

**Introduction to Western Political Thought**  
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**Lecture 13**

**Hobbes – II: Leviathan and the Making of the Sovereign**

Hello and welcome everyone. This is the second lecture on Hobbes. In the previous lecture, we have discussed Hobbes's conception of human nature. And how to understand human nature and his behaviour in a more scientific manner with the materialistic conception of human being and human nature. This understanding of human nature was necessary for Hobbes to develop a more sophisticated or scientific understanding of a sovereign which exercise absolute power over their subject.

The theorization of politics in Hobbes was rooted in this understanding of human nature and a very materialistic understanding of human nature. He was not having any moral or ethical presupposition about the good or bad conduct of the human being. But he reduced human beings to a kind of scientific objective definition like any other material objects in the physical world.

So, driven by the Euclidean theory of Geometry, the major premises in Hobbesian political philosophy was based on the scientific understanding or definition of the parts which constituted the Commonwealth or sovereign. In the previous lecture, we have discussed how Hobbes defined the human being as a matter in motion with a bundle of desire and aversion. So, the movement of human beings or his behaviour was a voluntary act or endeavours can be understood scientifically.

When we look at this dominant passion or desire in the individual, to gratify their ego, to constantly seek fulfilment of their desire, and all voluntary acts or endeavours of human being, as a matter in motion is towards the fulfilment of desire. And the fulfilment of desire is the source of happiness, according to Hobbes, that we have discussed in the previous lecture. Today, we are going to focus on his idea of sovereign and why sovereign should exercise absolute power.

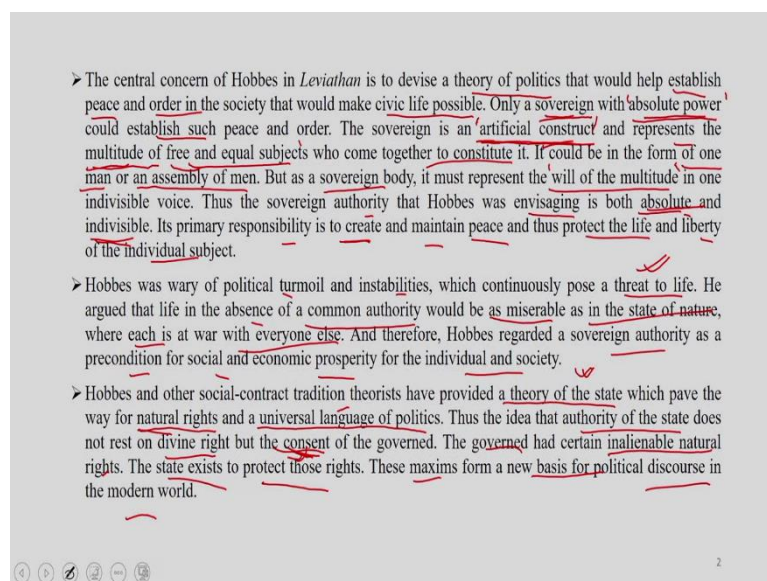
And to understand that we need to understand what he calls the 'state of nature'. In the lecture today, we will focus more on the idea of the sovereign, how it is constituted through covenant or social contract. But before that, we will understand this hypothetical construct in Hobbesian political theory that is of the 'state of nature'. And this becomes then the basis of

any argument or discussion on politics in contemporary times. Thus, the legitimacy of all the rule or government even today is based on the consent of people.

And we will see that how we can trace the roots of such thinking about the legitimacy in this social contract tradition of which Hobbes was the founder. So, we are going to discuss this 'state of nature' and the covenant, and how the sovereign should exercise absolute power, and in what condition, human beings have the right to revolt against the sovereign. This we are going to discuss in today's lecture.

In the following lecture, that is the third or concluding lecture on Hobbes, we will focus particularly on his theory of political obligation. That is why we should obey the sovereign. And then, we will conclude our discussion on Hobbes by critically assessing Hobbes's political philosophy in the light of newer interpretation. Let us start with this idea of sovereign and 'state of nature' and what drives Hobbes to develop this absolutist authority.

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So, the immediate or central concern in Hobbes, like in many other previous thinkers we have discussed was to devise a theory of politics that would help establish peace and order in society. And that establishment of peace and order would make civic life possible. For the individual to lead a happy or a prosperous life, there must be peace and order in society.

In the absence of peace and order, there is no possibility of living one's life happily or pursuing something which one considers as just or good. Hobbes in that sense shared this consent with many other philosophers like Plato or Aristotle, or Machiavelli, as we have

discussed that the central premise or concern in their political theory or philosophy is to establish an order.

And that concern is there in Hobbes. However, there is a kind of distinct where the participation of everyone in the political or public life is required, say in Aristotle and Plato. But for Hobbes, human beings are perfectly okay or justified in living their private life or civic life that is different from the public and political life of the state or sovereign.

Nonetheless, the concern that Hobbes had was similar to another political philosopher. That is how to establish peace and order in society. And he regarded that only a sovereign had absolute power. So, there was no division of power. There was no kind of mixed rule or a mixed constitution or a mixed government. It had to be one singular body, might be of one body or a group of body, or person. But that body had to have a kind of indivisible or absolute power over their subject to establish peace and order in society.

He regarded that a sovereign with absolute power could establish peace and order. And this sovereign was then not a given body, or not justify its existence on some other premises. People would come together and form this sovereign through the contract, through a covenant. In that sense, the sovereign was an artificial construct through the covenant or contract among the people.

And these people were a kind of radical conception of people, where the life of everyone was of equal birth, and they were all equal participants informing or constituting this sovereign. There was a kind of movement or logical progression in Hobbesian thinking from human nature to the 'state of nature' and the formation of the sovereign. So, the sovereign body was not a kind of given natural entity, to which we must abide by or submit ourselves to. But it was something which was created.

And this artificial construct was the precondition for the civic life that would ensure peace and prosperity in the society. So, this agency or involvement of human beings, in the construction of the sovereign, was a radical departure from the previous thinking about the politics. So, why should we obey the government? Because the government was something which we have constituted, given consent to, and that consent was the basis of legitimacy of the government even today.

In that sense, Hobbesian political philosophy in the true sense was not just logical and scientific. But also, a very objective or unambiguous explanation of political authority which

was the construct of human beings, not God representation or any kind of divine origin. So, this sovereign was absolute and necessary for establishing peace and order in society. It was an artificial construct. This was the greatest gift of human nature.

So, even when we are envy, we compete with each other, and there is a war of each against all. Yet, there are some unique traits in an individual which enables them to construct something like the sovereign that would establish peace and order. And thereby, to preserve the life of the individual and enable them the condition to flourish in trade, business, commerce, art, science and philosophy.

In that sense, this artificial construct of the sovereign in Hobbesian thinking also gave us a sense, where the human nature for a human being was not all bad or evil, as there was in Machiavelli's account. He regarded human beings capable of constructing something as good as sovereign which would create the conditions for peace and order for everyone to flourish in their personal life. So, this sovereign was the artificial construct that represented the multitude of free and equal subjects who came together to constitute it.

And this terminology of free and equal subjects and the voice of multitude was represented in one voice of the sovereign. The existence of the sovereign was first dependent on the people coming together and constituting it through a covenant. And it was representative of these multiple voices, the multitude of voices, and that is very unique in Hobbesian political philosophy. Now, this sovereign, thus constituted could be in the form of one man or an assembly of men or a group of men.

When you have the individuals capable enough to regulate their insatiable desire and to live peacefully through mutual coexistence or in relative peace. Then there is no need for any authority. So, some kind of anarchist thinking is also possible, when the individual behaviour can be regulated by themselves through their rational, moral sense of modesty or temperance.

However, human beings constantly tried to fulfil their desire, and their desire is at conflict with other's desire. There is a need for someone who can arbitrate between these conflicts, and therefore there is a need of the sovereign. So, the sovereign could be of one person or a group of person or the assembly of person. But as a sovereign body, it must represent the will of the multitude. Thus, the existence and legitimacy of this sovereign were to represent the will of the multitude.

All the voices of people are legitimately authoritative represented in the person of the sovereign. Therefore, we must obey the sovereign. Because it is our construct. And also, it represents our will. So, why we should obey the sovereign, we are going to discuss in the next lecture. He gives very logical reasoning for why we should obey the sovereign. So, the sovereign authority that Hobbes was envisaging is both absolute and indivisible.

So, the power or authority that sovereign exercised over the subject was indivisible. It could not be shared by different groups. There might be the counsellor, other institution. But the sovereign was not bound to follow their concern, whereas everyone else was bound to obey the command of the sovereign. Thus, the laws and legitimacy of laws and without any confusion law is having the force. That means, if one does not follow the law, there would be a coercive apparatus, which will force that individual to abide by the law.

The justification that we have in Hobbesian understanding is that the sovereign as the representative of the people and their voice knows what is good for them. And in that spirit, the command of the sovereign is the law. So, what is the law? This is what the sovereign says is the law. And everyone should obey that law. Because sovereign which is the representative of the people says so. Thus, there is no confusion about what is the law, what is the correct law. It is something which sovereign says or the commands of the sovereign.

This authority of the sovereign is thus absolute or indivisible in a sense, it does not get divided into like in present three organs of the state, legislature, executive and judiciary. In Hobbesian conception, this *Leviathan* or sovereign exercise all the power in one body or the group of the body. And once, that body is constituted, everyone should abide by the command of that body which is sovereign.

So, the primary responsibility of the sovereign is to create and maintain peace. And this you can connect with the prevailing condition in English society of Civil War or the factionalism between the royalist and parliamentarians on the one hand, and the temporal power or the monarchy on the one hand. And the religious authority on the other. This was a kind of turbulent time, where Hobbes was arguing about how to restore or establish peace and to maintain it.

The first or primary responsibility of the sovereign was to create and maintain peace. Thus, to protect the life and liberty of the individual subject. Hobbes was very wary or apprehensive about the political turmoil and instability which continuously posed a threat to the life of the

individual. He argued that life in the absence of a common authority would be as miserable as in the 'state of nature', where each is at war with everyone else.

In the absence of a common authority that has absolute power or indivisible power, life would be miserable. The reason being there would be constant war or threat to everyone's life and everyone would all the time be concerned about the preservation of their life. And if they devote all their energy or endeavour to protect their life, there was no scope of trade, business, industry, philosophy, art and science. In other words, civic life would become impossible.

Therefore, there was a need for the sovereign with absolute power. Hobbes regarded sovereign authority as a precondition for social and economic prosperity for the individual and society. So, Hobbes and other social-contract tradition theorists had provided a theory of a state which was very different, if you recall Machiavellian understanding of principality or the prince, or in Aristotle or Plato.

In the social-contract tradition, we have a theory of a state which paved the way for natural rights and a universal language of politics. What is the legitimacy of the state? What is the responsibility of the state? Why we should obey the state? It becomes the basic tenets of political discussions in the modern world and we can trace it in this social-contract traditions. The state has its legitimacy, not because it's representative of the divine will on the earth. But people themselves create this artificial body, state, or sovereign.

And we will see how within social-contract traditions, there is a difference between Hobbes, Locke and Rousseau. Nonetheless, they all argue this is an artificial corporate legal entity to create the condition for individuals to lead their life, a happy, prosperous, stable life, without coercion or any threat to their personal life and liberty. Thus, the state exists to protect individual life.

And if you recall, the fundamental responsibility of a modern state is to maintain law and order. That means, there should not be arbitrary violence or coercive, or violent, arbitrary actions among the individuals, if there is such prevalent violence or violation of contracts. Then you have the authority of the state to arbitrate and to enforce the law. So, the fundamental task of the modern state is to understand about maintaining law and order.

And that maintenance of law and order enables the individual to pursue their interest, desire and thereby leads to prosperity in all walks of life. So, this kind of understanding about the state and the politics, you have in the social-contract tradition. They provide this natural rights that even the state cannot take away certain rights which you call the fundamental rights. So, the very existence of a state is to protect individual rights.

And there is a complex debate on what are those rights. There are moral rights, natural rights, legal rights, or fundamental rights. But this very discourse of right which is inalienable, a state must protect is something that we can trace to this natural law tradition or natural rights tradition, beginning with the social-contract tradition. So, the idea that the authority of the state does not rest on divine right. But the consent. All forms of authority have its legitimacy. Why certain institution or public institution, and its command or instruction, we must obey? Because it has legitimacy.

And legitimacy rest not on some divine right. But on the consent that we have given. And once, we have given the consent, then it represents our will. That means, we authorize them to exercise certain power. And in such condition, if they ask us to behave or do in a certain, act in a certain manner, we must obey it. That is the consent which is very crucial to understand the legitimacy or existence of any state and authority in modern politics or in the modern state, which you can trace to this social-contract tradition.

Thus, the state and its existence are not because of the divine right or any given rights. But because the human beings as free and equal member coming together to construct this legal corporate entity. The governed had certain inalienable rights. And the existence of a state was to protect those rights. These maxims formed a new basis of political discourse in the modern world which we can trace to this social-contract tradition.

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**State of Nature**

- Hobbes provides a hypothetical, ahistorical, theoretical account of the state of nature, before presenting his account of the construct of the commonwealth or civil authority. It is not an actual primitive stage of living. Hobbes deploys this idea of the state of nature to describe the miserable conditions of the lives of human beings in the absence of a competent authority. He uses it as the basis for the justification of the absolute power of the sovereign.
- Hobbesian state of nature is a perpetual state of war, which is 'a war as is of every man against every man.' This description of the state of nature follows from his characterization of the human being as a bundle of desire and aversion. Their dominant traits that are the source of perpetual conflicts and war of each against all are competition for power, a mutual sense of insecurity or fear of life from violent and sudden death, and excessive pride or vainglory.
- Thus the state of nature is a miserable condition of life, which makes any kind of civic and peaceful life impossible. And in the absence of civil and peaceful life, there could not be industry, cultivations, arts, sciences, and worst of all life itself would be that of constant fear, and the ever-present threat of violent death and the life of man would be 'solitary, poor, nasty, brutish, and short.'

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Now, let us move on to discuss Hobbes's idea of 'state of nature'. And this 'state of nature', you should not assume as something real, actual or given kind of status of human livings. It is just a kind of hypothetical, ahistorical and theoretical account. So, this idea of 'state of nature', Hobbes constructed in support of his conception of the absolute power of the sovereign or absolute authority of the sovereign.

So, this was a hypothetical, ahistorical, not historical, there was no given manifestation of such kind of life. It was a kind of theoretical construct in support of Hobbes conception of the absolute power of the sovereign. Hobbes provided this hypothetical ahistorical and theoretical account of 'state of nature' before presenting his account of the construct of commonwealth or civil authority with absolute or indivisible power.

It was not an actual primitive stage of living. So, if you think of hunting and gathering kind of society, that was the stages of human life, the Hobbesian conception of 'state of nature' was different from that kind of historical understanding of human life. It was a hypothetical construct. How human being would behave in a condition, where there is no civil authority, there is no authority to arbitrate among the citizens or the individuals? And what kind of life would be there?

Will, there be happiness or stability, and if not, why we should create something which will provide us with those conditions of life that will enable us to pursue our desire or to pursue our private life? So, it is not an actual primitive stage of living. Hobbes deployed this idea of



the 'state of nature' to describe the miserable condition of the lives of human beings in the absence of a competent authority.

So, this hypothetical and theoretical construct was based on this idea of how human beings as a matter in motion, having constant desire and desire was not something seen as bad. It was necessary for living. But if it is not regulated, if it is not controlled, then it would lead to chaos, anarchy, conflict and war of each against all. So, how this human being as a matter in motion, would behave in the absence of a civil or competent authority that Hobbes called as 'state of nature'.

It is not the actual or real historical stage of life or primitive lives of the individual. It was merely a kind of hypothetical understanding of human beings, as a matter in motion, behaving in the condition of absence of any competent civil authority. So, he used the 'state of nature'. The idea of 'state of nature' was the basis for justification of the absolute power of the sovereign which we will discuss after this discussion on the state of nature.

Hobbesian state of nature was a perpetual state of war. It was a war as if every man against every man. So, this perpetual state of war was of everyone against everyone else. Because there was a threat to everyone else's life. All the endeavours or voluntary actions of the individual were guided towards the preservation of life. And everyone was right in doing everything that helped him or her to protect his/her life.

That is the natural right or understanding of natural right that all human beings have equal worth. Their life had a similar value and they all were equally justified in doing everything that helped them protect their life. Now, everyone else, if they tried to do everything else, then there was a constant flux. There was a kind of constant uncertainty. There was a mutual sense of distrust or insecurity from each other. Now, there would be a perpetual war, where everyone would be constantly trying to outperform with others in securing their life.

And that will lead to a kind of power for the sake of power, you constantly try to acquire more power without ever getting the sense of security. Because of the 'state of nature', and the absence of competent civil authority. But when you provided the order and the security by the state or sovereign, then you can behave decently, in a civil justified rational manner. But in the absence of that, there would be a kind of perpetual war of each against all.

So, this description of 'state of nature' followed from his characterization of the human being like a bundle of desire and aversion which you can recall from the previous lecture. And their dominant traits are the source of this perpetual conflicts and war of each against all are, basically these three things. One is a competition for power. The second is a mutual sense of insecurity or fear of life from violent and sudden death. And excessive pride or what he calls vain glory.

Why in the 'state of nature', there was a kind of perpetual war? Because there would be competition among everyone to exercise or accumulate as much power as he, she can, exercising his ability, weight, rational or sense of perception. Now, this competition led to constant envy among each other. And there will be no finality or ceasing of this constant search for more power. And that will lead to, so suppose let us take it this way, if you have few individuals or one individual constantly trying to accumulate power, that is okay.

But if everyone else tries to acquire more power, it will naturally lead to conflict. It will naturally lead to envy and war. Second, if there is a kind of mutual sense of insecurity of life, then the individual will do anything treacherous or not, just or unjust, desirable and undesirable to protect his or her life. There is a kind of absence of trust that leads to a sense of mutual insecurity, where everyone sees everyone else as a kind of enemy or as a kind of envy or a rival.

And now, they will do everything treacherous or treacherous, lawful or unlawful, just or unjust that helps them the preservation of life. And the second is the human beings which is a self-seeking creature and constantly, seek honour or glory which he calls the vain glory that will lead to insatiable desire, to accumulate power for the sake of power. That will lead to a sense of honour among the similarly competing groups of individuals. Now, in that condition, there will be always the attempt by others to outperform the others.

These three things of competition for power, the mutual sense of insecurity, and a threat to life and death through the violence or sudden attacks or conflicts or war. Finally, a sense of vain glory. A sense of insatiable desire for honour from the mutually competitive, equal citizens and subjects led to a state of war or perpetual state of war of each against all. So, the state of nature created a condition, a miserable condition of life that makes any kind of civic and peaceful life impossible.

In the absence of civil and peaceful life, there could be no industry, cultivations, arts and science. Life itself would be of constant fear, an ever-present threat of violent death and life of man would be the famous word of human beings in the 'state of nature', 'solitary, poor, nasty, brutish, and short.' That is the characterization of life in the 'state of nature' according to Hobbes, where there was a constant fear of death from violent actions or sudden death.

People would not invest in long-term industries such as farming, business, or cultivation of science, or philosophy. Because there was uncertainty. And the primary fear was that of life. All the endeavours of human beings would be channelized towards the preservation of life and there would be less focus on the cultivation of science, arts, industries, and farming. So, life would be a miserable life which would not allow the individuals to lead a civil and private life in the absence of common civil authority.

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**Natural Law and Rights**

- Hobbes does not present only the negative character of human beings as it is in Machiavelli's account. In the state of nature, human beings do have sense or reason to deliberate upon the actions and consequences of those actions. For Hobbes, men could be good and bad depending upon their desire and passion and circumstances of living. Human beings, according to Hobbes, are rational, innocent, and moderate too. They would behave peacefully or in a just manner under the command of the civil authority. However, it is the absence of such authority in the state of nature and constant threat to their life from violent and sudden deaths that make them do everything under their command or power to preserve their lives.
- Thus eventually, they develop an understanding of the need for laws and authority through rational deliberations. These are based on certain natural laws. The first law of nature is based on the idea of seeking peace. However, in the absence of such peace, everyone has the natural right to do everything to preserve his or her life.
- He describes many other types of natural laws too. Such each life is of equal worth. Each one should treat others in the same manner as he wanted to be treated by them. One must obey the terms of contract and covenant. Man has the right to defend himself and can't be forced to be a judge in his own case. These natural laws, according to Hobbes are rational percept which must be followed. These exist in the state of nature. However, in the absence of a common authority, it could not be enforced. Hence the need for a sovereign with the power of the sword to enforce these laws.

However, in the 'state of nature', Hobbes recognized certain natural law and certain rights of the individual which were natural and inalienable rights, and the sovereign and its existence were premised on this necessity or requirement, to protect those rights or to respect those natural laws. Hobbes did not present only the negative character of human beings, as we have seen in Machiavelli or Christian theology that man is a fallen being, and the redemption depends on the god and submission to the will of god.

Similarly, in Machiavelli, human nature was necessarily wicked. And if the human natures were wicked, how a prince could establish order. In Hobbes, there was a kind of understanding, where human beings were capable of creating something as good as

sovereign, and the artificial construct. That gave us a sense that human beings also calculate the consequences of their action, and in what ways, one could preserve one's life in the long term. That led them to create this artificial construct which we call *Leviathan* or sovereign or the civic authority.

Hobbes did not present only the negative characters of human beings, as it was in Machiavelli's account. In the 'state of nature', human beings did have sense or reason to deliberate upon the actions and consequences of those actions. Human beings were passion driven by their desire and aversion to some things which displease or force them to behave in a particular manner. That means anything that brings displeasure to them, they will be averse to that kind of action.

So, human beings as a bundle of desire and aversion would gradually develop this sense of their action. They would calculate the consequences of their action which led to the preservation of their life and lead to its threat or destruction of their life. And they would preempt any actions that could be a threat to their life. This understanding of human being as having a sense or the reason to deliberate upon the actions and consequences of that action was there in the 'state of nature', as well.

For Hobbes, men could be good or bad, depending upon their desire and passion, and the circumstances of living. In the 'state of nature', in the absence of a common authority, even the good men or honest men would behave unjustly to protect his or her life. So, it is not that human beings are innately good or bad. They could be good and bad, depending upon the circumstances. Thus, if you have the circumstances of life, where civil authority or the sovereign will provide the condition of peace and order, the human being will behave lawfully.

But in the absence of such authority, human beings would do everything that helped them to preserve their life. So, that is the kind of understanding that Hobbes had about men who could be good and bad depending upon their desire, passion and the circumstances of living. Human beings, according to Hobbes were rational, innocent and moderate, too. They would behave peacefully or in a just manner under the command of civil authority.

However, it is the absence of such authority in the 'state of nature', and constant threat to their life from violent and sudden deaths that make them do everything under their command or power to preserve their life. That is how he saw life in the 'state of nature' and defines

human beings do rational and having some sense of what is desirable and what helps them in the preservation of life. Yet they would behave unjustly or any manner that is possible under their power or command to preserve their life. Because no authority would guarantee them peace or protection of their life.

Thus, eventually, people develop an understanding of the need for laws and authority. Because the life of human beings in the 'state of nature' was miserable. There was a perpetual war of each against all and yet they had some sense or rationality or rational calculation of their actions. And they then develop a kind of common understanding of the desire of law and authority which would provide them with the peace, stability or order.

So, they developed an understanding of the need for laws and authority through rational deliberation. And these were based on certain natural laws. The first law of nature was based on the idea of seeking peace and order. And the rights that individual had followed from this. Human beings should seek peace and order. However, in the absence of that peace and order, everyone had a natural right to do everything to preserve his life or liberty or preserve his or her life. Thus, that natural rights, Hobbes gave even when the sovereign was constituting.

He described many other types of natural laws such as each life is of equal birth. In the 'state of nature', there was no hierarchy between the monarch or common layman or aristocrat. All of them had a similar equal world. Each one should treat others in the same manner as he wanted to be treated by them. One must obey the terms of contract and covenant. And man has the right to defend himself and cannot be forced to be a judge in his case.

Thus, the natural right justice that we have even in a modern democracy, where even the accused of the worst crime has the natural right to defend himself. He cannot be forced to be witness or judge of his crime. So, it has to be proved beyond doubt through evidence, to punish a person, even when that person has committed the heinous crime. There is this kind of natural right to given to the individuals are something that we have in this social-contract or tradition.

And the discussion on natural laws and natural rights, and the whole idea of laws, justice, and the state, you have in the modern world can be traced back to this social-contract tradition. So, these natural laws, according to Hobbes, are rational percept which must be followed. These exist in the 'state of nature'. These kinds of rights that everyone's life is of equal worth, everyone should treat everyone the way he or she wanted to be treated by the others, the

covenant or contracts should be followed. So, these are moral, rational precepts which exist in the 'state of nature' too. However, in the absence of common authority, it could not be enforced.

And that is the problem in the 'state of nature' when human being through their deliveries and rational calculation arrived at certain common laws and the rights of everyone. But it cannot be enforced. Because there is no authority, there is no sovereign, and that makes these laws and rights merely a kind of word without any force. Everyone can violate it, as and when it is suitable to them. And that will lead to a condition of war of each against all. Hence, the need for a sovereign with the power of a sword to enforce these laws. And that leads to the creation of a sovereign.

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**Covenant & the Making of the Sovereign or Commonwealth**

- The basis of the constitution of a commonwealth or a sovereign is social-contract or a covenant or each against all. It is constituted to avoid constant threats to life and establish peace and order. Hobbes called such sovereign *Leviathan* (It is Biblical expression meaning mortality God). It could be one man or an assembly of men. However, Hobbes preferred monarchy over other forms of the sovereign. But in all its forms, sovereign authority is an artificial construct. It is the creation of all men coming together through a covenant. And such an artificial body then represents the will of all and is committed to the preservation of natural laws and rights.
- The terms of covenant among the free and equal individuals are as following 'I authorize and give up my right of governing myself, to this man or to this assembly of men, on this condition, that you give up your right to him, and authorize all his actions in like manner. This done, the multitude so united in one person, is called a Commonwealth, in Latin Civitas.' Thus sovereign is institutionalized by the people and authorized to act and exercise power on their behalf. They also voluntarily, as a free and equal being (in contrast to hierarchical world views), commit to obey the commands of the sovereign.
- Hobbes also argued about the establishment of sovereign authority through conquest or acquisitions. And conquered people must obey the new sovereign to preserve their lives and liberty. Similarly, he argued about the ecclesiastical sovereign as well. But he gave it a more secular content in terms of its power and responsibilities in protecting the lives and liberty of the people and establishing the condition of peace and prosperity in the kingdom.

Now, the covenant and making of the sovereign or commonwealth, if you look at the basis of the constitution of a commonwealth or sovereign was a social contract or covenant. So, the constitution of the sovereign or commonwealth was based on the social contract and covenant, or each against all. In this covenant and contract, there was a participation of everyone. So, this contract was a contract of each against everyone else.

So, they came together and constituted this sovereign through a covenant and contract among themselves. It was constituted to avoid the constant threat to life and establish peace and order. And now Hobbes called such sovereign as *Leviathan* that was a biblical expression meaning mortality god. It could be one man or an assembly of men. However, Hobbes in *Leviathan* preferred monarchy over other forms of the sovereign.

Nonetheless, he was equally okay with the sovereign, where there was a group of men or the assembly of men or one man. But in all its form, sovereign authority was an artificial construct. So, it was not the given natural or divine entity. It was the creation of all men coming together through a covenant. And such an artificial body then represented the will of all and was committed to the preservation of natural laws and rights. That was the preservation of life, peace and order in the society.

So, the terms of covenant among free and equal individuals. Those who came together, they were not divided in any kind of hierarchy, they were all having equal worth. And there was a kind of equality there among the people. They were equal and come together on their own voluntary free will. Thus, the terms that they have of this covenant through which they construct the sovereign was that 'I authorize and give up my right of governing myself, which is the natural right'.

In the 'state of nature', everybody had the right to govern himself or herself. However, when they came together to form this construct, they agreed that "I authorize and give up my right of governing myself, to this man or this assembly of men. That is one man or the assembly of men or group of men, on this condition that you give up your right to him and authorize all his actions, in a like manner. This done, the multitude so united in one person is called a commonwealth in Latin Civitas".

That is the basis of the formation of sovereign or *Leviathan*. When human beings come together and have a contract with each other. And each other were a free and equal member, no hierarchy existed in medieval Europe during the classical Greek-Roman times. Thus, this sovereign was a body institutionalized or constituted by the multitude, and all its actions and power were authorized by this multitude again.

So, this sovereign is institutionalized by the people and authorized to act and exercise power on their behalf. The power that sovereign exercise is the power of the people. The people themselves through their contract authorized the sovereign to exercise that power. Therefore, the sovereign cannot make mistakes or behave justly. And why it is so, we will discuss in the theory of political obligation. This group of people were voluntary as free and equal being in contrast to hierarchical worldviews committed to obeying the commands of the sovereign.

Once they institutionalized the sovereign and authorize them to act on their behalf, commit themselves to follow the commands of the sovereign. Hobbes argued about another kind of

constitution of the sovereign. One is that of through institutionalization, when people on their own free will, who are equal, come together to constitute this sovereign through a covenant. And the terms of the covenant, when another person who was equal and free agreeing to transfer their rights to govern themselves to this body or body of men. Then the sovereign was institutionalized.

The other way of institutionalizing the sovereign was through conquest or acquisitions of new territory. In that sense, the sovereign could be established. And the conquered people must obey the new sovereign to preserve their lives and liberty. Similarly, he argued about the ecclesiastical sovereign as well. But he gave it a more secular content in terms of its power and responsibilities in protecting the lives and liberty of people and establishing the condition of peace and prosperity in the kingdom.

That is how he argued about the institutionalization or constitution of the sovereign through a covenant among the free and equal member. Also, through the acquisition of property, new territories or conquering the new territories or new people, and by the ecclesiastical sovereign based on religion and scripture.

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**Sovereign: Absolute and Indivisible**

- According to Hobbes, the sovereign, thus constituted, has two attributes – representation and authorization. It represents the will of multitudes and utters it in one unambiguous voice. Hence the command of the sovereign is the law, and he carries the sword or coercive means to enforce such laws. Second, the power that a sovereign exercise is authorized by the people. And thus, once a sovereign is created, people are bound to obey its command as it is their own construct based on their 'free' will through a covenant.
- Once such a sovereign is institutionalized, it must exercise absolute power over its subject. It is such authority that provides the sovereign the requisite power to enforce laws and arbitrate among the conflicting parties. In the absence of such power or authority, laws would be merely written words without force and could lead to chaos and back to the state of nature again. And anything is preferable to the state of nature. Therefore, the sovereign must exercise absolute power accountable only to God and his conscience.
- After the creation of the sovereign, people transfer all their rights to that body except their right to life. And sovereign has absolute, undivided, and limitless power to decide and act in a manner it deems fit for protecting the lives of its subjects and the preservation of peace and order. Thus, Hobbes does not give the citizen any right to question or criticize the decisions or acts of the sovereign.

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Now, the sovereign thus constituted should have absolute and indivisible power. This was the attributes of the sovereign as Hobbes envisaged. According to Hobbes, the sovereign constituted two attributes. One was the representation and the second was the authorization. So, representation in a sense, it represented the will of the multitudes of free and equal member and utters it in one unambiguous voice.



The will of the people was legitimately and authoritatively expressed by the sovereign. So, the most legitimate and authoritative voice of people was through their representatives. And the sovereign, as their representative, represented the will of the multitude. So, within a society, country, and democracy, you have a multitude of voices. And that created confusion on many issues. But which voice was truly representative of the people of that country or that society, it was a voice of their government that they legitimately had elected themselves.

Their voice was legitimately represented by their government which was the representative of their voice. So is the case of this sovereign as the representative of the multitude. There was often confusion, a difference of opinions on many issues. But the valid or legitimate voice of the people was the voice of the sovereign as the representative of the multitude. So, they expressed or uttered their will in unambiguous term or voice.

Hence, the command of the sovereign was the law and he carried the sword or coercive means to enforce such a law. So, what happens if the individuals living in a society do not obey the laws or the command of the sovereign? That sovereign has the coercive means or the sword to enforce the law. The law abided nature is meaningful when there is a kind of coercive apparatus that back those laws. So, in the contemporary discussion on laws, we see that laws should be followed by everyone. Because there are other ways of thinking about regulating the conduct of behaviour.

There could be moral reasoning. There could be religious instruction and ethical concerns. But why, for the law was something forceful. Because there was a backup of the coercive apparatus of the state. So, there was a police and army. There were other kinds of coercive apparatus, through which human beings or the individual could be forced to abide by the law. Here, this sovereign provided that necessary power or coercive means through which law could be enforced. Second, the power that a sovereign exercised was authorized by the people.

It was not given to him naturally or through some other apparatus. But by people themselves. So, the representation and authorization was something derived from the people. People coming together through their voluntary action gave certain power to this sovereign. And thus, once a sovereign was created, people were bound to obey its command, as it was their construct based on their free will through a covenant. Thus, once a sovereign was institutionalized. It must exercise absolute power over its subject.

It is such authority of absolute power or individual power that provides the sovereign with the requisite power to enforce the law and arbitrate among the conflicting parties. So, if a sovereign does not have that coercive power or absolute power, then it would be law without any meaning or merely words with no force at all. So, in the absence of such power or authority, laws would be merely written words without force and could lead to chaos, and also back to the 'state of nature'.

And anything, according to Hobbes, is preferable to the 'state of nature'. Therefore, the individual must submit to the will or command of the sovereign. The sovereign must exercise absolute power accountable only to god and his conscience. So, the sovereign is not accountable to the people. Hobbes argued that the individual should submit to the will of command without scrutiny. Because the sovereign knows what is best for the people.

And once the sovereign is constituted, then what is desirable or undesirable for the nation as a whole or the society as a whole is left to the sovereign. Because the sovereign knows what is best. And Hobbes goes to the extent of saying that someone cannot make mistakes, the sovereign cannot do injustice. Because if it does, then how one could justify the free will or the voluntary nature of the covenant.

So, the sovereign was constitutive of the free will or voluntary actions of the individual and represent their own will. In the exercise of the authority, Hobbes argued the sovereign could not make mistakes. Therefore, there should be a kind of absolute submission to the will or command of the sovereign. After the creation of sovereign people transferred all their rights to that body, that is the sovereign body except their right to life.

And sovereign had absolute undivided and limitless power to decide and act in a manner it deems fit for protecting the lives of its subject and the preservation of peace and order. Thus, Hobbes did not give the citizen or subject any right to question or criticize the decisions or acts of the sovereign. So, once the sovereign was constituted, he exercised absolute indivisible, and limitless power accountable only to the god and his conscience, and not to the people who had constituted.

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- The command of the sovereign is the law that must be obeyed. Sovereign must possess the means to enforce its command, i.e., laws. However, Hobbes thought that the sovereign would exercise this power minimally and left maximum areas of human life free from interferences or regulations. Thus he equates the longevity of the sovereign with the prosperity of its subjects. So, the laws should be minimal.
- Hobbes demarcated the public or political life of the state or sovereign from the private or civil lives of the citizens or subjects. Here, it is vital to understand the Hobbesian conception of liberty. He gave it a materialistic definition similar to the one he gave to human beings and their behavior. For Hobbes, liberty is the absence of external impediments or interference. In other words, any acts that obstruct the movement of human life as a matter in motion impedes his liberty.
- However, this liberty human beings could enjoy only in a civilized life under the conditions of peace and order. In the state of nature, such liberty exists but is unrealizable due to a constant threat to an individual's life. Its realization is possible only under a sovereign. Hobbes wants the sovereign to not to interfere in the many areas of individual lives, such as – their choice of trade, economic dealings and contracts with one another, how they educate their children, or family lives, and so on. Hobbes argues that for the longevity of their rule, a good monarch or sovereign would not interfere too much in the private lives of subjects and thereby provide them maximum liberty to pursue their desire.

So, the command of the sovereign was the law that must be obeyed. And sovereign must possess the means to enforce its command, i.e. laws. However, Hobbes thought that the sovereign would exercise this power, minimally and left maximum areas of human life free from interference and regulations. That is the kind of sovereign that Hobbes envisioned, where Hobbes argued that sovereign would exercise its power and authority in a manner, where it lived maximum areas of human life, particularly, his civil or private life free from interference.

There would be minimum laws and regulation from the sovereign, and that would ensure its longevity. So, he equated the longevity of the sovereign with the prosperity of its subject, and the prosperity could be guaranteed, when there was maximum liberty or freedom to the individuals. The laws, according to Hobbes, should be minimal. If there were too many laws, it would become impossible for the sovereign to enforce them.

So, if it was minimum, then the sovereign would have maximum power to enforce those laws. But if a sovereign constantly tried to legislate new laws, and regulate all the areas of human life, it would become impossible in the long term to enforce those laws. Therefore, to ensure the sustenance or longevity of the sovereign, it was desirable to control and regulate in the minimum areas of life.

And there was a kind of liberal thinking in Hobbesian discourse. Of course, he was the supporter of the monarchy, and we will discuss that how we should look at Hobbes more critically when we represent him as the liberal thought or philosopher of the individualist rights and responsibility in the third lecture. But in Hobbes, you have that liberal imagination

as well of minimum government with minimum laws. Hobbes demarcated the public or political life of a state or the sovereign from the private lives or civic lives of citizens or subjects.

In contrast to Aristotle, Hobbes individual was perfectly okay if he or she did not take any interest in the public and political life. It was the life of the sovereign or the state. And the responsibility of the state was to provide the condition of peace and order for the citizens and subjects to pursue their desire, to lead their personal civic life. So, there was a kind of clear distinction in Hobbes about the public and private.

And that became the maxim for the modern state in modern times. So, the life of citizens is seen in modern times is that of private life, the pursuit of business, trade, industries, arts, philosophy, science, latest is perfectly okay if an individual does not take any interest or active interest in the matters of the politics or public matters of the state which is the concern of the sovereign or state and its institutions. So, there is a clear division between the public and private life which Hobbes argued.

Here, it is vital to understand the Hobbesian conception of liberty. And he gave it a very materialistic definition that is similar to one he gave to human beings and their behaviour. So, for Hobbes, liberty is the absence of external impediments or interference. In other words, any acts that obstruct the movement of human life as a matter in motion impedes his liberty. So, he gave a very negative conception of liberty if you connect it with (61:16) the positive or negative liberty.

And negative liberty is that area of life where we are free from any kind of interference. So, it is freedom from something. And only those areas of life, we can say, we have liberty or freedom which is free from any external interference, or impediments. And positive liberty is to do something. It is the freedom to act something. In Hobbesian conception of liberty is like any external impediments or interference in the movement of human life as a matter in motion.

However, this liberty human being could enjoy only in civilized life. The human lives, the way he defines is the constant matter in motion. But it can be realized only in a civilized life under the conditions of peace and order. In the 'state of nature,' such liberty exists. But it was unrealizable due to constant threat to one's individual life. So, if there is a threat to life, there

is no guarantee or certainty of free movement or the realization of liberty. Its realization of human liberty is possible only under a sovereign.

Hobbes wants the sovereign to not to interfere in the many areas of individual life, such as their choice of trade, economic dealings, and contracts with one another, how they educate their children or their family lives. So, he wanted the sovereign not to interfere in these lives of the individuals. Hobbes argued that for the longevity of their rule, a good monarch or sovereign would not interfere much in the private lives of the subjects and thereby, provided them maximum liberty to pursue their desire. Thus, life was about the pursuit of one's desire.

And the sovereign would ensure its sustenance if it gives the subjects or citizens maximum liberty to choose the trade it likes to do or have contracts with one another in the manner they do or how to educate their children and how to lead a public life. That should be left for the individual to decide and the states should not interfere or sovereign should not interfere in those matters. That would ensure its longevity in the long term. Now, Hobbes's philosophy also justified revolt. Although in Hobbes, we have seen that he wanted the individual to submit to the command of the sovereign.

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**Revolt against the Sovereign**

- Hobbes wanted individuals to support and obey the sovereign in all conditions without scrutiny. However, he wanted the individual to defend his life individually without any assistance from others, even against the sovereign. In some conditions, he also gives the individuals the right to rebel or revolt against the sovereign. But not in their individual capacity or wisdom. But when there emerges an alternative rebellious group against the sovereign and sovereign lacks the power to quell them, then an individual could revolt against the sovereign.
- Hobbes thus gives the right to revolt to the individuals in a condition when the existing sovereign violates the first law of nature, that is when it lacks the requisite power and authority to enforce peace or order and fail to arbitrate among the warring factions and groups—and thus rendering civic and peaceful life impossible. In such conditions, people could revolt.
- Otherwise, Hobbes provides an unambiguous defense of absolute monarchy and a sovereign body. Thus, Hobbes is accused of putting the life of men at the mercy of the sovereign, which is created in the first place by them to protect it.

But in certain conditions, he gave the individual right to revolt. Hobbes wanted individuals to support and obey the sovereign in all conditions without scrutiny. Because the sovereign knows what is good for the people. And that doing or act of the sovereign is just. Because it represented the will of the people. It was institutionalized in the first place by the people

through a covenant. So, individuals should support and obey the sovereign in all conditions without scrutiny.

However, he wanted the individual to defend his life individually, not with assistance or support from others. He wanted the individual to defend his life even against the sovereign individually. So, the right to life, he gave to the individual even after the creation of the sovereign or commonwealth authority. Only other rights were transferred to the sovereign on the condition when everyone else agreed to the same transfer of their rights to the sovereign body of one man or the assembly of men.

However, the individual right to defend his life is there even after the creation of the sovereign. So, an individual has the right to defend himself individually without securing assistance from others. In some condition, however, he gives the individual the right to rebel or revolt against the sovereign. But not in their capacity or wisdom. But when there emerged an alternative rebellious group against the sovereign and sovereign lacked the power to quell them, an individual could revolt against the sovereign.

So, the condition to revolt or rebel against the sovereign was when it lacked the power to quell or defeat any rebellious groups that existed in society. The first condition for the existence of a sovereign and its limitless absolute individual power was its ability to provide peace and order in society. But if there was a kind of rebellious group or the factions emerge and challenged the existing sovereign. This existing sovereign failed to quell them or defeat them. Then the individual had the right to revolt against such sovereign. Because it failed to perform its primary responsibility of providing order and peace in society.

Hobbes, thus, gave the right to revolt to the individuals in a condition, when the existing sovereign violated the first law of nature. And that was when it lacked the requisite power and authority to enforce peace or order and fail to arbitrate among the warring factions and groups. Thus, rendering the civic and peaceful life impossible. And in this condition, Hobbes gave the individual right to revolt against the sovereign.

Otherwise, Hobbes provided an unambiguous defence of absolute monarchy and a sovereign body. Thus, Hobbes was accused of putting the life of men at the mercy of the sovereign, which created in the first place by them to protect it. In a way, there was a kind of accusation against Hobbes that by giving the sovereign absolute power. He rendered the life of the individual under the threat of the will or furies of the sovereign.

So, the sovereign in its exercise of limitless power could pose a threat to the individual life, an individual would have no right to question such acts of the sovereign. In the condition, when there was a large group question the authority of the sovereign and sovereign could not quell those rebellions, only then individuals were justified in revolting against the sovereign. Otherwise, if the sovereign takes away the life of an individual, his action must not be questioned.

There was a kind of criticism against Hobbes, where he put the individual at the mercy of the sovereign. And this we can discuss in the next lecture. So, that is all in today's lecture on Hobbes, a 'state of nature', the constitution of sovereign or *Leviathan* through a covenant or contract. And how much sovereign should exercise absolute and individual power and authority over its subject? In what condition, individuals are justified in revolting against these sovereign or *Leviathan*.

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On this lecture today, you can refer to some of these books, David Boucher and Paul Kelly's, *Political Thinkers: From Socrates to the Present*. Gary Browning's, *A History of Modern Political Thought: The Questions of Interpretation*. Murray Forsyth and Maurice Keens-Soper's, *A Guide to Political Classics: Plato to Rousseau*. Thomas Hobbes's, *Leviathan*, you should refer to which was edited by J C A. Gaskin, Oxford University Press. Shefali Jha's, *Western Political Thought: From the Ancient Greeks to Modern Times*, is a very good text to understand the 'state of nature', language of contract and covenant.

Similarly, James Alan Ryan's text. I will also request you to look at this text by Richard Tuck's, *Leviathan*, which was the revised student edition, published by the Cambridge University Press, to understand the complexities or logical flow of argument about human nature, 'state of nature', sovereignty, and the absolute power of sovereignty. And its justification by Hobbes. So, that is all in today's lecture. Do share your comments and feedback. We will be happy to listen to or respond to your queries. Thanks for listening.