***Class Notes: 5TH SEM (Hon)***

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***Paper: Classical Political Philosophy***

***(POL-HC-5016)***

***DT: 19-09-2023***

**Q. 1. Hobbes concept of Human Nature:**

Thomas Hobbes conception of human nature is articulated in his great work ‘The Leviathan’. Hobbes stated that the study of political society must begin with the observation of men’s nature. His understanding of humans as being matter and motion, following the same physical laws as other matter and motion, remains one of the major themes of his entire political philosophy. Using the method of geometry, he starts with a set of axioms about human nature. Hobbes observed human natures from the motion, psychology and physical point of view. His methodology to study human nature may be summarized under the following points:

1. Hobbes view human beings as matter in motion. There are two kinds of motion. The first he calls vital, or involuntary motion, by which he means those basic and unthinking life functions of inhalation, digestion, circulation, and so on. The second Hobbes calls voluntary motion, by which he means those forms of human activity that are willed such as walking and speaking. Hobbes saw individuals constantly in motion to satisfy their desires and continual success in the attainment and fulfilment of their desires. According to him “there is no such thing as perpetual tranquility of mind, while we live here; because life itself is but motion, and can never be without desire. This desire for success makes men to be egoistic, selfish and even quarrelsome”.
2. Hobbes political theory is originated from psychology which is based on his mechanistic conceptions of human nature. Like Machiavelli, Hobbes was concerned with the secular origins of human conduct. Disagreed to Aristotle, who saw human nature as naturally social. Hobbes observed human beings as isolated, egoistic, and self-interested and seeking society as a means to their ends. Hobbes implied that human condition in the state of nature is derived from the nature of man, his basic psycho-physical character, his sensations, emotions cravings and behaviour.
3. Hobbes asserted that every human action, feeling and thought is physically determined. Though the human being was decent on his life, he was able to control these motions up to some extent and make his life.
4. According to Hobbes, it was reason that distinguished humans from animals. Reason enables the individual to understand the impressions that sense organs picked up from the external world, and also indicated an awareness of one's natural desires.
5. Individuals were creations of desire, seeking pleasure and avoiding pain. His human beings, extremely individualistic rather than moral or social, are subject to *“a perpetual and restless desire of power after power, that ceases only in death*” (Leviathan XI 2).

**Characteristics:** He holds the following traits of human nature:

1. Man is the matter as well as the artificer of that natural man- the state. In Hobbes view of human nature, his great revolution was in seeing the state as a human, artificial creation. It is not based on the eternal principles as Plato imagined, nor is it intrinsic to human nature as Aristotle described in his book ‘The Politics’.
2. Activities of man never break, as soon as one activity is fulfilled, next one starts. This means that individuals constantly in motion to satisfy their desires. There was no end to the desire of man and because of this man jump from one action to another.
3. According to Hobbes the decision of men is not separate from their activities and behaviour. In other words, the behaviour of one person is the reaction the behaviour of another man. By saying this Hobbes had applied the idea of motion into his analysis of human nature.
4. Hobbes treated good and bed concept and they fall within the private domain of the individual. Hobbes stated that its man’s like or disliking that makes a thing good or bad.
5. In the ‘natural condition of mankind’, humans are equal, despite minor differences in strength and mental acuity. There is no vital difference between man and man. Hobbes viewed “*the nature has made man so equal in the faculties of body and mind, as though there he found one man sometimes manifestly stronger in body or of quicker mind than another, yet when all is reckoned together, the difference between man and man is not so considerable…….i find yet a greater equality among man, than that of strength”*. Hobbes argues that men were naturally equal in mind. This basic equality of men is a principal source of trouble and misery. Men have in general equal faculties; they also cherish like hope and desires. It they desire the same thing, which they cannot both obtain, they become enemies and seek to destroy each other.
6. Hobbes in his famous work Leviathan wrote thus: in the state of nature we find three principle causes of quarrel-competition, diffidence and glory. The first makes men invade for gain, the second for safety and third for reputation. All these features of men created an atmosphere of animosity and war like situation in the state of nature. It was a war of every man against everyman to win the desired goal. Hobbes specified that conflict is essential in human psychology. There was none to prevent them because there was no recognizable power to put an end to that undesirable situation. In his own words:

*“I put for a general inclination of all mankind, a perpetual and restless desire of power after power that cease only in death. And the cause of this, is not always that a man hopes for a more intensive delight, that lie has already attained to ; or that he cannot be content with a more moderate power : but because he cannot assure the power and means to live well, which he hath present without the acquisition of more”* (Leviathan. ch. 11).

1. Hobbes admitted that everyman in the state of nature was not rebellious, and he was not prepared to declare war against another. Hobbes stated that some people were quarrelsome and this attitude instigates others which eventually created warlike situation in the state of nature.
2. Hobbes viewed that man is not concerned with the satisfaction of momentary desires. He seeks his own preservation. To attain this goal man seeks power, and there is no end of this desire.
3. Man have no pleasure in keeping company, where there is no power able to overawe them all, for every man looks that his companion should value him.
4. Hobbes viewed that man is endowed with a faculty of reason by which he acquires the knowledge of consequences and dependence on e fact upon another.

However, it is pertinent to mention here that the classical view asserted that man is a rational and social animal who has a natural inclination to his proper end, happiness, which can be attained by the virtues or the perfections of mind and character. Classical natural law was therefore ‘teleological’: directed to the natural end of human beings and to the good life of virtue in a just political community. Hobbes rejects the teleological view of human nature as a false and dangerous illusion. Instead, he viewed human nature as the restless striving for power after power that has no end and therefore no happiness or perfection. The rejection of end-directed motion underlies Hobbes’s revolution in thinking from classical natural law, and its perfectionist principle of virtue, to modern natural rights.

**Criticisms:**

1. There is inadequacy of observation as a foundation of Knowledge. Hobbes repudiated the scientific method and believed that the observation of nature itself is too subjective a basis on which to ground philosophy and science. He rejects the observation of nature as a means of ascertaining truth because individual humans are capable of seeing the world in vastly different ways. Again, Hobbes rejects inductive reasoning, arguing that the results of contrived experiments carried out by a few scientists can never be universally demonstrable outside of the laboratory.
2. Critics pointed out that Hobbes' view of human nature was influenced by the English Civil War, which occurred during 1642 to 1649 and ended in the beheading of King Charles I. Hobbes considered the ensuing chaotic interregnum period, from 1649 to 1660, to be as close to that basic state of nature as humans could get. Considering the highly dysfunctional nature of English government during that time, Hobbes' views on human nature should come as little surprise.
3. Hobbes had pessimistic view of human nature. He believed the only form of government strong enough to hold humanity's cruel impulses in check was absolute monarchy.
4. The most durable components of his philosophy have been his appraisal of the role that power and fear play in human relations and his attractive representation of humans in the state of nature. Political and ethical philosophers have had to confront his theories his concept of power and fear.
5. Hobbes attributed nearly total power to the monarch, and did not believe the people to have any right to rebellious against monarch.
6. In putting together this materialist view of the world, Hobbes tried to establish similar laws of motion to explain the behavior of human beings. Hobbes attempted to arrive at his laws of motion deductively, in the manner of geometrical proofs. It is important to note that Hobbes was not in any position to prove that all of human experience can be explained in terms of physical and mechanical processes. In fact, , the image of the human being as a machine in Hobbes’s writing remains more of a metaphor than a philosophical proof.
7. Hobbes believed that in man’s natural state, moral ideas do not exist. In speaking of human nature, he defines good simply as that which people desire and evil as that which they avoid, at least in the state of nature. Hobbes believes that moral judgments about good and evil cannot exist until they are decreed by a society’s central authority. This position leads directly to Hobbes’s belief in an autocratic and absolutist form of government.

**Importance:** Hobbes view of human nature and his idea of the world is strikingly original and still important to contemporary politics. Its relevance may be discussed under the following points:

1. His major consideration is the issue of political and social order. This in other word means how humans can live together in harmony, peace and avoid the danger and fear of civil conflict.
2. Hobbes conception of human nature, which prepossess that going into a contract with the sovereign or leviathan means that one have to be loyal even when the sovereign is going for and unjust cause just to avoid sanctions.
3. Hobbes makes available a logical explanation that seeks to examine or look into the phenomenon of society. Using the method of geometry, which he commended, he starts with a set of axioms about human nature he considered undoubtedly and then infers a series of theories from them.
4. It is pertinent to comprehend that he does not claim this is a historical account of how society actually originated. Rather, he tried to show why government is justified in terms of laws of human nature and what form it’s to take if it is to be rational.
5. The quest and struggle for power lies at the core of the Hobbesian vision of relations among states. The same model of international relations developed by Hans Morgenthau, who was deeply influenced by Hobbes and adopted the same view of human nature.

**Q. 2. Hobbes concept on State of Nature:**

Hobbes depiction of the human nature is well connected with the concept of the state of nature. His description of human nature is found in his earlier work ‘*De Cive’*. Hobbes stated that prior to the formation of state or common wealth, there existed state of nature. Men in the state of nature were essentially selfish. Hobbes considered that like all other things in nature, man is principally a body governed by law of motion which pervades the entire physical world. Men in the state of nature possessed some natural instincts like competition, shyness and glory. Men are naturally equal in mind and body. This basic equality of man, according to Hobbes is a principal source of trouble and misery in the state of nature.

Hobbes in his renowned book ‘*The Leviathan’* makes us to understand that the state of nature was not convenient for man. In the state of nature man behave according to their innate nature. Men are inherently in no way better than wild animals; each individual in the state of nature is driven by endless appetite to grab everything within his reach. His self concern blinds him to the needs of others. In his words:

*“He is like a king who believes that all creation was meant to do his bidding; and his acts reflects this belief. Thus he is imperious and proud; and all objects which seem to get in the way of his appetite for power are ruthlessly crushed”* (Leviathan).

Hobbes narrated a gloomy picture of the state of nature. The state of nature was not a place for peace and tranquility, but tension and animosity. This animosity created a sense of insecurity of life and one man believed that another was his enemy; but in reality it was not. The ill-feeling and suspicion pervaded the atmosphere of the state of nature. His life and property were always at stake. The natural condition of mankind, according to Hobbes, is a state of war in which the life is ‘solitary, poor, nasty, brutish, and short’, because individuals are in a ‘war of all against all’. There was no sovereign authority to rule over them. ‘Might is right’ was the order of the day. ‘Kill whom you can and take what you can’ was the slogan in the state of nature. In a word, it was state of which the governing law was the law of sword. Hobbes says:

*“in such condition there is no place for industry, because fruits thereof is uncertain, and consequently no culture of the earth, no navigation, no use of commodities that may be imported by sea……no knowledge of the face of the earth…..no arts, no letters, no society and what is worst of all, continual fear and danger of violent death, and the life of man, solitary, poor, nasty, brutish and short”* (Leviathan, Part I, Ch-3).

It is worth to mention here that Hobbes was very much clear that he is not describing the historical facts, but only trying to demonstrate what would happen if there were no settled government for a state. In other words, Hobbes was not concerned whether such a state ever existed or ever men lived in such as state. He admits that the picture of the state of nature depicted by him may not be universally applicable. But in many places of America, the savages of natural state like situation prevailed. They did not have government and lived in brutish manner.

**Characteristics:** From the discussion ofthe state of nature as hold by Hobbes, we can easily summaries the following important characteristics of his state of nature:

1. Prior to the formation of state or common wealth, people lived in the state of nature.
2. The predominant passions of desire and aversion are the root cause of conflict in the state of nature.
3. There was no distinction between right and wrong, just and unjust as they exist only in society. In the state of nature ‘*nothing can be unjust’* since the ‘*notions of right and wrong, justice and injustice have there no place*’ (Leviathan 188).
4. There was no sovereign power over men that everyone will fear. Hence anarchy and war like situation where the inevitable consequences.
5. There is no such thing as private property, because in the state of nature was based on the principle of Might is the right.
6. Lives of the natural man were always at stake and filled with suspicion and ill-feeling.
7. Hobbes state of nature is philosophical and not historical.

**Criticism:**

Hobbes philosophical idea of the state of nature has been strongly challenged by competent scholars as either irrelevant or inconsistent. Following are some of them:

1. Critics point out that Hobbes depiction of the state of nature is not primarily a historical account but a logical construction from the first premise about human nature.
2. Anthropologists have shown that even amongst the most primitive people there has always existed some form of moral code and social life. It said that family or the clan is the basic unit, and not the individual of the primitive society. It was controlled not by laws, but by traditions and customs.
3. It is generally believed that the basis of Hobbes' state of nature lies in his theory of psychological egoism. This view has been vigorously challenged by some theorist on the ground that Hobbes does take into account other-regarding or altruistic motives and virtues such as sympathy, pity, kindness, charity, benevolence etc.
4. Some scholars have expressed the opinion that Hobbes was principally concerned with the clash of beliefs and ideologies. Shortsightedness may be another factor responsible for the state of strife.
5. Critics argue that Hobbes depiction of the state of nature is full of sheer-imagination, and it has no practical values.
6. It is said that Hobbes depicted the dismal picture of the state of nature keeping in mind the situation of his contemporary Britain.

**Importance:**

The importance of his concept of the state of nature cannot be ignored. Following are some its merits:

1. Hobbes has said that in many places of world, there was savage like situation. His depiction may not be fully correct, but the prevalence of anarchical situation cannot be denied.
2. It is to be noted that this is not primarily a historical account but a logical construction from the first premise about human nature.
3. His concept of the state of nature grounds politics in the individual’s desire to preserve his life and his goods, and stipulates that the role of government is to serve these ends

**Q.3. Hobbe’s concept of Natural Rights and Laws of Nature:**

Hobbes concept of natural right and laws of nature is considered to be the great contribution of to modern political theory. Hobbes however, makes a clear distinction between natural rights and natural laws. By the right of nature every man has a claim to whatever that will satisfy any of his desires. But by law of nature he is obliged to renounce some parts of his claim for the realization of a better purpose.

Hobbes concept of natural right is related with his depiction of the state of nature. The right of nature is the freedom of each man has to use his own power for the preservation of his own life and subsequently of doing anything in his own judgment. In other words, to Hobbes natural rights means liberty possessed by every man what seems best for the preservation of his existence. By a right of nature everyman has a claim to whatever will satisfy any of his desires. He says, is *"the: liberty each man hath, to use his own power, as he will himself, for the preservation of his own nature; that is to say, of his own life; and consequently, of doing anything, in his own judgement, and reason, he shall conceive to be the aptest means thereunto*" (LeviathanCh. XIV).

According to him the state of nature where every man possessed equal rights or license to do everything in the world. This inevitably leads to conflict ‘a war of all against all’. In such a state of uncertainty, the life of the people was insecure. In order to make life safe and secure, the natural law which is a body of principles or rules was framed by the natural men. In fact, Hobbes concept of natural law is restriction rather than liberty to the man. So, the ultimate purpose of natural law is to forbid any act that is unfavourable to preservation.

Hobbes says, *“a nature of law is a precept or general rule found out by reason, by which a man is forbidden to do that which is obstructive of his life or take away the means of preserving the same; and to omit that by which he thinks it may be best preserved*”. Thus, the principle of natural law, as it follows that it is meant to seek peace and prevent war. But this is possible only when each man abandoned their natural rights.

Hobbes presents the social contract in the context of elaborating his ‘laws of nature’, which are the steps we must take to leave the state of nature. In calling these rules ‘laws of nature’, Hobbes significantly changes the traditional concept of natural law, in which nature offers moral guidance for human behavior.

**Principles of Natural Law:** From the above analysis, we can simply surmise the following principles of Hobbes concept of natural law.

1. The first principle of natural law is to seek peace and avoid war;
2. To have peace and to avoid animosity and war is possible, when the natural men abandon their natural rights;
3. Hobbes repudiates the validity of natural law, as it placed itself above the legal sovereign;
4. The law of nature is not a law at all, because moral values, justice, gratitude are the laws of nature.
5. Laws of nature are nothing but a set of general principles’

**Kinds of Natural Laws:** Hobbes lists natural laws which are nineteen in numbers. Of all these following ten are important ones:

1. The law of nature holds that every man should seek peace and preserve it, and if not possible he should use all helps and advantages of war.
2. That a man must be willing along with others in the interest of peace and self-preservation, to swear his right to all things, is content with as much liberty as would allow others over him and transfer some of his rights by a contract.
3. The law of nature enjoins that men keep and perform their covenants made.
4. All men that mediate peace are allowed safe conduct.
5. At the entrance into condition of peace, no man requires to reserve to himself any right which he is not content should be reserved to every one of the rest.
6. The law of nature is the men to whom the rights are transferred cause no injury to the one who makes that transfer.
7. Such thing as cannot be divided, be enjoyed in common if it can be, and if the quantity of the thing permit, without stint, otherwise proportionately to the number of them that have right.
8. Other laws of nature points to the advisability of an individual accommodating himself to the rest, spirit of freedom, sense of equity and avoiding the spirit of revenge, cruelty, pride and avarice.
9. Upon caution of the future time a man ought to pardon the offences past of them that repenting, desire it.
10. There was redistribution of evil for evil.

Besides the above, there are other laws of nature which are not generally emphasized, but they are quite important insofar as they show that Hobbes is really not the type of psychological egoist or ethical subjectivist that he is usually made out to be. These are justice, propriety, complaisance, equity, against pride, against arrogance etc.

**Limitations:**

The laws of nature play a crucial role in the transformation of the state of nature into civil society. But they raise highly controversial and difficult questions which have 'been a subject of continuing debate. Here we are citing a few of them:

1. The essential point is that Hobbes makes a clear-cut distinction between rights and might without identifying right with the traditional doctrine of morality. Strauss stated that Hobbes' theory is moralistic as against naturalistic or utilitarian, but his theory is a moralistic of a special kind. It is not possible here to examine in depth the Strauss view of Hobbes' natural right. But it must be said that on this point Hobbes is neither clear nor consistent.
2. According to Hobbes nothing is definitely known about God except his existence. Critics argued that the introduction of God in his exposition is logically redundant and is meant only to assuage the feelings of those who were enraged by Hobbes' atheism. "Anobligation to obey God", says Plamenatz "as Hobbes conceives of it, does not differ in kind from what the obligation to obey a human sovereign would be in a world without God"
3. Howard Warrender takes a firm stand against treating natural law as rational principles of self-preservation devoid of moral implications beyond self-interest. Against Plamenatz he contends-"the Laws of nature (seek peace, keep covenants etc.) are a special kind of rules for self-preservation and are not strictly rules for personal preservation-the individual may save himself by the most dubious means. They are rules for the preservation of man in general.
4. There is the question of the nexus between the state of nature and the laws of nature. Are these laws operative in the state of nature? If not, in what sense are they natural? If the description of the state of nature as the war of all against all is to be taken seriously, laws of the nature obviously do not play any effective role in the conduct of men in that state.
5. Critics pointed out that if reason is an essential element of human nature, how could individuals be absolutely devoid of it in the state of nature? The paradox arises out of the fact that Hobbes analytically separates two parts of human psychology, passion and reason, and delineates their working alternately in order to show, by a sleight of hand as it were, that the only alternative to anarchy is absolute rule.
6. Hobbes sometimes equates natural right with power, sometimes with absence of obligations, and still on other occasions, he regards it as liberty to do that which right reason prescribes.
7. The concept of natural rights as Hobbes conceives remains highly precarious on account of the very conditions in which it is claimed, in civil society. It touches the vanishing point as it survives simply as the right to life which even the sovereign cannot touch except in extraordinary conditions.
8. Hobbes’s laws of nature are not obligatory in his state of nature, since, as he makes clear, seeking peace and keeping contracts in the state of nature would be self-destructive and absurd.

Despite criticism, we cannot deny the significance of the concept of natural laws. His individuals are not utility-maximisers, but disaster-avoiders. On sober thought they would trust each other and take initiative in coming to an agreement. Hobbes' reply to the critics is meant to convince that it is always rational to abide by the laws of nature if the other party has-already performed and that justice. Hobbes rightly says *"that is to say, keeping covenant is a rule of reason, by which we are forbidden to do anything destructive to our life; and consequently a law of nature."* (Leviathan, Ch. 15)

**Q. 4. Hobbes concept of Social Contract: Origin of the State or Commonwealth:**

Hobbes concept of social contract occupies a significant position in conceptualization of his political philosophy. As stated above, Hobbes said that the state of nature was full of struggle and chaotic. He calls such a state of nature as pre-social and pre-political. Force was the guiding principle of life. Hobbes after considering all aspects of society arrived at the conclusion that if a ‘common power’ could be created through the instrument of covenant the awfulness of the state of nature could be overcome. Hobbes writes:

*“the only way to erect such common power, as may be able to defend them from the invasion of foreigners and the injuries of one another……is to confer all their power and strength upon one man or assembly of men”.*

So, in order to escape from the horrible situation of the state of nature, people made contract among themselves and the state is established. By this social contract, each man surrenders all their rights to single man or assembly of men of his own accord as sovereign. The mere aim of the contract was to protect their life, property and security, by creating state and surrendering rights to a sovereign power.

The central point of contract may be stated when he says,

*“I authorise and give up my right of governing myself, to this man, or to this assembly of men, on this condition, that thou give up thy right to him, and authorise all his actions in like manner…….This is the generation of that great Leviathan or rather of that mortal God, to which we owe under the immortal God, our peace and defence.* (Leviathan, Ch. 17).

**Characteristics:** We can draw the following important characteristics from his concept of social contract:

1. The social contract is a contract between people themselves or subjects and subjects.
2. It is a contract by which people created sovereign and established state which can be called a legal institution. Thus, the state of nature through the mechanism of contract was converted to civil society.
3. The sovereign was not party to the contract he is the creation of the contract. This means that subjects is the creation of the sovereign.
4. By the contract, natural man unconditionally surrendered their rights to the sovereign. There is no scope of divided opinion. One surrenders his rights on the condition that others will do the same. This commonwealth is the sovereign, the unity of all in one person. So we can say the foundation of the commonwealth is unanimity.
5. The contract made the sovereign all powerful. It has absolute, unrestricted and inseparable and incommunicable supreme authority.
6. People had to follow the command of the sovereign. Laws are the commands of the sovereign. It is obligatory on the part of subjects to give full obedience to its laws. The justification for giving obedience is that the state makes life comfortable and worth living. Obedience will bring better returns than disobedience.
7. The people enjoyed only those rights which the sovereign permitted to them.
8. People have no right to resist, threaten, punish or to dispose the sovereign authority. Of course, in certain cases Hobbes gives man the right to disobey the sovereign if it commands him*, “to kill, wound or maim him; or not to resist those that assault him”.* Hobbes justifies the disobedience to a command only if it frustrates the end of self-preservation. This creates confusion of his concept of obedience and disobedience.

From the above, it becomes obvious that Hobbes state is based on reason not on fear. The state that emerged as result of contract is not inevitably monarchic; it may be aristocratic or republican. His contract had produced absolute state, instead of absolute king.

**Criticisms:**

1. Hobbes was vehemently criticised for identifying man as anti-social. Critics pointed out that the same man who just a moment before were the foes of one another, in the next moment could become the intimate friend of that person with arms in hand. This is irrational for society and nothing more than his speculation of the other side of human nature.
2. Hobbes identifies that war is one of the two main forces that drive men to set up a state. But wherever two main force that drive men to set up a state, he speaks of war, it is protective war and there is exaltation of war in the Leviathan.
3. Critics pointed out that a contract is possible under an established order of the state. This means that natural men entered into contract before the existence of the state and compared with roping the cart before the horse.

**Q. 5. Hobbes concept of Leviathan or Sovereignty:**

Hobbes visualized the sovereign power as undivided unlimited inalienable and permanent. The contract created the state and the government concurrently. The sovereign power was authorized to enact lows as it deemed fit and such laws were legitimate. Hobbes was categorical that the powers and authority of the sovereignty had to be defined with least uncertainty.

**Characteristics:** Major attributes of Hobbesian Leviathan or sovereign are as under.

1. The sovereign is absolute and unlimited and accordingly no conditions can be imposed on it. It is not limited either by the rights of the subjects or by customary and statutory laws.
2. The sovereign is indivisible, inseparable and incommunicable.
3. The sovereignty is not a party to the covenant or contract. A sovereign does not exist prior to the commencement of the contract. Contract was signed between in the state of nature mainly to escape from a state of war of every man against every man. The contract is irreversible.
4. The sovereign can do no injury, no wrong to his subjects because whatever he does is by the authority of his subjects.
5. He is the sole source of law and the laws are subject to his interpretations. Law is the command of the sovereign.
6. The people have no right to revolt or resist, to punish or to dispose the sovereign.
7. The sovereign has absolute right to declare war and conclude peace.

Thus, Hobbesian sovereign signifies the ultimate, supreme and single authority in the state and there is no right of resistance against him except in case of self-defence. Hobbes considered that any act of defiance of a subject is unfair because it is against the covenant. Hobbes believes that covenants without swords are mere words. Division of sovereignty means destruction of sovereign which means that men are returning to the old state of nature where the life is intolerably depressed.

**Criticisms:** By allowing absolute power to the sovereign, some critics disparaged Hobbes as one of the founding fathers of totalitarian Fascism or Communism. However, William Ebenstein in his well-known work 'Great Political Thinkers' has opposed this charge in the following basis.

1. Firstly, government is set up, according to Hobbes, by a covenant that transfers all power and authority to the sovereign. This contractual foundation of government is abhorrence to the modern totalitarians. By granting absolute power to the sovereign, some critics went to the extent of criticizing Hobbes as the ‘spiritual father of totalitarian fascism or communism’.
2. Second, Hobbes' assigns to the state some fundamental functions such as to "maintain order and security for the benefits of the citizens". By contrast, the aim of modern totalitarian state is anti-individualistic and anti-hedonistic.
3. Third, Hobbesian state is authoritarian, not totalitarian. Hobbes' appeals for equality before law so that rich and mighty have no legal advantage over poor and obscure persons. Hobbes 'authoritarianism lacks one of the most typical features of the modern totalitarian state: inequality before law and the resulting sense of personal insecurity.
4. Fourth, Hobbes maintains that the sovereign may be one man or an assembly of men whereas modern totalitarianism is addicted to the one man leadership principle.
5. Fifthly, Hobbes identifies that war is one of the two main forces that drive men to set up a state. But wherever two main force that drive men to set up a state, he speaks of war, it is protective war and there is exaltation of war in the Leviathan. By contrast totalitarian, imperialist fascist look on war as something highly desirable and on imperialist war as the highest form of national life.

It is apparent from debate that Hobbes' theory of sovereignty is the first systematic and consistent statement of complete sovereignty in the history of political thought. It was Hobbes who first advocated a principle of the absolute and unrestricted sovereignty of the state. His sovereign enjoys an absolute authority over his subject and his powers can neither be divided nor limited either by the law of nature or by the law of God.

The heart of Hobbes’ political philosophy is his theory of sovereignty. He was not the first to use the term sovereignty in its modern sense. It is beyond dispute that before and after Thomas Hobbes the doctrine of sovereignty has been defended by various scholars on various grounds. Hobbes was perhaps the first thinker to defend the sovereignty of the state on scientific grounds. Hobbes freed the doctrine of sovereignty of limitations imposed by Jean Bodin and Hugo Grotius.

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