

# Comparison of hobbes and al-farabi



**ASSIGN  
BUSTER**

Reading Response 4 Sarah Zou Sep. 23. 2012 LBST 1B11 Comparison of Hobbes and Al-Farabi Human nature was one of the most controversial topics now and then. In two of the world's greatest philosophers' essay, they discussed their own perception of human nature. Thomas Hobbes (1588-1679), England's political philosopher, who discussed his view on the degeneration of human nature in his book, Leviathan, which depicted the natural state of humanity as nasty and brutish.

His point of view came across many similarities as Al- Farabi (870- 950 CE) an Arab Scientist and philosopher during the Golden Age of Islam. With a group of philosopher, Al- Farabi created synthesis on Aristotelian thought and Muslin theology. His subject of interests varies from music to sociological and political issues. In his, On the Perfect State, he compared political state as a body, which the most important part of heart was the ruler. From both Hobbes and Al-Farabi's perspective they both argued, in order to maintain a civil society, a form of ruling system was more than necessary.

Hobbes suggested that the nature of men were equal, because everyone has different strengths that others may not possess. Al-Farabi supported this point by saying that human is not naturally perfect, they needed to be provided, and contribute to the needs of society with their strength in order to achieve perfection. And because of this equality, Hobbes stated, men needed to compete against each other or became enemies to achieve their goals. Therefore no one can be trusted because their interests might conflict and become enemies.

So it was unclear that how powerful one must become to be always secured. However this theory contradicts with Al-Farabi's statement of people in

societies must co-operate and come together to supply each other. Another point Hobbes declared regarding human nature was: everyone desired to be valued, but when they were not, they damage others to get more value. Thus it was significant to sustain a form of constrain to prevent the destruction, and sustain justice in the society. Similar statement by Al-Farabi also supported Hobbes' idea.

When part of the system is out of order, the ruler or the heart of the system must remove the disorder. Consequently both essay emphasized: Even though a law system might limit certain people's freedom, only when there was law, justice could be remained. Hobbes' idea of peace means not only without conflict but a reliable structure to prevent conflict. By freeing men's nature, there were no forms of government to restrain or assurance, so war appears. During a time of war, man's security could only be coming from one's own strength.

There were neither society nor culture, only fear and danger of violent death in war. Human nature will do what they desire until they know of a law that will stop them. Only when there is law there is justice. Although Al-Farabi's interpretation of a perfect society could agree to Hobbes' law system, his idea on the qualities of a ruler differs from Hobbes' perception of human nature. Al-Farabi described an ideal ruler had to be naturally born with leadership skills, and in the process of leading, decisions made the rulers were often relying heavily on their nature and virtue.

However, Hobbes thought, virtue is not ability that inherited by man, or given by nature, with no exception to the rulers, because the rulers were human themselves, their desire were no different than others. Therefore, to

maintain a civilized, justice and organized society could not only rely on the virtue of human nature, but also through a system of law to constrain some desires of people, even the leaders, to achieve an overall freedom and security for the majority.