

# Self-interest by hobbes essay



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' Self- Interest' by Hobbes clearly reflects his main philosophical teachings. He touches many important aspects of his philosophy in this brief essay.

He believes that man is basically self interested and he all his actions can be understood in the light of his survival satisfying his personal needs. As every man has his own wants naturally they come in conflict with others. Hobbes interprets his understanding with help of psychology. In the pre-social man all his likes and dislikes have got their origin in his primary objective i.

e. self-preservation'. (140)The perpetual desires of man make him restless in his pursuit of power and power which come to an end only with his death. When several people desire the same things, enmity is bound to arise. Hobbes strongly believes that in the natural state, men fight with one another and there will be perpetual fights between them. ' Nature has given to every one a right to all' (146).

So every man has the same powers as the others have. As a result, he lives in a state of constant fear, anticipating some threat from others. To avoid that he comes into contact with another man so that he can avoid danger from him. Like this people enter into contacts with one another. Thus, the social relations are created artificially. All the social contacts have originated from the fear every man has got from others.

Hobbes argues that society originates out of self interest and fear and not out of natural feelings of love and affection for others. So there should be someone who is more powerful and who can control all the people. And he is called Sovereign. Whatever the Sovereign says becomes law.

No man has any power to go against the Sovereign. Hobbes states that there should be some civil power to determine what is right, wrong and what is good and bad in society. Such power, he believes, should be endowed with single sovereign power. The sovereign could be either a single individual or assembly, but it should have sovereign power to decide all matters relating to the state including the religious matter. Thus, Hobbes makes his stand clear on individual and the sovereign. Nature of Justice and morality Hobbes considers the ethical questions from the psychological stand point.

He feels that the concept of what is good and what is bad is primarily decided by man based on his desires and appetites. Whatever he needs that is considered good and whatever he hates is evil and bad. Hobbes strongly contends that all these are based his primary objective, i. e. self – preservation. Various objects that man desires become good for him.

Whoever helps him in getting those objects for him become his friends. Similarly riches and wealth attract people, hence it is considered friendly. According to him, man is driven into actions by his need for self-preservation. It is especially so in the state of nature where each individual respects others desires out of his own fear but not because of any moral considerations. Nature has given everyone a right to all.

Hobbes maintains that the concept of moral obligation has neither meaning nor application in the state of nature. (147) Rather they arise concomitantly with the establishment of a civil society. The perpetual war among men will come to an end with civil society. The laws of nature are the origin for the

concept of Justice. Where there is no covenant, there is no right transferred. Then everyone has right on everything.

But when a covenant is made, breaking it is unjust. (151). According to Hobbes, Injustice is no other than ‘ non performance of covenant’. It is clear from this that ‘ whoever is not unjust is just. ’ Hobbes says that the traditional concept of justice is ‘ the constant will of giving to every man his own’ (151).

Logically speaking, where there is no ownership, there is no scope for injustice. Hobbes states the nature of justice consists in keeping of valid covenants.