

Human nature as depicted in thomas hobbe's book leviathan

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Thomas Hobbes' Leviathan (1651) is a critical work which argues that all men are united by their self-interests, and natural inclinations to acquire (the instinct of self-preservation and the desire for pleasure. Historically, leviathan commonly referred to a mammoth sea monster haunting the depths of the seas, mentioned in six passages the Old Testament of the Bible in Job 3: 8, Job 40: 15-41: 26, Amos 9: 3, Psalms 74: 13-23, Psalm 104: 26 and Isaiah 27: 1. Depicted as a fusion of both dragon and serpent, the leviathan which mercilessly destroys so many creatures including mankind, is promised a merciless demise at the end of earth's history. In Mesopotamian myth, the leviathan is represented as having seven heads and whose virulent enemies were the people of God. Strangely, Hobbes compares man's own egoistic nature as a leviathan, relishing in dominion over other men he counts as his intrinsic property. He counts three major causes of conflict which stirs up war: competition, diffidence, and glory. Therefore, war is the natural product of man's belligerence, his passion for self-aggrandizement, and his inclination to seem superior to others.

Laws and government are existent and in force to protect and curb these lusts of man. Lawlessness and the lack of a common superior power begets civil wars, force and fraud. "War of man against every man," sums up man's acquisitive and controversial nature in the name of service to his purposes. The motives of peace are judged as the fear of death and the desire to peace to gain materialistic ends and enjoy comforts. Absolute Monarchy is upheld as a regime which fosters relative peace and provides protection because The Supremacy of One counterbalances and checks the strivings of men among themselves for there is Another that surpasses them all.

The right of nature is identified as “ jus naturale” is the liberty that each man possesses to protect himself from imminent danger or the right to self-preservation. The law of nature is identified as “ lex naturalis” is the law which proscribes man’s self-destruction or which threatening his own existence. Therefore, man’s own security and safety are priority. Because of man’s contentious nature, peace is unattainable and war inevitable. Man’s conceding his right to defend himself or to use any means necessary to preserve his self and his interests can be a way to peace. Man’s right to self-preservation may be renounced or transferred; but it is in the transference of his right which most often redounds to his benefit and shows his own self-interest. Here, Hobbes alludes to the social contract which in effect transfers man’s natural right (or rights of nature) to a superior body to govern and rule such as a king or civil government.

Establishment of a common power aids to shield against foreign invasion and protects the compatriots from one another based on the “ All against All principle.” Contract furthers the cause for common peace and safety and security even as the subjects transfer their rights. Commonwealth stands as the product of the voluntary surrender of the natural rights or (rights of nature/ laws of nature) to a common ruler or an assembly of governors where they are entrusted with the protection and security, peace and defence of all. As a consequence, the emergence of leviathan is described as the great monster (the civil governing body) in whom is united the amalgamation of the wills of a people and/or nation.