

Introduction to Western Political Thought
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Lecture 12
Hobbes – I: Intro and Human Nature

Hello and welcome everyone. In this lecture, today, we are going to study a new thinker, Thomas Hobbes in western political thought. With Hobbes, we see a kind of new thinking and theorization about politics which is very different from the religious modes of thinking about the temporal or political power and authority in medieval Europe. And from the ethical or sense of virtue, a predominant role in theorizing about politics in Plato and Aristotle.

So, with Hobbes, we see a kind of new approach to politics which is quintessentially modern. And that is why with Hobbes, we see a kind of the beginning of modern political thought. On Hobbes, we are going to have three lectures. In the first lecture, we will situate Hobbes in the larger social, political, and intellectual context of England. We will discuss his views on human nature.

In the first lecture, we are going to discuss these two things. In the second lecture, we will focus particularly on his Leviathan or the idea of sovereignty, and how this civic authority or civil authority has absolute power. And what is the justification for such absolute power and authority in Hobbes, and how he argues such an absolute form of authority based on ‘the state of nature’.

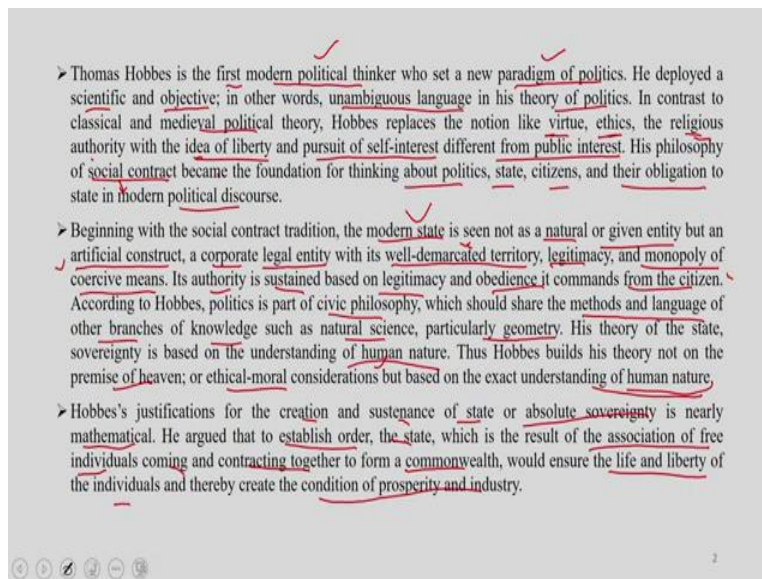
Thus, all these theorizations about sovereignty, state, and its justification of absolute power and authority, we are going to discuss in the second lecture. And in the concluding lecture on Hobbes, we will particularly focus on his theory of political obligation. So, in modern political discourse, the obedience of the ruled or the people or the governed is not given like in the monarchy or like when we have the divine right theory of politics and the temporal politics.

Now, with modernity, government or the state must justify or legitimize its rule by getting obedience from the people. The consent of the people or the ruled becomes the basis of legitimacy for the modern state and the modern government. So, this theory of political obligation is why a citizen should obey the rule. Not because it commands certain religious authority or virtuous notion of life or ethical promises. But it has to justify in the unambiguous term. What is the theory of political obligation? We are going to discuss in the third lecture.

And in that lecture, we will discuss in the second part the criticism that is labeled against Hobbes. Hobbes is regarded as the first modern political thinker in the western tradition. None the less, he creates Leviathan or the sovereign which takes away all the rights of the individual and the citizens. So, what is the point of creating that order, which will you know (04:03) as all kinds of liberty or the choices that individuals, may have?

In the concluding lecture, we will discuss the criticisms against Hobbes. In this lecture, we are going to study Hobbes by situating him in the largest socio-political and intellectual context, and his brief biography before we start discussing his views on human nature.

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As I have said that Thomas Hobbes is the first modern political thinker and this you can relate with Machiavelli's political thought that we have discussed in the previous three lectures. That Machiavelli is someone who is in between that medieval mode of thinking about the politics and the modern.

He is a kind of precursor to modern political thought. But Hobbes truly represents the approach or the methodology to politics that we have in modern times. Thomas Hobbes is the first modern political thinker who provides us a new paradigm of politics. So, the reason for regarding Hobbes as the first modern political thinker was because the kind of methodology, the kind of approach, or the language that he deployed distinguished him from the previous political philosophers.

He deployed a kind of scientific and objective method. So would see how he defines human nature and how that human nature leads to the creation of a state which is an artificial construct. And why such an artificial construct should exercise the absolute power of those who construct them in the first place. Thus, the justification that he provided, the language that he deployed, and the approach were very different, scientific and objective from the previous medieval political thinker or the classical era political thinkers and that distinguished Hobbes from the earlier tradition of political thought and thinking.

He had a very scientific and objective approach to politics or the political phenomena and the characteristic fault of Hobbesian political theory was its unambiguous language. And that unambiguous language about the politics; he regarded as the science of politics. Before that, there was subjective speculation or contemplation about politics for instance in Plato certainly. But also, to his great extent, Aristotle was there.

So, he rescues in a sense of political thinking and theorization from the subjective speculation of a particular thinker. In other words, a kind of science, objectivity, or a kind of neutrality that he deployed in his theorization about politics, state, and political obligation.

There was a kind precision of language closer to the mathematical kind of reasoning. That's why, we should obey the sovereign, why we need a sovereign which should exercise absolute power. The justification he gave was not based on some religious thinking or ethical or more or less speculation. But he justified it based on the understanding of human nature. What will happen without the state or absolute power of the state?

He provided a kind of unambiguous language to his theory of politics. And in contrast to classical and medieval political theory; Hobbes replaces the notion like virtue, ethics, and the religious authority with the idea of liberty or choice of the individual which was necessary for the social, economic progress, and the prosperity of individual as well as the community.

So, the idea of liberty and the pursuit of self-interest which was different from public or political interest. There was a kind of shift in the Hobbesian imagination of politics, state, and the theory of sovereignty. If you remember in Plato and Aristotle, the whole purpose of the state or the policy is to create a condition where human beings can realize his/her true potentialities.

The best possible life or the fullest expression of one's skill is possible in the associational life of the community in the policy. Here, in Hobbesian thinking, the public and the political part of human life are replaced with the private pursuit of interest. So, Hobbesian political thinking regarded the individual as a private person and it is perfectly okay if that private person pursues his/her particular interest and does not participate in public life.

The very existence of politics and state then was to create the condition for the people to secure his life, and provide him/her the freedom to pursue his personal or private interest. There is a kind of decisive shift in and that to a great extent becomes the understanding of politics today. We live an individualistic life and we demand the state to provide law and order. In other words, provides the condition where we can pursue our interest.

It is not necessary like in classical time to also proactively participate in the famous Aristotelian dictum. The ability to rule and being ruled in turn does not define citizenship. Citizenship is a kind of passive, personal life of the individual and a state is there to provide the condition of law and order where an individual can pursue a personal interest or the particular interest.

So, that kind of shift was there in Hobbesian thinking which became the basis of modern political thought and thinking or theorization of what a state is. He replaced notions like virtue, ethics, and religious authority and how he does. We will discuss as we proceed with his understanding of human nature and the 'state of nature'.

Hobbes's philosophy of social contract is also something that gives the existence of the state and its legitimacy a new paradigm. So, the state is not something given, it is not natural. It is the artificial construct of human beings when they come together in the larger good of their protection of life and liberty.

So, the existence of a state is dependent on the contract among the individuals when they come together. His philosophy of social contract then becomes the kind of basis or the foundation for thinking about politics, state, citizens, and their obligation to state in modern political discourse. In modern terms, when we think about why should we obey the rule of the state? Why should we obey the command of the rulers?

The reason being that the ruling or the government of modern times is regarded as based on the consent of the rule. So, we are not for some religious, ethical, or moral reason expected to obey the rule or the government. We obey the government because we choose the government in the first place. So, there is a kind of tacit consent that citizens give and thereby provide legitimacy to the government. And once that consent is there that becomes the ground of our obligation.

And that is something new in Hobbesian thinking and here there is a kind of language of contract like in the corporate world or world of industries. So, human beings as free individuals are not subjected to obey the commands of others because of religious or ethical-moral consideration. But, because he or she in his free will think that that rule or government, or the obedience to that rule or the government is in the benefit of their own life and liberty.

This language of the contract becomes the basis of modern political discourse what is a state, citizen, and obligation. So, beginning with the social contract tradition, thus the modern state is seen not as a natural or given entity. But an artificial construct. Thus, human beings coming together through contract and government constituted a legal and corporate entity which we called state.

It was not given, not religious and this was a corporate legal entity that must provide certain security or which must perform certain duties for the people to obey its command. There was a kind of give and take the relationship between the state and the citizens. So, the existence of the state is not for its own sake; it must provide the condition for the human being to pursue their interest.

And so long it can provide that condition where individuals can pursue their interest that state is legitimate and therefore the citizen should obey its command. So, it is a kind of contract between the two-party, the state, and the citizens, and that makes the state in modern concepts a kind of legal and corporate entity with its well-demarcated territory. That is the characteristic of a modern state; it will have a very precise demarcated territory.

It is not like an unambiguous boundary in pre-modern times during the era of empire and other forms of political authority. Here, the territory of the state is well-demarcating with its legitimacy and monopoly of coercive means for violence. So, the state as a corporate legal entity enjoys

certain legitimacy and monopoly of coercive violence that distinguishes the modern state from other forms of political authority.

And the legitimacy of this state as a corporate legal entity with a monopoly of violence within a given territory rests so long as it can provide the condition for individuals or for the citizens to pursue their private interest. So, there is a kind of different take on the understanding of a state, participation in the public political life, and the Hobbesian conceptions. We will see later on how it creates a kind of condition for the Bourgeoisie society or the modern capitalist society to emerge (15:36).

And it is rooted in that modes of thinking where prosperity, industries, trade, and business are regarded as necessary for a happy life or human satisfaction, for the protection of the community. And for that, you need a state which will exercise absolute power, the sovereignty which is individual and non-transferable. So, this kind of image of the state as a legal corporate identity with a monopoly of violence is rooted in this idea of a new subjectivity that does not necessarily enjoy or force to participate in the public life of the state.

The Hobbesian individual is regarded as perfectly okay if he or she does not take any interest at all in the political matter. But, the politics or the state and its existence are legitimate, so long it provides the private citizen the condition for the pursuit of their interest. According to Hobbes, its authority that is the state's authority is sustained based on the legitimacy and the obedience it commands from the citizen.

According to Hobbes, politics is part of civic philosophy which should share the methods and language of other branches of knowledge such as natural science and particularly geometry. We will see later on how when Hobbes theorizes his concepts of states or sovereignty and why such sovereignty should be absolute? What is the justification? He developed a very scientific objective and a kind of mathematical language; so there is no ambiguity is there.

So, why we should obey the ruler? Because if you do not obey there will be the war of each against all. And then it will create a condition, where the prosperity in life trades and business becomes impossible. And life will be nasty, brutish, and short. Therefore, we must obey the one. So, the language that he deploys is unambiguous and very precise.

And the rule of definition becomes a central part of his development of political theory and political thought. And there he regarded that we should follow the method of natural science, particularly, mathematics or geometry. His theory of state sovereignty is based on the understanding of human nature, which we are going to discuss in today's lecture.

Hobbes built his theory, not on the premise of heaven or ethical or moral consideration. But based on the exact understanding of human nature. So, the whole artifacts of Hobbes and political philosophy are based on the understanding of human nature. And that we will see as we move on these three lectures on Hobbes's political philosophy.

So, Hobbes's justification for the creation and sustenance of state or absolute sovereignty is nearly mathematical in terms of its precision. He argued that to establish order, the state which is the result of the association of free individuals coming and contracting together to form a commonwealth. It would ensure the life and liberty of the individuals and thereby created the condition of prosperity and industry.

That is the basis of the justification of state and its absolute power that is the result of the people who are free individuals. And they come together and then have a kind of contract among themselves. Through that contract, the state and sovereign power emerged. The existence of such a state and sovereign power was based on its ability to create the condition for human beings to pursue their interest.

And so long that the state or sovereign provides those conditions, its authority or power is legitimate. Once it fails to do so, human beings have the freedom to come together and create a new sovereign or state. So, that is the premise of Hobbes's political theory.

Now, we try to situate Hobbes in the larger socio-political and the intellectual context of England of the 17th century. And this you can connect with the methodological lectures that we have. The thinkers and their ideas can be better understood in the historical and socio-political context. And most of the political theory and theorization developed in the context of turbulence was in the context of crisis. It is equally true in Hobbesian political theory.

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Socio-Political and Intellectual Context

- Hobbes was developing his political theory during a very turbulent period in England's history. There was a violent struggle between the parliament and the royalty or monarchy. Parliaments representing the interests of nobles and aristocrats, not the poor was attempting to curtail the absolute power of the monarchy claiming to represent the interests of the people. It led to the English civil war (1642–49), the beheading of Charles I (1649), and the establishment of the leader of the parliamentary army, Oliver Cromwell's rule. There was the restoration of the monarchy in 1660 after the death of Cromwell in 1657. But factionalism between the parliament and monarchy and, more specifically, between Catholics and nonconformists continued and settled to a great extent in 1689 with the passage of the Toleration Act.
- The ceaseless struggles between the Royalists, the Parliamentarians politically, and the Catholic church and protestant movement religiously shaped much of the political turmoil and confusion in seventeenth-century England and Europe. There was a search for new forms of political authority and their legitimacy. Divine right theory or the Catholic church or even the absolutist monarchies were unable to command obedience from the people. Hobbes's political philosophy of absolute sovereign or *Leviathan* appears to, in some sense to institutionalize the protestant reforms movement's maxim – *cuius regio eius religio* (it was up to the king to decide religious orthodoxy).
- Hobbes's political philosophy thus developed in a context of the rejection of the Christian metaphysics and revival of the Greek-Roman classics and humanist traditions. Copernicus in astronomy, Galileo in physics, Francis Bacon, and Descartes in philosophy were extending the frontiers of human knowledge. Hobbes derived much of the methodological tools from the natural sciences. He wanted to develop an ahistorical and scientific theory of politics or state 'that would demonstrate from first principles the essence of political authority and what rulers and subject must do to avoid war and secure peace and prosperity.'

Hobbes was developing his political theory during a turbulent period in England's history. What was that turbulence or crisis in England's history? It was a period of a violent struggle between the parliament, royalty, or monarchy. There was a kind of tussle or struggle which was violent between the parliamentary forces that wanted to represent the voice of people.

And these people are not the poor or multitude. But those who have the property or in other words, the aristocrats. They pay taxes or revenues to the government and monarchy. And once they pay the taxes or revenues, the monarchy should be accountable to their opinion, views, and scrutiny. Thus, there was a kind of tussle between the parliamentary forces which represented the interests of the aristocrats or nobles or property, class, and monarchy.

The Parliament which was representing the interests of nobles or aristocrats and not the poor unlike today, where we see the parliament as the representative body that reflected the will of the people. And modern democracy is supposed to function as per the will of the people that reflected in the parliament through their representatives. That is the basis of the legitimacy of the modern democracy and liberal parliamentary state.

Unlike, the parliament in 17th century England, there was a group of propertied people, the nobles, or aristocratic families. And they wanted to check the power of the monarchy or royalty. So, the parliament represented the interests of nobles and aristocrats, not the poor who were attempting to curtail the absolute power of the monarchy.

Monarchy in contrast to the parliament claimed to represent the will or the interests of the people. And not just the propertied class. This tussle led to civil war, a violent struggle between the parliament and monarchy. There was a kind of polarization in society between the forces of royalty on the one hand and the parliamentary forces on the other.

It led to the English civil war from 1642 to 48 or 49. It ended with the beheading of Charles-1, the king of England in 1649, and the establishment of the leaders of the parliamentary army which was Oliver Cromwell's rule. There was a kind of political turmoil or instabilities when Hobbes was trying to construct a new theory of politics or political order.

There was the restoration of the monarchy in England in 1660 after the death of parliamentary leader Cromwell in 1657. But the factionalism between the parliament and monarchy continued in one form or the other. And more specifically, monarchy claimed to represent the views of the Catholic Christian religion and the non-conformists which resulted in a religious war.

And when we discussed law, we see how tolerance is regarded as necessary for political stability. So, after the restoration of the monarchy in 1660, there was a kind of factionalism between the parliament and monarchy. Specifically, between the Catholic and non-conformists, which continued and settled to a great extent in 1689 with the passage of the Toleration Act. So, once the parliament passed this Act, this kind of some understanding was there between these two sections.

It was this ceaseless struggle between the royalist, parliamentarians politically and Catholic Church and protestant movement religiously which shaped much of the political turmoil and confusion in the 17th century in England and Europe. Thus, historically for the European continent, this 17th to 19th century was a period of much political instability.

New imagination of political power, new thinking about the state, and conventional authority such as the Catholic Church or absolutist monarchy were unable to provide political order or command the obedience of people. That required a new discourse, new thinking about politics which Hobbes in a sense provided.

Thus, there was a search for new forms of political authority and their legitimacy. The divine right theory and the Catholic Church or even the absolutist monarchies were unable to command

obedience from the people. So, Hobbes's political philosophy in a sense, then particularly his theory of sovereign or Leviathan, in some sense, institutionalized the protestant reforms movement maxim, that 'cuius region eius religio'. That means it was up to the king to decide religious orthodoxy.

And that was a kind of movement towards secular politics in modern political discourse, particularly in Europe. As a result of religious war, the competitive struggle for the authority between the Catholic Church and absolutist monarchies resulted in the Treaty of Westphalia or with that a kind of understanding that the monarch who governed the territory that rules the territory. So, decide the religious orthodoxy in that particular territory.

That led to the creation of the Church of England and the modern re-imagination of religion which should not dictate the temporal power or political power. But, it should work within the sphere of political power or political authority. So, Hobbes's conception of a sovereign or the Leviathan to a great extent institutionalized these protestant ethics.

The outcome of the religious war or religious intolerance that was prevalent widely in the European continent among the Catholics and the protestant, among the royalist, and the parliamentarians. So, Hobbes's political philosophy, thus, developed in a context of the rejection of the Christian metaphysics and the revival of Greek-Roman classics, and humanist traditions.

Copernicus in astronomy, Galileo in physics, Francis Bacons, and Descartes in philosophy were extending the boundaries or the frontiers of human knowledge. By providing a new explanation of planetary movement, philosophy, human nature, and the role of human agency in creating a better society or understanding of the world in which we live.

So, Hobbes's political philosophy was developing in a context where there was a kind of all-around progress in every sphere of life, in science, in philosophy, in physics, in mathematics, and so on. And that to a great extent shapes the political thinking or theorization of Hobbes. So, Hobbes derived much of the methodological tools from the natural sciences.

And will see later on how he deployed a different language or approach to politics that is free from subjective biases or speculation of a particular thinker. He wanted to develop an ahistorical. So, the very basis of the social contract is the idea that a state is not a trans-historical or a

historical thing. It was created by the individual when they come together to protect their life and liberty.

And in protecting their life and liberty, they trade-off certain liberty. When others agreed to do some similar kind of trade-off and then create a monarchy and sovereign with absolute power. Thus, this is an artificial construct. In that artificial construct, it is ahistorical. So, he wanted to develop an ahistorical and scientific theory of politics or state that would demonstrate from the first principles.

The essence of political authority was what rulers and subjects must do to avoid war and secure peace and prosperity. So, the whole purpose of politics in that sense is to secure peace to establish an order that is the precondition for any prosperity, socio-economic, and political. So, like Plato, Aristotle, and Machiavelli, Hobbes also shared this anxiety to create a condition of peace order in the society that is necessary for prosperity, economic, social, and political.

However, how in these turbulent times, where the conventional understanding or authority fails to command obedience from the people. One can develop a new maxim, understanding of politics, and theorization of politics which will lead to political obligation, to the creation of the state where the state and citizens should function in a manner that would create the conditions of political order, peace, and stability. And thereby, prosperity in society. Thus, in constructing that political theory, Hobbes deployed an ahistorical method and scientific approach.

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Thomas Hobbes (1588-1679): Brief Bio-sketch

- Hobbes was born in 1588 in Malmesbury, Wiltshire in England. His father was a clergyman with limited means and few intellectual accomplishments. He had his education in Oxford with support from his uncle. It is in Oxford that he developed the criticism of Aristotelian and Scholastic philosophy and developed a scientific and materialistic understanding of politics and society.
- He spent most of his life in the family of an aristocrat, William Cavendish, and despised the rule by the people or the multitude. His political theorization coincided with the civil war and enclosure movements in England. Conventional authorities such as a church, papacy, and Royalty were increasingly challenged. In the beginning, he was the staunch supporter of Royalty and fearing the civil war in England, he spent a good portion of his productive life in exile and spent many years in Paris, France (1641-51).
- However, after the end of the English civil war (1642-49) and the execution of Charles I (who governed England without consulting the Parliament) in 1649, Hobbes returned to England in 1652. He made peace with Lord Cromwell, the leader of the parliamentary army. However, after the restoration of the monarchy in 1660 and the return of Charles II as the King of England, Hobbes returned to the royal court and received a pension. He died aged ninety-one in 1679.

Now, we will briefly, discuss the biography of Hobbes. He was born in 1588 in Malmesbury, Wiltshire in England. His father was a clergyman with limited means and few intellectual accomplishments. Hobbes had his education in Oxford with the support from his uncle and it was in Oxford that he developed the criticism of Aristotelian ethics and Scholastic philosophy which he thought was very little significance, to understand the prevailing circumstances in real life and also, how to improve those circumstances.

He developed a critical approach to the Aristotelian ethics that was dominant in the university circle and discourses. And also, the Scholastic philosophy and his approach was scientific and materialistic understanding of politics and society. So, the first building block of politics and society is the individual.

And to understand society and the state, one needs to understand the individual and the way he defines the individual. And we will see it later when we discuss human nature is a very materialistic understanding, not any kind of moral, and unethical approach to define a human being and its behavior.

And this definition or understanding of human nature or behavior becomes the basis of his theory of sovereignty or *Leviathan* or political obligation. Hobbes developed it in Oxford with his critic of Aristotelian and prevalent Scholastic philosophy. His own scientific and materialistic approach to politics and society. Hobbes spent most of his life in the family of an aristocrat. William Cavendish despised the rule by people or multitude.

In the Hobbesian approach, he was very apprehensive about the rule of people or the multitude, and in that sense, he was a somewhat controversial figure. And as we will see in the third lecture, while we assist his political thought. He was a supporter of the monarchy and for his thought, he was being criticized by the royalty or the forces who supported the royalty.

Similarly, he was criticized by the forces of the parliamentary form of government and the religious authorities of his time. And in that sense, Hobbes had a very peculiar situation to think about the politics and political trait as it is. To his political theorization coincided with the civil war and enclosure movement in England which was about dispossessing the poor from their land and appropriation by the aristocrats or newly emerging middle class in England.

And that leads to mercantile capitalism and gradually, the industrial revolution. So, conventional authorities such as the Church, papacy, and royalty were increasingly challenged by the people. In the beginning, he was a staunch supporter of royalty and fearing the civil war in England. He spent a good portion of his productive life in exile and spent many years in Paris and France, where he wrote many of the text, including Leviathan.

However, after the end of the English civil war 1642 to 49 and the execution of Charles-I, the king of England who ruled England without consulting the parliament. So, the parliamentary forces wanted the monarchy to consult parliament, be accountable to parliament in governing. However, Charles-I refused to consult the parliament and ruled England without being accountable to the parliament that leads to the civil war.

And after the execution of Charles-1 in 1649, Hobbes returned to England in 1652 and he made the peace with the new ruler Lord Cromwell who was the leader of the parliamentary army. However, after the restoration of the monarchies in the 1660s and the return of Charles-II as the king of England, Hobbes returned to the royal court and received a pension. He died aged 91 in 1679.

Thus, Hobbes in his personal political life, there was a kind of shift from being the staunch supporter of the monarchy to coming into terms with the parliamentary leader and then going back again to the monarchy. And in this movement, there was a kind of constant endeavor to avoid violent or sudden death. So, this basis of avoiding the condition would lead to a sudden or

violent death that becomes the premise of his all political theory which we will discuss with his understanding of human nature.

In his personal life, it will see his exile coming back to support for the monarchy and coming into terms with the parliamentary forces. So, it is a kind of preservation of life and avoiding death as the sole basis of political action for the individual. That becomes the basis of his understanding of *Leviathan* or the sovereign as well.

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- It was in exile he came across major intellectuals and scientific luminaries of Europe and cultivated friendship with them. These men of letters and science were Francis Bacon, Galileo Galileo, Descartes, and others. He taught mathematics to the future king of England, Charles II. It was during this tour in exile that Hobbes came across Euclid's work on Geometry (*Elements*). It profoundly influenced his thinking and political thought. His emphasis on the precision of language and value of definition comes from his reading of Euclid's geometry, which he regarded as master science.
- It was on the basis of mathematical knowledge that Hobbes developed his theory of the state, sovereignty, and political obligation. He distinguished his theory of political science from past political thinkers whom he regarded as the scholastic thinkers driven by their subjective understandings and ambiguous and vague descriptions of political phenomena. In contrast, Hobbes considered himself as a political scientist. He boasted about his works as the beginning of political science. He did not want to give any advice to a prince or a ruler. His only desire was that his works, mainly *Leviathan*, should be taught and discussed in the universities.
- Although, now it is taught in all the major universities in the world. In his lifetime, he faced significant challenges and criticisms from the powerful groups and authorities. He was hated by the Royalists, the parliamentarians, and ecclesiastical authorities alike. The Oxford university condemned *Leviathan* and burnt it in public. However, three hundred years later, it remains the most celebrated text of modern political philosophy in the English language.

So, it was an exile that Hobbes came across major intellectuals and scientific luminaries of Europe and cultivated friendship with them. And these men of letters and science were Francis Bacon, Galileo-Galileo, Descartes, and others. He taught mathematics to the future king of England, Charles-II. It was during this tour in exile that Hobbes came across Euclid's work on geometry. That becomes the foundation for his political thinking, his obsession with the precision or unambiguous language of politics.

Thus, Euclid's geometry profoundly influenced his thinking and political thought, and his emphasis on the precision of language and the value of definition. So, he defined everything that is human nature. What is the movement? What is voluntary movement and what is involuntary movement? what is a sense of what is the reason?

He defined it very precisely and if you care to read his text, *Leviathan*. You will be mesmerized by the mathematical language that he deployed. There was so much logical argument or coherence from one to the other argument. That it created a kind of mathematical artifacts in a sense, where premise justified the foundation or later construct of *Leviathan*.

So, the basis of understanding *Leviathan* or the sovereign was understanding of human nature and how human beings behaved. His obsession with the precision of language and value of definition comes from Euclid's geometry. The text is called *Element*. And from his reading of Euclid's geometry, he regarded as the master science and basis of all sovereign knowledge.

It was based on this mathematical knowledge that Hobbes developed his theory of the state, sovereignty, and political obligation. And he distinguished his theory of political science from the past political thinkers whom he regarded as merely scholastic thinkers driven by their subjective understanding, ambiguous and vague descriptions of political phenomena.

Hobbes wanted political science to be based on precise language, unambiguous terms, and definitions and the construct of theory should be based on this precise definition or unambiguous language. And the other thinkers, before Hobbes, he regarded not truly political science and he wanted to assert that the political science started with his writings in *Leviathan*.

Hobbes considered himself a political scientist and he boasted about his work as the beginning of political science. He did not want to give any advice to a prince or a ruler. His only desire was that his works, mainly *Leviathan*, should be taught and discussed in the universities.

Although, *Leviathan* was taught in major universities in the world. In his lifetime, he faced significant challenges and criticisms from all kinds of authorities or powerful groups, be it parliament, monarchy, and the religious authorities. There was a discussion in the British parliament about *Leviathan*. He, later on, lived a precarious life, where he had an enemy in all camps in the parliamentary groups, monarchy, and among the religious authorities.

So, he was hated by the royalists, parliamentarians, and ecclesiastical authorities alike and Oxford University condemned *Leviathan* and burnt it in public. However, 300 years later, it remained the most celebrated text of modern political philosophy in the English language. And that is the strength of his arguments in the text, *Leviathan*.

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Hobbes: Major works & *Leviathan*

- Hobbes's first published work was an English translation of Thucydides's *History of Peloponnesian War* (1629). However, his approach to politics was ahistorical. His major works on politics and laws are – *Elements of Law, Natural and Politics* (MS 1640); *De Cive* (in Latin, 1642); *Leviathan* (1651). *De Cive* was later published into English as *Philosophical Rudiments Concerning Government and Society* (1651). Hobbes also supplemented *Leviathan* with *Behemoth or The History of the Causes of the Civil Wars of England*, which presents his take on the English civil war. However, this could be published only posthumously.
- *Leviathan* is Hobbes's *magnum opus*, which represents his mature thought. It heralded a new era of political thinking and thought in Western tradition – *social contract tradition*. In its approach to the theory of sovereignty and political obligation, the characteristic of this text is quintessentially modern in terms of precision of language, which is almost mathematical, objective, and scientific.
- Hobbes's *Leviathan or The Matter, Forme, & Power of a Commonwealth Ecclesiasticall and Civill* is regarded as the most brilliant and influential political treatise ever written in English. It was written in exile in France (1647-50). It is divided into four parts – 'Of Man,' 'Of Commonwealth,' 'Of a Christian Commonwealth,' and 'Of the Kingdom of Darkness.' However, the major discussion of his political thought is limited to its first two parts. We, too, are going to discuss his thought on human nature, state of nature, the theory of state, sovereignty, and political obligation by engaging with these two parts only.

Now, if we look at the major works of Hobbes, particularly *Leviathan*, Hobbes's first published work was an English translation of Thucydides's, *History of Peloponnesian War*. However, his approach to politics was ahistorical. His major works on political and laws were elements of law, nature, and politics. The manuscript was written in 1640.

And *De Cive* in Latin in 1642 and *Leviathan* in 1651 which was his mature work. *De Cive* was later published in English as the *Philosophical Rudiments Concerning Government and Society* in 1651. The same year when *Leviathan* was published. Hobbes supplemented *Leviathan* with *Behemoth* that is his take on the civil war. It is also called the history of the Causes of the Civil Wars of England and it is his take on the English civil war.

However, this *Behemoth* could not be published in his lifetime, one speculation was because of not getting the approval from the monarch. So, it was published after his death. *Leviathan* was Hobbes's *magnum opus* which represented his mature thought. It heralded a new era of political thinking and thought in the western tradition that we called the social contract tradition.

And Locke, Rousseau, and many other political thinkers developed this concept of state authority and political obligation based on this understanding of state and its existence as a contract, between the ruler, citizens, and state. So, in its approach to the theory of sovereignty and political obligation, the characteristic of this text was quintessentially modern.

It was not rooted in religious, ethical, and moral thinking. It was a scientific objective in its approach. So, in terms of precision of language certainly is almost mathematical, objective, and scientific. This text of *Leviathan* and his approach to politics was quintessentially modern. Hobbes's *Leviathan* or *The Matter, Form, and Power of a Commonwealth Ecclesiastical and the civil*, was the full name of his text when it was published in 1651. It was regarded as the most brilliant and influential political treatise ever written in English.

It was written in exile in France from 1647 to 50 and it was divided into 4 parts. 'Of Man' we are going to focus it today of the commonwealth, 'of a Christian Commonwealth' and finally 'of the kingdom of darkness'. These are the four parts of Hobbes's *Leviathan*. But, the major discussion that we had on Hobbes's political thought was limited to the first two 'of Man' and 'of the commonwealth' or 'commonwealth by means just the civil authority'.

What kind of authority would make it possible for the individual to lead a civil life? And the civil life was very different from the publican and political life in Aristotelian political philosophy. So, our discussion on Hobbes was then limited to these two part of his book that is 'of man and commonwealth' only. So, we will discuss from these two parts, his idea on human nature, the 'state of nature', the theory of the state, sovereignty, and political obligation which are the basis of his political thought and thinking.

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Human Nature

- Hobbes *Leviathan* begins with a very persuasive account of human nature, which is the basis of all his political theory. He considered human being a self-regulating mechanism driven by a complex set of emotions and reason. The chief among them is desire and aversion. Fulfillment of desire, according to Hobbes, is the source of happiness. Human beings are hardwired in a particular way to behave and act according to their desire and aversion to certain acts and objects.
- Hobbes distinguishes between 'vital' and 'voluntary' motions in human beings. Heartbeats, breathing, bowel movement are vital functions for being alive. These are involuntary actions. Speaking, eating, and limbs' movements, he regarded as voluntary actions. He regards these voluntary movements as endeavors that are the cause of pleasure or pain for the human being. These endeavors are of two types – towards an object and away from an object. As a self-propelling mechanism, human beings, according to Hobbes, are driven by their desire or appetite for pleasure and aversion to pain.
- Thus according to Hobbes, human beings are a bundle of desires or passions and aversions. And to live is to fulfill the desire and passion one after the other continually. Human beings have sense and reason too. However, Hobbes does not consider reason as innate to human beings. There is nothing inherently good or bad about human beings. They develop reason and deliberative faculties through their senses and language. But passion is stronger and more potent than reason. The role of reason is in helping human beings in the fulfillment of their desires and passions. And, it is the fulfillment or unfulfillment of desire or passion that, according to Hobbes, cause felicity or happiness and pain in human beings.

Now, if we look at human nature in Hobbesian conception, in Hobbes's *Leviathan*, he began with a very persuasive account of human nature which was the basis of all his political theory. So, to understand the whole, sovereign, it was necessary to understand the constituent of that whole or sovereign and that is the human being.

Thus, he considered the human being as a self-regulating mechanism. It was light and of physical understanding or natural science understanding of human being as a matter, as a form, as an entity which are self-regulating and what regulates this human being is a complex set of emotions and reasons.

So, the human being was self-regulating. There was a kind of very precise definition or understanding of human nature, the basis of state and sovereignty in Hobbes. And he defined it in a more mathematical, and scientific sense, not with any kind of ambiguity or some form of subjective speculation, or a kind of transcendental understanding of human nature.

He considered the human being as a kind of self-regulating mechanism driven by a complex set of emotions and reasons, and the chief among these was desire and aversion. So, what guided human actions or human movements was his or her desire and aversion. The desire was something that pleased that individual. So, this individual would pursue those course of action which fulfill his desire. And he would averse those courses of actions which did not fulfill that desire. That is aversion.

The human being as the self-regulating mechanism or self-propelling entity was guided by this complex set of desire and aversion in its pursuits of actions or its pursuits of what it thinks was good. So, the fulfillment of desire, according to Hobbes was the source of happiness or felicity. So, the human being constantly searched for happiness and happiness, not in pursuit of some transcendental idea of ethics or morality, or a sense of justice as in Eudemonia of Aristotle and Plato's political philosophy.

For Hobbes, it was like a consumerist society. So, the human being as a consumer constantly desired to accumulate something, to own something, and in that owning, there was a kind of constant search for newer desire. And the state was to provide the condition, where human beings could fulfill those desires. Thus, happiness and the felicity for individual life were in the pursuit of those desires that are insatiable. There was no end to those desires.

Human beings are hardwired in that sense with its set of complex desires and reason, to behave and act according to their desire, and aversion to certain acts and objects. Why we want something and do not want other things? Can we have a universal understanding of what is desirable and undesirable? And it differs from people to people. People should have the freedom to choose what is desirable and undesirable, and in that sense, the very definition of good and bad is based on that desire.

So, anything that helps the individual satisfy his desire is good and anything that hampers the pursuit of his desire is bad. This understanding of good and bad is very different from the ethical and moral understanding of desirable and undesirable, as we have seen in Aristotle and Plato. Hobbes distinguished between the vital and voluntary motions in human beings.

The vital movement or involuntary that means for a living entity such as human beings. Certain actions are natural or involuntary. And these are like heartbeats, breathings, or bowel movements which are vital for the living. So, human beings do not endeavor or choose to breathe or not to breathe, or other kinds of vital functions of human life. Thus, that vital function is involuntary.

But, Hobbes's focus was on the voluntary actions of the individual which required certain endeavors. So, like speaking, eating, and limb movement, Hobbes regarded as voluntary action and these voluntary movements as endeavors that constituted the human will. And these voluntary movements or endeavors caused pleasure and pain for the human being. Thus, the

source of human beings' pleasure or pain was their endeavors, voluntary actions, and will to participate or not.

So, the endeavor says further divides into two types. That is towards an object and away from an object. Human beings are guided by their desire and aversion will pursue those things which give pleasure to them and avoid those things which cause pain to them. That is how human beings behave. Now, the very definition of understanding of his behaviors, Hobbes had a very precise or unambiguous understanding.

He did not regard any kind of transcendental entity or essential understanding of human beings or some kind of teleological imagination as in Aristotle. So, the human being will realize his fullest potentiality only in the life of the police. Because he is essentially ethical or rational with a sense of justice and injustice, that is in Aristotle. In contrast to that, there is no such kind of transcendental, and teleological understanding of what is desirable or undesirable for the human being.

He gave a kind of natural or materialistic explanation that human being as a set of complex emotions and reason were guided by their sense of desirable and undesirable. They desired something which pleased them and they avoid something that gives pain to them. So, as a self-propelling mechanism, human beings, according to Hobbes were driven by their desire or appetite for pleasure, and aversion to pain or hatred.

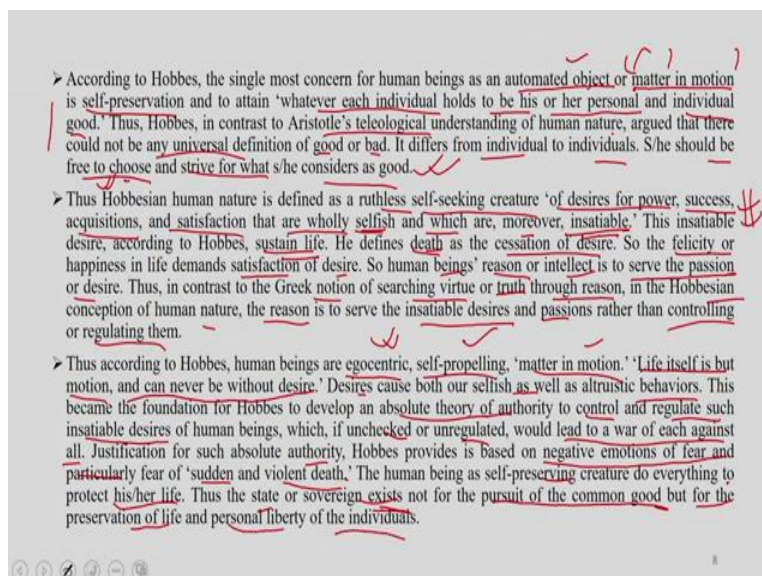
That is how human beings are the same. This, according to Hobbes, human beings were a bundle of desires or passions and aversions, and to live was to fulfill the desire and passion one after the other, continually. There was a kind of ceaselessness, no end of human desires, and aversions. And so life was meaningful, could be happy or what it calls the felicity of life, required the human being to constantly and continuously satisfy these desires one after the other.

There was a kind of insatiability in human desire and passion. Human beings had sense and reason too. So, the sense or reason made it possible for human beings to assist the circumstances. And that sense led to some kind of rational faculty of calculation. What was beneficial for the preservation of life or the fulfillment of desire? And what should be avoided for avoiding pains or hatred or fear of death in life? So, sense and reason are also constitutive of human beings. However, Hobbes did not consider reason as innate to human beings or as inherent.

Reason develops through our senses and our perception of the world. There was nothing inherently good or bad as I have said, good and bad has a very materialistic understanding here. Anything that helps the human being in the pursuit of desire is good anything that hampers or obstructs in the pursuit of that desire is bad and evil. Thus, human beings develop reason and deliberately faculties through their senses and language.

But, passion, he regarded as stronger and more potent than human reason. So, it was the passion that drives human actions. The rule of reason in human beings was in helping them to fulfill those desires and passions, to have happiness in life to achieve the felicity of life. And it was the fulfillment and un-fulfillment of desire and passion that according to Hobbes, caused felicity or happiness, and pain in human beings. Thus, the understanding of pleasure and pain was not based on any kind of ethical, or moral understanding. But in the fulfillment of the desire or undesirable in human action.

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- According to Hobbes, the single most concern for human beings as an automated object or matter in motion is self-preservation and to attain 'whatever each individual holds to be his or her personal and individual good.' Thus, Hobbes, in contrast to Aristotle's teleological understanding of human nature, argued that there could not be any universal definition of good or bad. It differs from individual to individuals. S/he should be free to choose and strive for what s/he considers as good.
 - Thus Hobbesian human nature is defined as a ruthless self-seeking creature 'of desires for power, success, acquisitions, and satisfaction that are wholly selfish and which are, moreover, insatiable.' This insatiable desire, according to Hobbes, sustain life. He defines death as the cessation of desire. So the felicity or happiness in life demands satisfaction of desire. So human beings' reason or intellect is to serve the passion or desire. Thus, in contrast to the Greek notion of searching virtue or truth through reason, in the Hobbesian conception of human nature, the reason is to serve the insatiable desires and passions rather than controlling or regulating them.
 - Thus according to Hobbes, human beings are egocentric, self-propelling, 'matter in motion.' 'Life itself is but motion, and can never be without desire.' Desires cause both our selfish as well as altruistic behaviors. This became the foundation for Hobbes to develop an absolute theory of authority to control and regulate such insatiable desires of human beings, which, if unchecked or unregulated, would lead to a war of each against all. Justification for such absolute authority, Hobbes provides is based on negative emotions of fear and particularly fear of 'sudden and violent death.' The human being as self-preserving creature do everything to protect his/her life. Thus the state or sovereign exists not for the pursuit of the common good but for the preservation of life and personal liberty of the individuals.

According to Hobbes, the single most concerned for human beings is an automated object or matter in motion. So, human life was a matter. But this life was constantly in motion and that gives a kind of dynamic existence to the human being. The single most concerned for human beings as an automated object or matter in motion is self-preservation. And to attain whatever each individual holds to be his or her personal and individual good. He disconnected the idea of

common good or virtue which applied universally to everyone with a very individualistic and particular understanding of good and bad.

Thus, Hobbes in contrast to Aristotle's teleological understanding of human nature or virtue argued, there could not be any universal definition of good or bad. It differed from individual to individuals and he/she should be free to choose. And the liberty was in this constant movement of the human being as a matter in motion.

So, anything that obstructed or interfered with the individual pursuit of the desire or its motion, was contradicted to his liberty, his or her choice. According to Hobbes, he or she should be free to choose and strive for what he or she considers as good. For human beings what was desirable and undesirable was not for the society or community to decide or for the state to decide.

It was the human being as a free rational. The individual with a sense should decide what is desirable or what is good? And, his life was meaningful when it endeavors to fulfill those desires or what it considers as good. The Hobbesian human nature was defined as a ruthless self-seeking creature of desires for power, success, acquisitions, and satisfaction that were wholly selfish and insatiable.

That was the understanding of human nature, Hobbes had these insatiable desires, according to Hobbes that sustain life. He defined death as the cessation of desire. So, human beings have no desire, there is an end of life. Being alive means having in desire and the human endeavor should be in the pursuit of those desires which brings happiness to life. So, the felicity or happiness in life demands satisfaction of desire.

Human being's reason or intellect was to serve the passion or desire. Thus, in contrast to the Greek notion of searching virtue or truth through reason or intellect, in the Hobbesian conception of human nature, the reason was to serve the insatiable desires and passions rather than controlling and regulating them.

So, if you recall Plato's human being, the appetites, honor, and intellect, and intellect were supposed to regulate the appetites, and their spirit and honor of the individual to have a harmonious life. Here, the reason and intellect were to help a human being in the pursuit of their

passion and desire. Thus, according to Hobbes, human beings were egocentric, all his or her action was to satisfy his or her ego.

The self-propelling, matter in motion, and life itself was but motion. And can never be without desire. So long as human beings are alive, they must have the desire, and once, they do not have the desire. That means death, there is the end of this human being as a matter in motion. Thus, desires cause both selfish or altruistic behaviors of a human being.

This became the foundation for Hobbes to develop an absolute theory of authority, to control and regulate such insatiable desires of human beings which if unchecked or unregulated, would lead to a war of each against all that would create the condition of 'state of nature' without regulation, and control. And the justification for such absolute authority, Hobbes, provided was based on these negative emotions of fear, particularly, the fear of sudden and violent death.

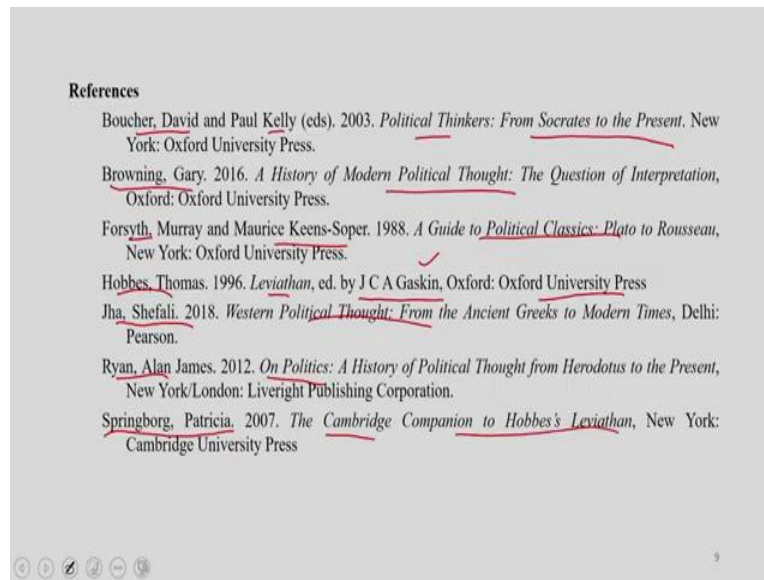
So, the human being as the self-seeking creature or matter in motion will give utmost priority to the preservation of life. And if all their actions are self-centric or egoistic, then it will lead to clashes in the society or war of each against the all. Now, to prevent that condition, you need the authority which has the absolute power to control and regulate these desires, to arbitrate between and among the people.

That is his justification of absolutist monarchy, we are going to discuss in the next lecture. So, human beings as the self-propelling matter in motion guided by their selfish desire give utmost priority to the preservation of life. They constantly fear their life and they enter into the contract, to create the monarch or the *Leviathan* or sovereign with the absolute power was to protect their life.

This creation of a state for Hobbes then was guided by this fear of human being of violent or sudden death. And this, you can connect with the civil war, where there is a kind of constant flux, instabilities, violence, and death to the individual and those who are in authority. So, human beings as a self-preserving creature do everything to protect his or her life. The state, thus the state or sovereign exists not for the pursuit of the common good. But for the preservation of life and personal liberty of the individuals.

That is the basis of his justification for the absolutist monarchy or power or monarchy or sovereign which we will discuss in the next lecture. That is all in today's lecture on Hobbes, his personal life and the socio-economic and intellectual contexts of England and Europe, and his views on human nature.

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In this lecture, today, you can refer to these books like David Boucher and Paul Kelly's; *Political Thinkers: From Socrates to the Present*. Gary Browning's another book on Hobbes and particularly, the interpretation of Hobbes. So, you can refer to his, *A History of Modern Political Thought*. Murray Forsyth and Maurice Keens-Soper again give you a very good introduction to Hobbes's conception of Man.

So, does Shefali Jha's text, *Western Political Thought*. You should also refer to Thomas Hobbes's, *Leviathan* which was edited and introduced by J C. A. Gaskin as part of Oxford classics published by Oxford University Press. James Alan Ryan, you should also refer to *On Politics*, and Patricia Spring Bourg's, the *Cambridge Companion to Hobbes's Leviathan*, the edited work, you can refer to know more about Hobbes's political thought and particularly his *Leviathan*.

These are some of the texts, you should refer to. Do let us know what you think about this lecture and share your comments and feedback. We will be happy to hear and respond. Thanks for listening. Thank you all.