

Thomas hobbes and francis bacon in english history history essay



Considered one of the most turbulent times in English History, The 17th Century could actually be looked at as an age of tremendous intellectual and economic advancement in Great Britain. Despite friction over issues of religion and church and state domestically, the British population grew and its economy prospered. Commerce expanded throughout the globe as Great Britain successfully developed and extended trade and business. Some of history's most famous minds were both a part, and a product of Great Britain's transition from an age of faith to one of reason. Thomas Hobbes was one of those famous minds and is now thought of as one of history's greatest natural law philosophers. (www. historyworld. net)

Thomas Hobbs was born in England in April of 1588. He was reportedly born prematurely due his mother's fear of the news of the approaching Spanish Armada. Hobbes was the second son of a local clergyman, but his father never played a role in his life. There are varying accounts as to why his father abandoned the family in Hobbes' youth, but he was nevertheless raised by a well-to-do uncle who supported his education and development. Hobbs started his schooling at 15 entering Magdalen College, Oxford, yet initially focused more attention on maps and charts. He graduated at 19 and soon served as private tutor to William Cavendish, a wealthy boy not much younger than Hobbes who later became the 2nd Earl of Devonshire. As Cavendish's tutor, Hobbes had the opportunity to travel and tutored Cavendish and his brother on the European Continent for several years. It was during this time that Hobbes broadened not only his world view, but more importantly his philosophical views. He studied the classics and developed and increasing interest in politics and history. (www.

notablebiographies. com) Hobbes association with the Cavendish family afforded him number of resources which probably played a large part in developing his scholarly pursuits.

As a scholar, Hobbes first major work was a translation of Greek historian Thucydides' History of the Peloponnesian Wars, in 1629. Hobbes indicated that he translated History of the Peloponnesian Wars during a period of civil unrest to remind political leaders of his day that the ancient scholars thought democracy to be the least effective form of government. Thucydides work represented that understanding the past was important in determining the proper course of action. Regarding Thucydides' great History of the Peloponnesian Wars: Hobbes stated,

“ For the principal and proper work of history being to instruct, and enable men by the knowledge of actions past to bear themselves prudently in the present and providently in the future, there is not extent any other (merely human) that doth more fully and naturally perform it” (<http://history.wisc.edu>)

In Hobbes's view, one of the most significant intellectual events of his life occurred when he was forty when he stumbled upon a copy of Euclid's geometry. His second work, A Short Treatise on First Principles, expressed his deep interest in the study of geometry. Hobbes went on to continue his travels throughout Europe and spent time with many of the most influential minds of his time. In France, he met with Mersenne and members of the scientific community including Gassendi and Descartes. In Italy, he spent time with Galileo. In order to escape the civil unrest in England, Hobbes

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spent the next eleven years in France and taught Mathematics to Charles, Prince of Wales. It was in the 1640's that Hobbes developed plans for future philosophical work. As Civil War was imminent in England, he was inspired to write on issues related to society and published *De Cive* in Paris in 1642. Hobbes later published the same work in English under the title *Philosophical Rudiments concerning Government and Society as the Commonwealth took hold of the government*. The book was highly contentious as both sides of the civil war criticized its views. ([www. philosophypages. com](http://www.philosophypages.com))

In light of the developments in Paris, Hobbes feared France was no longer a safe haven for the English court in exile and returned to England in 1651. Upon his return he published one of his most famous works, *Leviathan*. In *Leviathan*, Hobbes contends that all human acts are self-serving, even if they appear to be altruistic, and that in a natural state which lacks the organization of government, human beings would act in a completely selfish manner. Hobbes believes that humans are basically equal from mental and physical perspectives and are therefore naturally likely to compete amongst one another ultimately resulting in conflict. He believed that democracy would inevitably fail because people are solely motivated by self-interest and that human's desire for power and wealth would only result in conflict of humans amongst themselves. Hobbes perspective was that governments were responsible for protecting the people from their own selfish nature. In Hobbes view, government would have power similar to that of a sea monster, or *leviathan* and saw a king as a necessary figure of authority. (Clarendon)

Widely considered as one of the 17th century's most influential natural law philosophers, Thomas Hobbes had a significant impact on British social, economic and political theory. Hobbes developed status in a variety of studies and shaped intellectual philosophy until this day. ' He was known as a scientist, as a mathematician, as a translator of the classics, as a writer on law, as a disputant in metaphysics and epistemology; not least, he became notorious for his writings and disputes on religious questions'.

(<http://homepage.newschool.edu>) However, it is as a result of his writings on politics and morality that he has been eternally remembered. Several of Hobbes many works were never published during his lifetime, among the titles that remained unpublished is: the tract on Heresy, and Behemoth: the History of the Causes of the Civil Wars of England, among others. Hobbes outlived many of his contemporaries and continued to write completing his autobiography when he was eighty-four years old. He finished Latin translations of the Iliad and the Odyssey in his final years, and in 1675 he left London to live with the Cavendish family in Derbyshire until his death at Hardwick on December 4, 1679. (www.egs.edu)

200px-Thomas_Hobbes_(portrait).jpg bacon.jpg

Hobbes wasn't the only great philosopher to come out of the Elizabethan Age; Sir Francis Bacon was another leading natural philosopher during the period. Bacon was statesman, a lawyer, and Member of Parliament. His writings included subjects regarding questions of law, politics, and church and state. He also wrote on issues on which questioned societal and ethical norms in some of his most famous writings such as Essays or in his primary

work on natural philosophy, *The Advancement of Learning*. (<http://plato.stanford.edu>)

Francis Bacon was the son of Nicolas Bacon, the Lord Keeper of the Seal of Elisabeth I. He enrolled at Trinity College Cambridge at the age 12 and at an early stage of his development began to reject the common philosophical thought of the day which was generally based on Aristotelianism and Scholasticism. Bacon's father passed when he was only 18, and as the youngest son he was left with very little financial means. Although Bacon is said to have had rich relatives, he received little assistance, yet he pursued studies in law and had become a member of the House of Commons by 23. (www.oregonstate.edu)

Bacon went on to publish *Essays*, *Colours of Good and Evil*, and *Meditationes Sacrae* in 1597. After Queen Elizabeth 1st death and the rise of James I in 1603, Bacon's political career began to grow. He was knighted in 1603 and several honors followed: Solicitor General in 1604, Attorney General in 1613, Lord Chancellor in 1618, Baron Verulam in 1618, and Viscount St. Albans in 1621. (<http://bacon.thefreelibrary.com/>) Under King James, Bacon was appointed to a number of posts, and like his father, was eventually given the title of Keeper of the Great Seal. He was unfortunately caught in the middle of a power struggle between the King and Parliament which resulted in Bacon having to forfeit his political status, honor, and much of his personal wealth. (www.oregonstate.edu) Only 5 days five days after he had been given the Viscount St. Alban's title, he was accused of bribery in 1621. Bacon admitted to the charges and was subsequently banished from the court and received fines. Bacon never paid the fines, but his sentence was reduced and <https://assignbuster.com/thomas-hobbes-and-francis-bacon-in-english-history-history-essay/>

he was only confined to punishment in the tower for four days. Although the sentence had been reduced he would never again be able to hold political office for the rest of his life.

Bacon later published *Novum Organum*, or True Directions Concerning the Interpretation of Nature. In this work Bacon suggested that it was time to let go of Aristotelian ideas and in doing so helped to establish the foundations for modern science and philosophy. Following his dismissal from the court, four additional books followed: *Historia Ventorum*, *Historia Vitae et Mortis*, *Augmentis Scientiarum* and *Apothegms*. Some reports indicated that that Bacon assisted in editing the King James Bible, but that remains subject to debate until this day. There are groups that support, as well as dispute this claim, with equal numbers on either side of the debate. (<http://science.jrank.org>)

Bacon's contribution to contemporary thought focused greatly on the relationship between science and social philosophy. In Bacon's view 'knowledge is power' and that an expansion of knowledge and learning among individuals can help to offset many of societal issues. Many people in his time considered Bacon a genius. " His work, which attempted to encompass the three realms of natural, human and divine existence, has had a significant impact on the study of history, law and philosophy." (www.findingdulcinea.com) In 1626, Bacon attempted to test the impact of the cold on the decay of meat. In experimenting with stuffing a chicken with snow, he fell ill, developed pneumonia, and died on April 9th, 1626.