

Hobbes's leviathan in post 9 11 america essay



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The " State of Nature" in this post-9/11 21st Century America is one of self-induced fear, not by the US citizens but by our president. With constant reminders of terrorist threats against the US, as well as the constant state of high alert, the president has placed Americans in a tough place. US citizens are in constant fear and are looking to their government for protection.

This idea stems back to the writings of Hobbes in Leviathan. Hobbes critiques the effects of government, or as lack there of, on man and society. Hobbes first describes man's state of nature, in which he states that all men are by nature equal in their strengths as well as their minds. He states that even " the weakest has strength enough to kill the strongest, either by secret machination, or by confederacy with others, that are in the same danger as himself" (Hobbes, 1). This state of equality, however, creates considerable conflict between man because it leads people to seek power. He said ' if any two men desire the same thing, which nevertheless they cannot both enjoy, they become enemies" (1), at this point the men would " endeavour to destroy or subdue one another" (1).

Hobbes believes that without some type of power to mediate between man, they will remain in this constant state of war, as well as in a state of " continual fear, and danger of violent death" (2). He believed that every man would become every man's enemy because he felt that " the life of man [is] solitary, poor, nasty, brutish, and short" (2). Therefore, Hobbes' belief of man's " State of Nature" lead him to the idea that a central power, or government, was needed in order to unite man and prevent a constant state of war. This in some ways reflects the ideas of the president as well as many

Americans. They believe that everyone should have a central, democratic government in order for them to get along in the world.

Hobbes states that “ where there is no common power, there is no law; where no law, no injustice” (2). In order to prevent this, Hobbes, as well as our President, believes that there needs to be an institution of government. The people need to be constant awe of the government's authority and strength in order to not break laws and commit acts of brutality against one another. Hobbes creates a world full of chaos in his writings. This world invokes fear in his readers in order to convince them that a central government is necessary. Hobbes states that “ the passions that incline men to peace are: fear of death; desire of such things as are necessary to commodious living; and a hope by their industry to obtain them” (3).

Bush uses that insecurity to justify his own ideas for government. President Bush believes that without the correct government in place can cause the same results to occur. He uses this idea that government can control people's actions and protect them as well to instill fear into the hearts of Americans. We will in turn seek the protection of the government, therefore, confirming the ideas presented in Hobbes' Leviathan. Americans are focused only self-preservation, so because of this we live in constant fear for our livelihood.

According to Hobbes' writings, the attack on September 11th completely broke the covenant between man set forth by this idea of government. Due to this violation, the world has regressed back into this constant state of war, where we are forced to “ invade [another country] for safety” (2). The fact

that Americans have feed into these ideas of fear instilled by our government, we, therefore agreed with our President to go to war and force another country to create this same government. Like Hobbes's Leviathan, Bush petitioned to expand the powers of the government in order to combat the fear that he himself created.

Hobbes says the goal of government is to alleviate man's fear of his neighbors in the state of nature. Therefore, man will agree to form a government to fear so they will not fear each other. The events that took place on 9/11 only confirm the need for a government and because of this confirmation Americans will remain fearful for their lives as well as remain dependant upon their government. Due 9/11 Americans would agree with Hobbes and his analysis of man's " State of Nature. " His belief that with " this war of every man against every man...nothing can be unjust" (2) can scare many people into believing into the idea of a common power.

This is the case with the war on terror. Although we are beginning to see how this particular is more about gaining power rather than defending the covenant created by government, it was a safety net for Americans to believe in. It confirmed the idea the your government can protect you as long as you live in fear.