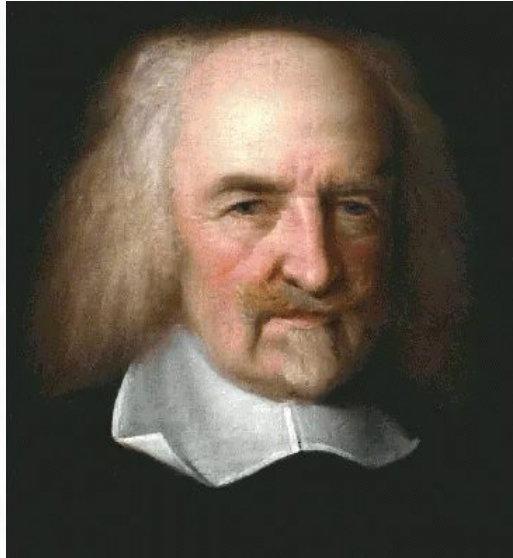


Thomas Hobbes



by Alex Summers

Biography

Early Life

- Thomas Hobbes was born on April 5, 1588, in Wiltshire in England.
- His uncle, a tradesman in Malmesbury in Wiltshire, became his source of education.
- By the time Hobbes was 14, he was a great student in Greek and Latin, and he went to Magdalen Hall in Oxford to study even further.

Biography

Hobbes as a Tutor

- In 1608, Thomas Hobbes left Oxford and became a tutor for the family of Lord Cavendish of Hardwick. He traveled twice as a tutor, each time with a pupil.
- On his first trip in 1610, he went to France, Italy, and Germany. After this trip, he went to London, where he came in contact with great scholars such as Francis Bacon, Herbert of Cherbury, and Ben Johnson.
- It was after coming back from his second journey in 1631 that his philosophy began to form.

Biography

Hobbes' Works

- Inspired by Euclid, Thomas Hobbes wrote *Short Tract on First Principles* around 1630 using geometric form to organize his thoughts.
- Around 1637, he went to Paris and began to share ideas with scholars like Marin Mersenne, René Descartes, and Pierre Gassendi. On a trip to Italy, he had many conversations with Galileo.
- When he returned to England, he wrote *Elements of Law Natural and Politic*. However, he soon went back to France in 1640 to avoid the civil war that was starting. He stayed in France for eleven more years.

Biography

Hobbes' Works (Continued)

- Thomas Hobbes wrote *De Cive* (also known as *Philosophical Rudiments Concerning Government and Society*) in Paris in 1642.
- Hobbes, feeling that France was no longer safe for those that had escaped England, return to England in 1651. In 1651, he also published *Leviathan*, his most prominent work.

Biography

Old Man Hobbes

- As he grew older, Thomas Hobbes continued to write. When he was 84 years old, he wrote his autobiography.
- In 1675, Hobbes went to go live with the Cavendish family in Derbyshire, never to come back to London again.
- Thomas Hobbes died at Hardwick, at the age of 91, on December 4, 1679.

Major Works

De Cive

In 1636, Thomas Hobbes was inspired by Galileo's idea that all objects, in their natural state, continue to move. Almost immediately, he started trying to use this idea to explain his social and political philosophy. He separated this idea into three parts. The first part, *Of Body*, related the human body to general laws of motion. The second part, *Of Man*, described the constant motivation and desiring of humans. The third part, *Of the Citizen*, showed the result of these human interactions on society and politics. Hobbes focused on the third part (*Of the Citizen*) while writing *De Cive*, which means “of the citizen” in Latin.

Major Works

***De Cive* (Continued)**

In *De Cive*, Thomas Hobbes explained his political philosophy, and compared it to the civil war in England. However, it was controversial because it criticized both sides of the civil war. Because of this, *De Cive* did not have as great of an impact in England as Hobbes hoped for.

Major Works

Leviathan

Hobbes soon realized that he would have to write a new work to better explain the philosophy in *De Cive*. To provide for this deficit, Hobbes published *Leviathan or The Matter, Forme, and Power of a Common Wealth Ecclesiasticall and Civil*.



Major Works

***Leviathan* (Continued)**

In the *Leviathan*, Thomas Hobbes explains that “of the voluntary acts of man, the object is some good to himself.” This explains his idea that humans are naturally selfish. Hobbes believed that human motives, misguided by self-interest without good principles, could possibly become very destructive. If left alone, humans and their self-interest would smash into themselves. In a “state of nature” like this, Hobbes imagined that life would be “solitary, poor, nasty, brutish and short.”

Major Works

***Leviathan* (Continued)**

According to Hobbes, all people are generally physically equal, have a want for survival, and hold a certain amount of common sense. Because of a human's want for survival, they have the right to engage in violence toward other human beings. However, their common sense would help them to realize that everyone else around them has that same right. Therefore, they would refrain from any unnecessary violence.

Hobbes, however, noticed that this was the foundation for a very unstable system. As soon as one human engaged in violence, all others would join in and create war.

Major Works

***Leviathan* (Continued)**

- In the Bible, the Leviathan is described as a creature whose power was unmatched by any other creatures on Earth. Hobbes' solution to the unstable system was to have a “Leviathan,” or a sovereign leader or group that was given absolute authority. The “Leviathan” would use this power to keep peace among its citizens. However, because its authority relied upon the citizens giving up their authority, the “Leviathan” would be motivated to keep from abusing it.

Contributions to AOKs and WOKs

- Thomas Hobbes contributed to the Human Sciences Area of Knowledge by providing a new perspective on how humans think and interact with other humans.
- He also contributed to the Ethics Area of Knowledge by giving a deeper insight on the true morality of humans. He also created his own ideology for what we, as humans, have the right to do.
- Thomas Hobbes provided these contributions using Reason as a Way of Knowing by explaining human morality, self-interest, and the need of a “Leviathan” through reasoning.
- Hobbes also used Imagination as a Way of Knowing when he imagined a world where humans and their self-interest were left alone to a “state of nature”.

What I Think

I agree with Thomas Hobbes that humans are generally motivated by self-interest, and that sometimes this self-interest is not guided by good principles. However, I disagree with Thomas Hobbes' belief that the self-interest of humans is so unguided that we need a "Leviathan" with absolute authority to keep us from destruction.

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