particles in someone else's brain.
 - Pleasure & pain have materialistic origin.
 - He advocates the use of Geometry as geometry is logically consistent in its approach. He believes that Political Theories are to be logically consistent.
 - This logical consistency is seen in his political theory. He supports absolute state because man is highly individualistic in nature. Only absolute state can control the individualism in man.
 - According to him, man is guided by passions rather than reason in most of the situations.

Hobbes' Political Theory: Theory of Social Contract.

Theme of contract is a significant feature of capitalist economy. Hobbes applies the theme of contract to build the theory of state.

Steps in Social Contract:

- Human Nature:

His view is very near to that of Machiavelli.

Man is by nature utilitarian, individualistic, materialistic, possessive & fearful.

Thus he contradicts Aristotle. According to Hobbes man is not social by nature, man is social only out of necessity. Nature has not implanted social instincts in human beings. Man is rather anti-social.

Extreme individualism in him makes him anti-social.

His views on State of Nature

- It is a hypothetical concept. It is a stage before the creation of the state. It reflects how human life will be in the absence of state or human beings left naturally what will be nature of our life.

- o Life in the state of nature is nasty, poor, brutish & short

- o State of nature is a state of war of all against all.

- o In the state of nature there is no scope for art & culture, industry or letters or civilizations.

o Life of a human being is an endless pursuit of power that ceases only with his death.

- Description of state of nature by Hobbes.

State of nature is a hypothetical concept employed by social contract thinkers to explain human life if human beings are left to act according to their nature or left naturally.

- Description of state of Nature varies from thinker to thinker. FI

- It depends upon thinker's assumptions about human nature. According to Hobbes man is utilitarian by nature. Hence man wants to possess those things which give him pleasure. Urge for pleasure is unending. After experiencing one pleasure man wants to enjoy the other pleasure. Its search for pleasure ends only when motion of particles in his brain stops. Thus till he is alive he will search for pleasure.

- In the state of nature there is no common authority to provide security of his life & possessions.

- Man has to depend on self help for his survival.

- In a situation where there is no law & no morality/ethics power is the only means to achieve security. Hence each person will be trying to increase his power.

- He views every other person as a competitor.

- Hobbes established that all men are similar, everyone desires pleasure.

- Every man has equal capacity or potential to destroy other man.

Hence, in the state of nature is struggle for power.

Man suffers from security dilemma in the state of nature.

- There is no security of life, hence there is limited scope to enjoy the things that give him pleasure.

- According to him state of nature is antisocial,

pre-political. It is a state of anarchy, war of all against all. It is a situation full of pain

& no scope to enjoy pleasure. Hence utilitarian

man think to come out of this state of anarchy.

They come together to enter into social contract.

Social Contract:

Why Social Contract?

State of nature is full of pain.

Who are the contracting parties?

It is a contract of all with all. All human beings

are part of the contract. No one is left out.

Terms and conditions of the contract:

Every person enters into the contract with every other person.

All persons transfer their natural rights or powers

enjoyed to a 3rd party, i.e., state. This

transfer of rights is voluntary. People will transfer their rights to

the condition: everyone transfers

In the state of nature, individuals were sovereign.

After contract only state is sovereign. A state has all rights, individuals have only those rights which state will permit.

- A state is the beneficiary of the contract.

- People are tied to the terms & conditions of the contract.

There are no limitations on the state except one, i.e., state can't take away "Right of Self-preservation" in an arbitrary manner. Right to Life is most sacred of all rights.

- It is for preservation of life that man has transferred his sovereignty to the state.

- It is supreme responsibility of the state to protect man's right to Life. If a state fails to protect Right to Life it means it is a failure of state.

- Hobbes gives Right of Self Defence. Man can use force only for self defence not for killing anyone.

- State can not take away life of a person in an arbitrary manner or except according to the procedure established by law.

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PK Theory Plato Context

PK Good gov.

Context bad state: Athens.

Purpose Athens: Ideal state.

Diagnosis - Ignorance

Ruling class no idea of gov.

corruption.

education

Knowledge is power.

Criticism by Aristotle.

- Contract is irreversible. Once individual has transferred the sovereignty he cannot claim it back.

- In a territory there cannot be more than 1 sovereign.

If more than 1 sovereign, theory of sovereignty will collapse. No one is allowed to disobey the law.

Disobeying law means having one's own law. It means trying to act as a sovereign. It is not permitted.

Only the command of sovereign is law.

- Sovereign has monopoly over the use of police power, or instruments of violence. Citizens can't be allowed to keep private armies.

- State can use force to punish the law breaker.

He does not give any right to resist the state. He gives right to resistance only in 1 situation, i.e., state taking away Right to Life in an arbitrary manner, or is not protecting Right to Life.

- No one can be given an opportunity to take law & order.

- in their hand. If 1 person will assert his sovereignty,
- other persons will also assert it. We will go back to anarchy.
- Man is utilitarian by nature would not like to go back to
- anarchy because it is a painful situation. According to
- him man has only 2 options
- - state absolutism
- - anarchy

- o Man has only 2 options, either to live under absolute state
- or a complete anarchy.

● Above statement gives Hobbes' views on

● Sovereignty of the state.

● (What are his views?)

- In a particular territory & all persons living on that
- territory, the authority of state is absolute. He suggests
- that there are no limitations on the powers of the state,
- except w.r.t. the protection of man's Right to Self Preservation.
- He does not give Right to Resist except where state is unable
- to fulfill its prime responsibility to protect life.

- He gives state monopoly to possess & use police power
- on those who disobey the laws.

● (Reasons)

- The theory of sovereignty of state is built on
- understanding of human nature. Man is utilitarian &
- self centered. When absolute authority of state was not
- there, life of man was "nasty, poor, brutish & short".
- no scope for industry, navigation art or culture "

- Hence no one can be allowed to act as a sovereign.

● There is a danger of going back to anarchy Utilitarian

man will prefer order over liberty.

(Critical Evaluation)

Sovereignty of the state & Right of citizens to protest

the unjust laws has been a matter of debate. Scholars

belonging to schools like anarchism, gandhism give

primacy to man's right to resist the unjust laws.

Marxist also view state as an instrument of

exploitation & justify revolution against the state.

International law, though treats sovereignty of state

as sacred principle but permits international community

to intervene in domestic affairs of the state to protect

human rights.

We are living in the times when we witnessed

civil society activism, rise of social movement

against states & increase in public protest.

However it can be suggested that people should prefer

legal institutional means rather than direct actions &

such actions should be taken with extreme caution &

only when it becomes absolute necessity.

Hobbes' views on Liberty

o Liberty is where Law is silent.

capitalist favoured liberalism in later stages.

Above statement reflects Hobbes' view on

rights & liberties. (What is his view?)

Hobbes supports absolute state Individual

- has no right or liberty against the state. He does not
- believe in Theory of Natural Rights. Man had
- natural rights in the state of nature. Man had absolute
- liberty in the state of nature. However in the state
- of nature absolute rights & liberties resulted into
- absolute anarchy where might was right.
- - Rights come into existence only after state comes
- into existence. State gives protection to rights. Hobbes
- believes in legal theory of rights.
- - According to him, individual is free only where state
- has preferred to ~~leave~~ leave him free & has not made laws.
- Once state makes laws man is bound to obey the law.
- He will be punished for disobedience to law.
- - Hobbes' views have been supported by other utilitarian
- scholars like Bentham who says that 'Natural rights
- are non sense' & called it a language of terror.
- Conservative scholar Edmund Burke held that
- natural rights are metaphysical abstractions.
- - Though there are scholars who support Hobbsean
- ideas, however it is important to achieve the balance
- betⁿ liberty of individual & authority of state.
- Constitution of India tries to achieve this balance.
- Citizens enjoy 6 fundamental freedoms but none
- of the freedom is absolute & state can impose
- "Reasonable restrictions" in the interest of sovereignty,
- liberty etc.

Hobbes' Conception of Law

- Law is command of sovereign
- Covenant with swords are nothing but words.

covenants - contracts

This statement explains Hobbesian view on law. There are different schools of law. Different schools view the origin of law differently.

Natural Law	Religion	Positive/	Customary
Reason	god	Analytical law.	Law
	faith	state made law	

- According to Hobbes the law made by state can be treated as law in true sense. The most important characteristic of law is its power of enforcement, i.e. Power to punish those who disobey the law. A state has a power to punish those who disobey the law. i.e.

(Why state requires power to punish?)

People will not obey law without fear of punishment.

(Reason)

Passion dominates man, not reason.

He has compared natural law with the positive law to prove his point. In the state of nature, people were supposed to be governed by natural law.

Natural law understood through reason. Natural law also guides man what he should do & what he should not do. However because passions dominate over reason, man is unable to act as per the dictates of reason.

Natural law alone is not sufficient to establish peace & order. Instead of regarding natural law as law, he calls natural law as "Articles of Peace". If followed peace will prevail. However peace will not prevail because there is no common authority to enforce law & punish the law breaker.

The relevance of Hobbesian idea on law can be seen in the sphere of international politics. ^{International} ~~International~~ law is a weak law. It lacks power of enforcement. & hence in international politics what matters is power not law. International law is a law without teeth to bite.

Assessment of Hobbes as a thinker

- Hobbes a first modern thinker.
- Hobbes as greatest of all individualists.
- Hobbes as a scholar of bourgeois class / capitalist class.
- Leviathan is as useless as a book of history & fruitless as a book of politics.
- Hobbes is father of all of us — Karl Marx

Hobbes as first modern thinker.

- While Jean Bodin was standing at the gate of modernity, Hobbes was the first person to enter into the gate.

~~Hobbes or Machiavelli are~~

Some consider Hobbes while others consider Machiavelli as first modern thinker.

Though Machiavelli represents some of the features of modern times, yet his thoughts are not taken to be completely modern. We come to know about nation state, supremacy of state over church but we do not have an exhaustive understanding of principles & practices of modern political systems. The most defining feature of modern political states is the element of sovereignty. Earlier the notion of sovereignty was vague. In modern times it was accepted that a state is supreme in both external & internal sphere. The most important concept of modern political theory is the concept of Sovereignty of the state. Hobbes has given a complete theory of state sovereignty. He has given reasons as to why only state is sovereign. He has given characteristic features of sovereignty. For ex., a state has power to punish those who do not obey the state.

Machiavelli has not used the term sovereignty. Hobbes was not the 1st person to use this term. First person to use the term sovereignty was Jean Bodin. He was first person to explain the definition of sovereignty. According to him, a state has supreme power over citizens & subjects. However he could not give a comprehensive theory of sovereignty. Bodin could not come out of medieval mentality completely. He gave supremacy to state only.

In secular sphere. He could not establish that state is supreme even in religious sphere. He even directs that state should not intervene in customs & traditions. It was Hobbes who clearly puts all other associations under the state, establish the supremacy of state law, Thus sovereignty of the state. He is regarded as first modern thinker for other reasons also. ex, His suggestion that man is individualistic by nature, He does not consider pursuit of material welfare as sin & his method where he tried to implement the principles of Physics & Geometry, he preferred to make the laws of political life not from religious text but understanding human nature

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Hobbes: Greatest of all individualist thinkers.

- o Hobbes is individualist in his assumptions but absolutist in his conclusions.

Individualism

Methodological (using individualistic nature of man to develop theories)	Normative (being individualistic is not as'n)
[Hobbes is both]	

What is individualism?

We can trace the origin of individualism to the thoughts of sophists. Later on individualism as a philosophy develops only in modern times. Hobbes & Machiavelli have shown that man is by nature self centered.

The systematic explanation of individualistic nature of man was provided by Hobbes. Hobbes has utilised the concepts of Physics & Human Psychology to prove that all actions of human beings are guided by pleasure & pain. These are individualistic experiences. Hence by nature man is individualistic. Contrary to Aristotle he establishes that man is social, not out of nature but out of necessity. Thus he was the first person to give systematic explanation about individualistic nature of man. This makes Hobbes "Methodological Individualist". He builds his political theory on the individualistic nature of man. He creates an absolute state considering it as a necessity otherwise it would not be possible for an extremely egoistic man to come out of the state of nature.

Hobbes can also be regarded as Normative Individualist. He does not consider being individualist as sin. Rather he considers it as being natural. He realizes that being individualist it is not possible for a man to come out of state of anarchy. Hence he proposes social contract & creation of state.

He remains individualist as he has established that a state has been created for the preservation of life. A state is a product of will of man rather than will of god. Man has created state to fulfill his self interest. State is not created by god to punish man. State is not a divine institution, but an instrument of utility that comes into existence to reduce his pains & increase his pleasures. He also gives right to resist in case state fails to protect right to life or takes away this right in an arbitrary manner. Thus in both methodological & normative sense we can consider him as greatest of all individualist thinkers.

• Hobbes begins as an individualist & ends as an absolutist.

Above statement provides the basis for the justification for Leviathan state. Hobbes produces a state which is supreme. All sovereignty lies with the state. State having absolute powers over the individual. He justifies absolute state because of extremely individualistic nature of man. Hobbes is individualistic & absolutist at the same time. This does not mean there is an inconsistency in his thoughts.

Hobbes is one of the most logically consistent thinkers. He himself suggested the use of the approach of geometry to give political theory. He can see logical consistency between the 2 positions: Hobbes as an individualist & Hobbes as an absolutist. It is said that Hobbes begins as an individualist & ends as an absolutist.

Above statement needs a modification. Even after justifying an absolutist state he remains individualist.

It is for the protection of self that man has created the state. It is for this reason Hobbes is called as greatest of all individualist even when he supports absolute state.

o Hobbes as a scholar of Bourgeoisie/Capitalist class.

Hobbes' political philosophy provides ideological support to the needs & aspirations of the emerging bourgeoisie class. The following aspects in his theory show him as the thinker of emerging capitalist class.

- Hobbes supported the materialistic nature of man.
- Hobbes held that man is by nature pleasure seeking & for that reason man is possessive by nature. It is natural for man to own property.

The emerging bourgeoisie class supported natural princes/kings against Roman Empire & influence of church. Capitalism at its initial stages required clarity of law so that contract can be ^{entered into &} implemented.

They needed protection of their enterprises from external competition & threats. Establishment of a

national market was the need of the hour.

- Leviathan is useless as a book of history & fruitless as a book of political theory.

Hobbes was criticised a lot by his contemporaries. What Hobbes says was not digestible by many of his contemporaries who could not free themselves completely from medieval mentality. He & his work had to suffer severe criticisms. He was called as a monster, poisonous toad. His book was criticised as containing lewd principles. His book was even burned. However we can say that Hobbes is one of the greatest political thinkers produced by an English race. His work is a masterpiece not only of English literature but also of a modern political theory. Calling his book useless as a book of history is not justified. His objective was not to trace the history of state. He was neither an anthropologist nor a historian. We can't say that his book is fruitless from the perspective of political theory. In fact his book is necessary to understand various aspects of modern political life. Hobbes' contribution is acknowledged even by Karl Marx, who held that Hobbes is father of all of us.

(objective)

- The end of obedience is protection..
- Liberty or freedom signifies properly the absence of opposition in external impediments of motion.

This is Hobbes' view on the relationship between liberty & law. As a utilitarian scholar he gives.

primacy to law & order over liberty. In the state of nature man had absolute liberty. However this state was nasty, poor, brutish & short. Once states came into existence, man comes out of state of pain & in a situation where he can pursue his pleasure. He gives absolute authority to the state over individual except the limitation w.r.t. Right to Life. He says that man has only liberty to the extent state prefers not to make law & leave him free. In the state of nature there was absence of opposition to the external impediments of motion. Other human beings act as an impediment to motion. Law is opposition to impediment. When state comes into existence, it will make law to protect a person from external impediments.