

Political science

Politics



Political Science Title :- “ Hobbes contribution as a social contraction-A critical analysis Submitted by- Sanskriti R. Mall B. A. LLB (Hons) V Sem

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CHAPTER-I INTRODUCTION The English philosopher Thomas Hobbes (1588-1679) is best known for his political thought, and deservedly so. His vision of the world is strikingly original and still relevant to contemporary politics. His main concern is the problem of social and political order: how human beings can live together in peace and avoid the danger and fear of civil conflict. He poses stark alternatives: we should give our obedience to an unaccountable sovereign (a person or group empowered to decide every social and political issue). Otherwise what awaits us is a “ state of nature” that closely resembles civil war — a situation of universal insecurity, where all have reason to fear violent death and where rewarding human cooperation is all but impossible. One controversy has dominated interpretations of Hobbes. Does he see human beings as purely self-interested or egoistic? Several passages support such a reading, leading some to think that his political conclusions can be avoided if we adopt a more realistic picture of human nature. However, most scholars now accept that Hobbes himself had a much more complex view of human motivation. A major theme below will be why the problems he poses cannot be avoided simply by taking a less “ selfish” view of human nature. Statement of Problem To study the concept of social contract theory under Hobbes purview as differentiated from other

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philosophers Objectives * To study evolution of social contract theory * To study the need for its existence * To study the role social contract plays in establishing the concept of law and society Hypothesis * Fear of violence is the most important impulse Research Question Is it justifiable to say that Hobbes is an absolute anti-democrat when we apply similar principle in today's democracy? Research Methodology A doctrinal research methodology has been adopted for developing this project where different articles, books, e-resources have been referred to. Review of Literature Hobbes intention was to ground certain of his more significant conclusions about politics on what he believed to be relevant facts about human nature. In each version the discussion leads to the same conclusion: people are such that when there is no civil government, there will be a "state of nature" in which there will be a "war of all against all." This view of the state of nature is the basis on which Hobbes constructs his theories concerning the justification and powers of civil authority and its most efficient forms. While the outline of Hobbes's argument and the conclusion he reaches in each case are the same, the three versions contain some very clear and striking differences. In the Elements Hobbes claims we know about the passions of other people and are able to identify these passions, but in Leviathan his account of human nature provides a general basis for developing a specific argument why we cannot know the passions of others. Also, as Hobbes became more of a skeptic, his political argument became stronger. The conclusion about the state of nature in the Elements is weak and unconvincing, but the increasing skepticism of the later versions provides better support for Hobbes's view concerning the war of all against all. Natural Right and Sovereign Duty According to Hobbes' account, the "right" <https://assignbuster.com/political-science-critical-essay-samples/>

is contrasted immediately with the "law" of nature, whereby individuals are forbidden to do anything destructive of their lives or to omit the means of self-preservation. These two categories—the right and law of nature—are the twin pillars of Hobbes' jurisprudence. Thereafter they are deployed, always together, at two levels in his theory: the state of nature and civil society. Unlike some contemporaries who favor a sincere embrace of people's equal worth, Thomas Hobbes saw the political uses for insincerity in culturally diverse societies teeming with contentious and distrustful characters. In fact, insincerity for Hobbes was as vital to the welfare of civil society as his more familiar account of authorization. This work explores a relatively neglected aspect of Hobbes theory by working upon account of his arguments about insincerity in law and social norms and using it to revisit our contemporary situation of racial conflict and mistrust.

CHAPTER-II Hobbes and state of nature

What appears today as rampant narcissism, a psychological state of nature affecting all aspects of social and economic life, should be understood not as a natural outgrowth of human development but as a pathologic outburst of energy that depends on the relation established between intrapsychic and interpersonal (social) elements. Hobbes' state of nature mirrors these modern psychic structures; it is a theory whose behavioral properties dominate modern consciousness. It may seem peculiar to borrow from a clinical terminology to elaborate Hobbes. Yet the similarities between the clinical descriptions and those of Hobbes are quite remarkable. The difference lies in the issue of assessment: how to judge the significance of possessive and narcissistic states of mind and how to interpret theories of etiology. In terms of behavior, however, both the pathological narcissist and the natural man resemble each other. Using this interpretive language,

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which departs from either strict textual or historical analysis, situates the Hobbesian argument within a psychological gestalt. It remains faithful to Hobbes in the sense that the method attempts to translate into a modern language psychological metaphor that defines the Hobbesian psychology and the theory of human nature and motivation. I recognize the speculative dimension of such "translation," and do not intend for the argument to present a "definitive" way of looking at the psychology of Hobbes' natural condition. I only wish to raise a few questions by relying on clinical "terminology" and turning to some of the more interesting (and political) conclusions of the clinical data. Hobbes took very seriously the issue of "human nature," and the power of drives in defining and limiting action. It is a theory whose modernity appears through the importance Hobbes attaches to uncertainty, anxiety, fear, and appetite. And it is a theory of human nature that in some respects requires a psychological language to draw out its implications. Hobbes conceives of the theory of the "state of nature" (and its implicit assumptions about human nature) as an essential truth about the self and its psychodynamic qualities; 2 it is a psychology of action, and its principles-govern all human behavior. What I shall argue, however, is that this theory-which lays the foundation for a great deal of later theorizing on human nature and the content of the self-actually portrays a pathological condition, a derangement of consciousness and motivation rather than a "truth" about the foundations of human experience. Hobbes' natural condition elaborates a theory of human nature; it is a speculation on what life might be like, were there no common power to contain human passion and desire. "It may be perceived what manner of life there would be, were there no common Power to feare." The state of nature, then, becomes something

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more than an attempt to hypothesize on the origins of impulse, passion, and desire; it is an argument justifying a specific theory of political order and form, a "science" of rule. What the state of nature means as life, as experience, develops for Hobbes into a justification for the creation of a political sovereign distinguished by its objective structure, its unambiguous language, its capacity to construct common political signs understood by all in the commonwealth. It is an "artificial" man, a structure of power. What I am arguing here, however, is that the state of nature, in addition to being a fiction, implies considerably more; it is the description of an intra-psychic environment whose modern analogue appears in the character traits of the pathological narcissist. While the natural man is drawn as unmediated appetite, it is a caricature that provides Hobbes with a theory of political obligation; the fiction allows the self to legitimately transfer or displace psychic energy from political dispute to economic endeavor. It stabilizes an external political environment by prohibiting dispute over the common "names" that constitute laws and regulations in the polity. It also effectively argues that human nature, transferred to a "commodious" pursuit of self-interest, will not in any way interfere with or harm the regulation of the political culture. That, however, is quite an assumption. It is difficult to conceive of such displacement without the re-directed, or in modern terms repressed, psychic energy having considerable impact on how the culture organizes its pursuit of the commodious life and how it constructs its politics and its laws of organization. It is of course for Hobbes absolutely essential that human beings cease destroying each other. And movement into civil society assures a covenant that makes survival into a realistic opportunity. Yet, even though the aggregation of individual wills becomes more "

civilized" under the " common Power," even though individuals relinquish their own sovereignty to a common authority, the intra-psychic facts of the state of nature do not disappear. Anxiety and " fear" remain within the self and exercise a destructive impact on a whole series of interpersonal transactions that depend on the objectification and quantification of human energy. What exists as physical movement in the state of nature stays within the psyche as fixed psychological properties. And even with the construction of a common power, the state of nature finds itself elaborated as an intra-psychic fact: the self traverses experience without an internally defined sense of limit, moral responsibility, and law. It is precisely this internal state of nature that describes the inner world of the pathological narcissist. It is a self in perpetual dread, but with a set of externally visible personae that belie the empty internal universe. The Hobbesian concept of power in the state of nature is analogous to what the clinicians call " control, triumph and incorporation." In both conditions, there is the extraordinary lack of any sense of limits to incorporation. Neither conscience nor restraint attaches to any movement in either the narcissist's intra-psychic environment or the Hobbesian natural condition. Each construction is a monad, concerned only with immediate gratification and survival. And both types define experience through the need to devour or incorporate others. For example, therapists treating narcissistic patients often feel " emptied out, helpless, lost in the presence of the completely self-sufficient self-satisfied and omnipotent patient."⁸ Or, " the patient feels relieved when everything unpleasant can be immediately discharged into the analyst during a session." To survive in the state of nature, the Hobbesian self is forced to conceive of its existence as power. If it did not, it would naturally be frightened and overwhelmed by

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the power of others. So, there seems to be an uncanny resemblance between Hobbes' description of the natural condition, the paranoid mentality of natural man, and pathological narcissism. Market activity in both Hobbesian commercial society and modern technocratic culture aggravates narcissistic personality disturbances, intensifies paranoid reactions, and encourages the manipulation of others through action whose primary aim lies in self-gratification. Pathological aspects of narcissism easily adapt to the social order and its possessive ethos. These aspects remain functional to the interests of corporate and organizational bureaucracy. What Hobbes then discovered in his concept of the natural condition appears in contemporary society as living psychological and economic fact, a pathological internality transforming the ego into a deadly battlefield.

CHAPTER-III Hobbes and leviathan

Natural right and sovereign duty

In the state of nature, the right of nature implies that each person has a right to all things while the law of nature obliges each to lay aside this right if possible. The result is the covenant in which individuals establish political authority by laying down their right to all things and authorizing its use by the sovereign. This authority is absolute in two senses: it is unlimited, since it exists as each subject's right to all things; and it is unconditional since, by giving up their own use of this right, the subjects have no right left by which to judge the legitimacy of the sovereign's acts. Although authority is absolute the obligation of subjects is not, because the right of nature-self-preservation-itself cannot be laid aside. Hobbes notes that there are " Certain Rights of Nature" which cannot be renounced. These include specifically the rights of resistance, self-defence.

Absolute authority

Absolute authority in Hobbes' account is followed by a set of limits on the obligation of subjects to obey

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and on the proper use of law and punishment. These limits are new in Leviathan: they do not appear in Hobbes' earlier works, *The Elements* and *De Cive*. Although certain natural rights are understood as non-renounceable in these works, ¹² the idea is not developed into anything corresponding to the "true Liberty" of Leviathan. The sovereign's authority is clearly absolute. It flows from each subject's right to all things, and cannot logically be limited by the subject's true liberties. These liberties are purely private and individual; they do not in any way add up to public or constitutional restrictions on the sovereign's authority. Hobbes' conception differs in that natural rights are liberties, they specify what individuals may do—for example, self-preservation—but without referring to others or imposing duties upon them. Consequently such rights do not limit the authority of the state. Rather, the natural right of the subject and the authority of the sovereign are logically independent; subjects are entitled by natural right not to obey certain commands but the sovereign is entitled to punish them for doing so. It may be objected, however, that these duties do not truly "limit" the exercise of "authority". As duties, they are merely Hobbes' moral views about how authority "ought" to be exercised; but they say nothing about the nature (or extent) of such authority itself. The limit of natural right The range of natural rights in Hobbes' account is limited implicitly by the law of nature, which is defined conjointly with the right of nature and as a limit on it. Nothing could be claimed as a natural right in society if it were destructive of one's life. ²⁴ From this, Hobbes derives two more specific limits. First, he treats natural rights as so important that they cannot in principle be renounced: if an individual expressly tries to renounce such rights "he is not to be understood as if he meant it" (14: 192) because no individual good

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could conceivably be gained. Hence only items of demonstrable importance can be claimed as natural rights in society. A further limit is the requirement of “ equal recognition. ” Natural rights in Hobbes’ account are generally understood to be distinctive insofar as-unlike the Lockean version-they do not entail correlative duties. This is only half-true. In fact, natural rights are matched by duties to respect them but the duties arise separately, from natural law as a logically independent principle. As a result, natural rights and natural duties are systematically complementary but the complementarity is not entailed logically. A further result, mirroring this complementarity, is Hobbes’ two-tiered conception of political authority as absolute but inscribed with limits on its proper use. These limits require that the exercise of the authority of law and punishment by the sovereign respect the natural rights of the subjects but if rights of individuality matter, then the Hobbesian model is superior though it does not entail correlative duties or limit the authority of the state, these duties can be established independently and in terms which imply clear standards for the proper exercise of political authority. The result is a theory which permits a richer understanding of the rights of the citizen and a more active role for the state in protecting them.

CHAPTER-IV Hobbes and power In the beginning there exist God and the unformed matter of the world. God in His omnipotence commands that this matter take form. He continues to hold the now-formed universe in its order by His Supreme Power. As part of this universe He creates man, an animal like every other animal but for the unique gift of language. By language man achieves reason. But God does not institute governments for men (except in the unique case of the Jews). Men must create their own polities. In the absence of any such " artificial" polities, men

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exist in a state of "mere nature" like unto the original unformed chaos. The state of mere nature is a war of all against all, lacking any civilized decencies or commodities, where fear of death pervades. To escape this chaos, men covenant with one another to invest all their separate powers into one sovereign artificial power? The Leviathan, the "mortal god." This Leviathan then establishes order in the social world, building a new social universe in accordance with the Laws of Nature, and holding this new commonwealth together by his absolute power. He interprets God to his people, and God alone holds the sovereign responsible for his acts. But this idea should not be confused with some "divine right" arguments, since in Hobbes's system the "mortal god" is not instituted directly from God but indirectly through the covenant of all with all. He thus is said to have his authority from the subjects, but also indirectly from God. Hobbes argued in many places that God and the soul must both be corporeal. He also maintained that it was impious to assign any attribute to God other than existence, infinity, eternity, incomprehensibility, and omnipotence. Infinity, eternity, and incomprehensibility he calls "negative" attributes; they express only our inability to conceive God's magnitude, duration, and so on. Indeed, apart from existence, the only positive attribute he consistently applies to God is "omnipotence. But Hobbes derives a good deal from this one attribute: God's governance of all things, His role as Creator, His authorship of all human actions and laws, His knowledge of all things. If we consider God's evident desire to create an ordered universe, the laws of nature were the rules he followed in generating order, necessarily based on his understanding of the "nature" of the unformed matter which was to be the material cause. And they were "rational" constructs, and precepts. And because He commanded

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them, they were " laws." Imitating God's Operations in the Creation, the philosopher first comes to an understanding of human nature, which he knows " by nature" if he will examine his own behavior disinterestedly and apply the already-proven-reliable methods of Euclid, Galileo, and Harvey. These accurate descriptions of human behavior are rational reconstructions by the philosopher examining a creation of God, of the regularities built by God into the man-machine. With this understanding the philosopher can construct his system, asking how we can bind these irrational, selfish, concupiscent, competitive men-machines into one harmonious commonwealth. Moreover, for this is the greatest difficulty, how can we do this and not violate their essential natures? For the mechanism that violates the nature of the material from which it is built must collapse. So the civil philosopher works out, by accurate addition and subtraction of the basic definitions he has already derived, a system of " laws" adherence to which underlies any and every lasting, peaceful, civil order. The laws of nature from this consideration, are rules and precepts for the commonwealth has yet to be constructed, and men do not understand yet exactly their obligation to it. Alexander also obligatory and binding, because they are found out by reason, are thereby commands of God which men are obliged to will to follow: commands of God because God commands order in His Creation, and in the Scriptures, and because it is He who built into us the processes which result in the Laws of Nature, and because God controls the Reason and Will that lead us to conceive the Laws of Nature . It is absolutely necessary, where a company of men combine and form themselves into a body politic, that some one should preside as the governing principal, who in kingdoms goes usually under the name of King. In this order, as out of an embryo, is

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formed an human body, with one head to govern and control it; so, from a confused multitude is formed a regular kingdom, which is a sort of a mystical body, with one person, as the head, to guide and govern. And, as in the natural body (according to the philosopher) the heart is the first thing which lives, having in it the blood, which it transmits to all the other members, thereby imparting life, and growth and vigor; so, in the body politic, the first thing which lives and moves is the intention of the people, having it in the blood, that is, the prudential care and provision for the public good, which it transmits and communicates to the head, as the principal part; and to all the rest of the members of the said body politic, whereby it subsists and is invigorated. The law under which the people is incorporated, may be compared to the nerves or sinews of the body natural; for, as by these the whole frame is fitly joined together and compacted, so is the law that ligament (to go back to the truest derivation of the word, by which the body politic and all its several members are bound together and united in one entire body. And as the bones and all the other members of the body preserve their functions, and discharge their several offices by the nerves, so do the members of the community by the law. And as the head of the body natural cannot change its nerves or sinews, cannot deny to the several parts their proper energy, their due proportion and aliment of blood; neither can a king, who is the head of the body politic, change the laws thereof, nor take from the people what is theirs, by right, against their consents. CHAPTER-V Conclusion Hobbes argued that a life without a master or without any subjection to laws would make impossible, all of the basic security upon which comfortable, sociable civilized life depends. There would be no culture no industry etc. and above all life would result into a violent death. Many <https://assignbuster.com/political-science-critical-essay-samples/>

criticize Hobbes for being pessimistic about state of nature but according to him, people have almost similar mental, physical attributes and everybody wants to preserve their own life. He says, state of nature is a state of war. This can be explained as, everybody is competing for resources which are scarce and thus, a situation of conflict arises. Hobbes further says that people are short-sighted without properly considering the effect of their long term interest. This would be a failure of the idea of rationality but people are guided by factors such as passions, jealousy etc. Hobbes argued that whatever be the form of government should have absolute power. It should not be divided nor limited because he believes that every issue is connected with one another, such as legislature limits of political obligations. He says that subjects have a right of self defense against the sovereign power, given them the right to disobey or dissent when their lives are in danger. About religion, he says that though man is rational but he cannot do everything individually otherwise, there wouldn't be any need of social contract. Hence, God is for ultimate good.

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17: 2) and De Cive (3: 14) the law of nature requiring the acknowledgment of equality is followed (as in Leviathan) by a reference to rights which cannot be renounced. There is also a statement in De Cive (2: 18-19) but not in The Elements that no one can be obliged by certain contracts. There is nothing in either work corresponding to the "true Liberty" of Leviathan. On the contrary, liberty is understood simply as "that part of naturall Right, which is granted and left to Subjects by the civill Lawes" (13: 15). References here are to Thomas Hobbes, *The Elements of Law, Natural and Politic*, ed. by Ferdinand Tönnies (2nd ed.; New York: Barnes and Noble, 1969) and to Thomas Hobbes, *De Cive*, ed. by Howard Warrender (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1983). [7]. Jean Hampton, *Hobbes and The Social Contract Tradition* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986), 243-46; and Richard Tuck, *Hobbes* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1989), 75-76. Tuck, for example argues effectively against the common impression of Hobbes as a theorist of absolute state power (69-75) but then describes these limitations as moral duties as if the only alternative were enforceable rights of the subjects (75). [8]. D. J. C. Carmichael, "The Right of Nature in Leviathan," *Canadian Journal of Philosophy* 18 (1988), 257-70. Tuck (*Hobbes*, 63) [9]. Sir John Fortescue, *De Laudibus Legum Angliae*, trans. Francis Gregor (Cincinnati, 1874), pp. 36-37.