

# Political philosophy in "of cannibalism" by michel de montage

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Michel De Montaigne's *Of Cannibalism* uses several different themes and techniques to exemplify his belief that human nature is innately good.

Montaigne slanders the Resurrection Western culture by comparing them to uncivilized natives who live with nature. Montaigne begins by bashing at the Western World's values and stating, "really it is those that we have changed artificially and led astray from the common order that we should rather call wild" (Montaigne 152).

Montaigne then refers to the natives' life and highlights all of the stigmas that are absent in their lives, "the very words that signify lying, treachery, dissimulation, avarice, envy, belittling, pardon-unheard of" (Montaigne 153)... Rather their culture values "valor against the enemy and love for their wives" (Montaigne 154). According to Montaigne the concept of human nature is eternally good and derives from the simplistic ways of the natives. The European Western culture refers to the natives who live with nature in simplicity and harmony as barbaric, when in fact they surpass the natives in several forms of barbarity... I think there is more barbarity in eating a man alive than in eating him dead; and in tearing him by tortures and the rack a body still full of feeling, in roasting a man bit by bit, in having him bitten and mangled by dogs and swine, than in roasting and eating him after he is dead" (Montaigne 155). Essentially, Montaigne is justifying the so-called "barbaric" natives and their practice of cannibalism by implying that his European people are even crueler due to the corruption of society.

Europeans have damaged the pure state of nature with their overspent, while the "savages" live in a state of bliss. "So we may call these people

barbarians, in respect to the rules of reason, but not in respect to ourselves  
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who surpass them in every kind of barbarity" (Imitation 158). Imitation is implying that part of our deferred human nature is to view any other belief, lifestyle, or ritual different than ours as barbaric"... Each man calls barbarism whatever is not his own 152).

Michael De Imitation believes that the natives lifestyle is our origin of society; the Western culture is the lifestyle presented by the soiled human mind. He states " Neither is it reasonable that art should gain the pre-eminence of our great and powerfulmother nature. We have so surcharged her with the additional ornaments and graces we have added to the beauty and riches of her own works by our inventions, that have almost smothered her" (Imitation 1 52) thus exemplifying how our society has taken away the value of purity and simplification.

Consequently, Imitation sheds light upon how our human nature also continuously pushes us to reach further than we can. Our society originated upon simplicity of the natives " They are still in that pappy state of desiring only as much as their natural needs demand, anything beyond that is superfluous to them" (Imitation 1 56) we have evolved to become a barbaric society that finds natures purity mundane. Theethnographicresource that Imitation used to determine his stance upon human nature is primarily a secondary source man who lived with the natives for ten to twelve years.

Essentially, Imitation used the information from this man to draw his conclusions regarding human nature and the origin of our society. This information enabled him to make a drastic comparison between he two groups, allowing him to oversimplify the natives and bash on the Western

Europeans. With these resources, Imitation stated that our pure unsoiled human nature is good and our society and desire to strive for more has corrupted us and consequently propelled the evolution in human behavior.

All of Montage's beliefs are primarily drawn from another man who lived with the natives, since this is a secondary resource Montage's credibility is highly questionable and more likely to be biased upon is interpretation of that man. Another significant writer whose thoughts and ideas correlate with Michael De Imitation is Rousseau Jean-Jacques. In Rousseau The Social Contract and Discourses he described all the different types of inequalities that exist between humans in an attempt to determine whether they are "natural/physical" or "unnatural".

His overall belief, like Imitation, is that human nature is innately good and it is our society that has corrupted us. Rousseau states that the savage man is self sufficient and content with what he has, " I see him satisfying his hunger at the first brook; finding his bed at the foot of the tree which afforded him a repast; and, with hat, all his wants supplied" (Rousseau 47). Rousseau begins by explaining how the nature of man is very similar to that of an animal and the only difference between man and animals appear when the concept of perfectibility and free will is included. With this difference, that in the operations of the brute, nature is the sole agent, whereas man has some share in his own operations, in his character as a free agent. The one chooses and refuses by instinct, the other from an act of free will" (Rousseau 53). The underlying inequality between the two demonstrates that man yearns to Moore the nature in which things must be and rather chooses to

follow their free will, " men run into excesses which bring on fevers and death; because the mind depraves the senses, and the will continues to speak when nature is silent" (Rousseau 54).

It is in our human nature to adapt to our natural environments and survive upon what nature has provided us with; 'those who come well formed into the world she renders strong and robust, and all the rest she destroys" (Rousseau 48). Rousseau questions the civilized man by highlighting what his abilities could be without machines. He states " If he has an axe, would he have been able with his naked arm to break so large a branch? If he had a sling would he be able to throw a stone with so great velocity... If he had a horse, would he have been himself so swift of foot? "(Rousseau 48). All of these questions emphasize that man is and should be capable of completing all basic tasks without the aid of machines that our society has created. An isolated man without all of these equipment's is forced to adapt and shape himself to his environment, thus proving that our human nature is self sufficient and good without societies corruption. We can conclude that the origin of our society consists of savage men who did not have the power civilized men do.

Essentially, the change in our society corrupted human nature and caused a great sense of inequality " Give civilized man time to gather all his machines about him, and he will no doubt easily beat the savage; but if you would see a still more unequal contest, set them together naked and unarmed, and you will soon see the advantage of having all our forces at our disposal"(Rousseau 48). Thus proving how our society has corrupted natural

law and created new forms of inequality that defy eternalness. The overall force that propelled a change in our society is the increase of human population.

As times began to evolve men started to settle down, build families, and create languages, which resulted in the development of reason and ultimately striped us from our natural environment. " By become innig domesticated they lose half these advantages... As he becomes social and a slave, he grows weak, timid, and servile; his effeminate way of life totally enervates his strength and courage" (Rousseau 52). Rousseau drew his ethnographic resource from Thomas Hobbler's work n the state of human nature by countering him completely.

Hobbes believed that when a man is in his natural state his is in an egocentric violent state, and society is the only way to prevent that.

Rousseau defies his beliefs by claiming the opposite, when a man is in a state of nature he is with peace andhappinessand society is what corrupts that. The last philosophical writer, Thomas Hobbes, portrays a perspective on human nature that defies Imitation and Rousseau. Hobbes believes that human nature is entirely greedy and ill without the stabilization provided by a greater power such as he establishment of a state to protect all its citizens.

Hobbes begins his argument by claiming that he has found a greaterequalitythan strength amongst men, which is their wisdom (Hobbes 183). He then continues to State that human nature is greedy, envious, and self praising 'Yet they will hardly believe that any so wise as themselves, for they see their own wit at hand and other men's at a distance" (Hobbes 184).

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This explains why man lives in a constant state of reaction to the worldly encounters he has, thus provoking his desires and wants in the world.

At a pure state of nature man is essentially fighting three things " Competition, diffidence, and glory" and this is all for the desire of gain, safety, and reputation of man (Hobbes 185). Essentially, the state of nature makes men go against each other and create a constant state of war " during the time men live without a common Power to keep them all in awe, they are in the condition which is called Ware; and such a Ware, as if every man, against every man" (Hobbes 185). In a pure state of nature any man can kill anyone creating a constant fear and anxiety since everyone is essentially equal.

When taking a journey he arms himself, and seeks to go well accompanied; when going to sleep he locks his doors; when even in his house he locks his chests" (Hobbes 186-187). Hobbes claims that it is not a sin that human nature is to feel insecure and greedy of one another because everyone man just wants to protect his own life, but the only solution is to have a greater power to protect everyone's right. " The desires and other passions of men are in themselves no sin. " No more are the actions that proceed from those passions, till they know a Law that forbids them"(Hobbes 187).

By having a greater power protecting everyone's life, man is able to live in a state of peace " Where there is no Common Power, there is no Law; Where no Law, no Injustice Force and Fraud are in Ware the two Cardinal virtues" (Hobbes 188) Hobbes believes that having a greater power to protect all men's lives is what our society originated upon. Without society, man alone

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is a greedy, lustful, and selfish for the protection of his own well-being. In a state of pure nature all men are equal and anyone can kill each other, our society (greater power) comes in to protect everyone of their rights, thus saving humanity.

Essentially, man's envious selfish desire propelled a change for a higher power, thus demonstrating the evolution of human history from solitude to civilization. Hobbes most likely used the Jesuit Relations as his ethnographic resources to draw his conclusions. This to some degree is a biased conclusion because he is stating that the only solution to the greedy human nature is a greater power of protection, in reality there may be several other solutions as well. All three philosophical thinkers are similar and very different in regards to the concept of human nature.

In general, all three thinkers agree that society has propelled a change within our human nature. Immanuel Kant and Rousseau believe that society corrupted our human nature, while Hobbes believes that it protected us. Overall, the thought processes and beliefs of all writers are biased in regards to the time period they are living in. Each writer is speaking in perspective to what is going on in the current society and their interpretations of it. This allows us to understand how our history has changed and the overall effects it has upon human nature; which is constantly evolving based on society.