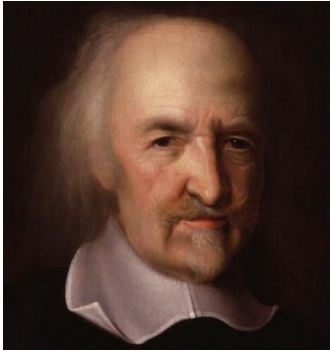


## MODERN POLITICAL THOUGHT

### The Social Contractualists: Hobbes, Locke, Rousseau

**THOMAS HOBBS** (1588 – 1679) was an English philosopher, whose famous 1651 book *Leviathan* established the foundation for most of Western political philosophy from the perspective of social contract theory. Hobbes is remembered today for his work on political philosophy, although he contributed to a diverse array of fields, including history, geometry, physics of gases, theology, ethics, general philosophy, and political science.



Thomas Hobbes was born in England prematurely when his mother heard of the coming invasion of the Spanish Armada. Thomas Hobbes later reported that "my mother gave birth to twins: myself and fear." His father, a vicar abandoned his three children to the care of an older brother.

At Oxford University, Hobbes followed his own curriculum, completed his B.A. degree and was appointed as tutor to William, the son of William Cavendish, Earl of Devonshire).and began a life-long connection with that family.

Hobbes became a companion to the younger William and they both took part in a grand tour in 1610. Hobbes was exposed to European scientific and critical methods during the tour in contrast to the scholastic philosophy which he had learned in Oxford.



Hobbes gave a new orientation to political theory. Aristotle made the promotion of good life on the basis of the state. The medievalists promoted good life on the basis of religion. Hobbes' theory was based on **materialist**, **psychologist** and **sociological** foundations. It is materialist because Hobbes identifies man with matter.

Hobbes on Human Nature: Mind is '**decaying matter**'. It is a kind of **extremely refined matter**. Therefore, it is regulated by the **law of cause and effect**. **Sensations** are received in to the mind; like **ideas, imagination, memory** etc. There are **actions** from the mind; like **emotions and passions**. Some sensations cause **pleasure** and some sensations cause **pain** in his mind. Man will **desire (appetite)** things which cause pleasure. There will be **aversion** for things which create pain in him. The object of man's appetite is called **Good** and the object of his aversion are called **Evil**. According to Hobbes, there is nothing inherently<sup>1</sup> good or evil. It depends on the human feeling towards the object. Men try to pursue what is good to them. Men try to avert what, he thinks, is evil to him. The sense of appetite or aversion is the rudimentary<sup>2</sup> form of **Will**.

Men are born equal in their faculties<sup>3</sup> of mind and body. The physically weak may be mentally strong and the mentally weak may be physically strong. If two men desire the same object, they

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<sup>1</sup> **inherently** :existing as a natural or basic part

<sup>2</sup> **rudimentary** :the simplest and most basic

<sup>3</sup> **faculties**, abilities

become enemies. Then they both need **Power** to overcome the enemy. There is a perpetual<sup>4</sup> desire for power and perpetual competition and perpetual conflict. The principal causes of **conflict** are **Competition**, **Diffidence**<sup>5</sup> and **Glory**<sup>6</sup>. In such a situation, men are isolated individuals. Man is ego-centric.

**State of Nature:** State of Nature is prior to the appearance of social or political life. Hobbes's state of Nature is a situation of conflict because man is selfish and wants his self preservation. In such a condition, there is no industry, no buildings, no instruments, no knowledge, no time, no arts, no letters, and no society. Above all, there is continuous fear of danger of violent death. "**Life of man is solitary**<sup>7</sup>, **poor, nasty**<sup>8</sup>, **brutish**<sup>9</sup> **and short.**" There is no common superior. There is a constant **war of all against all**. There is no distinction between right and wrong, just<sup>10</sup> or unjust. There is no private property.

**Natural Right and Natural Law:** Natural Right is the natural liberty each man has to use his own power to preserve himself. It is **not a moral**<sup>11</sup> **right**. But Natural Law prevents him from using all the force the way he wants. Natural Law prevents war. Natural Law forces man to renounce<sup>12</sup> some part of his Natural Right for the attainment of peace.

**Natural Right** entitles a man to grab everything and lead to war. **Natural Law** forces him to renounce some part of his Rights for the sake of peace.

Hobbes enlists 19 Natural Laws. The first law holds that every man must **seek peace**. Second law states that a man must be satisfied with as much **liberty** as he is ready to give to others. The third law states that men must **perform the covenants** they make. The fourth law states that the man to whom the rights are transferred should **not harm** subjects. Men could live in **peace** by following the Laws of Nature.

**Commonwealth:**

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<sup>4</sup>perpetual continuing forever

<sup>5</sup>Diffidence, shy and not confident of your abilities

<sup>6</sup> **Glory**, great admiration, honour and praise which you earn by doing something successfully

<sup>7</sup>solitary, only person or thing in a place.

<sup>8</sup> **nasty**, bad or very unpleasant.

<sup>9</sup> **brutish**, rough, unpleasant and often violent.

<sup>10</sup> **just**, fair; morally correct.

<sup>11</sup>moral, relating to the standards of good or bad behaviour.

<sup>12</sup>renounce, to say formally or publicly that you no longer own.

To enforce the Laws of Nature, men want a sovereign. For this purpose, men covenants<sup>13</sup> with others to form the Sovereign. **“Men confer all their power and strength upon one man or upon assembly of men...”** It is more than Consent. **“I authorize and give up my Right of governing myself to his Man, or to this Assembly of men”** on the condition that others also do the same. Thus the **COMMONWEALTH** is formed. It is the Sovereign. The basis is Fear. **Glory and Fear** are the two basic instincts, which make him to keep the Covenants. Of the two Fear is the only dependable one. Fear makes man to follow his covenant.

The contract is <sup>14</sup>Unilateral. The Sovereign is *not* a party to the contract.

It is an irrevocable<sup>15</sup> contract. Once the individual contracts into the civil society, he cannot go back.

The powers of the sovereign if unlimited. It is a **LEVIATHAN**. The powers of the sovereign Leviathan are **unlimited**. There can be no constitutional checks on the sovereign.

**Property** is the creation of the Sovereign. He may make laws relating to property, taxation etc.

It is the sovereign who declares **war**. Sovereign **protects the people externally and internally**.

Even if the sovereign ignores the pact, the subjects cannot do so. **Minority cannot resist** the sovereign on the ground that it is no party of choosing the contract.

The sovereign is the sole **source of authority** of public servants.

Sovereign is the source of distinction between **good or bad**, just and unjust.

Sovereign is **indivisible** and **inalienable**.

Sovereign is the wielder of the **executive, legislative and judicial** authority of the state.

The rights of the sovereign are those, which are surrendered by the covenant. The most important right or duty of the sovereign is **making laws**. Another duty or right is the power to **interpret the law**.

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## **ASSIGNMENTS:**

Essay

1. Thomas Hobbes: **Social Contract Theory**. 07
2. Hobbes: Critically examine the **Social Contract Theory** of <>.03

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<sup>13</sup>**Covenants**, a formal agreement between two or more people.

<sup>14</sup>**Unilateral**, involving only one group or person.

<sup>15</sup>**irrevocable** impossible to change, irreversible.

Short Essay:

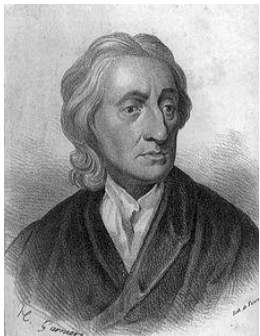
1. Hobbes: Critically examine view on **Human Nature** and **State of Nature**. 05
2. Thomas Hobbes: Why <> is considered as the **Father of Modern Political Thought**? 06
3. Hobbes: Write a note on the **state of Nature** as explained by <> 04



## MODERN POLITICAL THOUGHT

### The Social Contractualists: Hobbes, Locke, Rousseau

*John Locke* : 1632 – 1704



The **Glorious Revolution**, also called the **Revolution of 1688**, was the overthrow of Catholic King James II of England in 1688 by a union of Parliamentarians with an army led by (William of Orange), who as a result ascended the English throne as William III of England. It is sometimes called the **Bloodless Revolution**. James's overthrow began modern English parliamentary democracy: The deposition of the Roman Catholic James II ended any chance of Catholicism becoming re-established in England. It also led to limited toleration for nonconformist Protestants. For Catholics, however, it was disastrous both socially and politically. Catholics were denied the right to vote and sit in the Westminster Parliament for over 100 years after this. They were also denied commissions in the British army and the monarch was forbidden to be Catholic or marry a Catholic, thus ensuring the Protestant succession. Historically the events of 1688 have been called a "revolution" but it was Dutch 'invasion' of Britain also. Thus the revolution was not legal in the strict sense of the world. The Whigs (Protestants) were compelled to justify their invasion to a nation which had been led by absolutist doctrines. That is exactly what Locke did. As a confident secretary of Lord Shaftesbury, founder of Whig Party, whom he saved once from liver infection, (Locke was a doctor of medicine also) Locke gained much experience in practical politics. He opposed the theory of Divine Right of the King upheld by the Anglican Church.



*James II*  
King of England,  
Scotland and Ireland.



*William III*  
King of England,  
Scotland and Ireland

**Conception of Human Nature:** Man is a rational and social creature. He is capable of living in order. He is not selfish, competitive or aggressive. He wants to live in peace and harmony with others. It is not a dark picture of human nature as Hobbes did.

**Conception of State of Nature:** It is “Men living together according to reason, without a common superior on earth is the State of Nature.” This is **not a savage**<sup>16</sup>. Men were **Moral** beings with perfect reason. It is a state of **perfect freedom**. It is also a state of perfect **equality**. It is **not a state of war** of all against all. According to Locke, the State of Nature is a state of

<sup>16</sup> Savage, extremely violent, wild or fierce.

**“goodwill, mutual assistance and preservation.”** It is a state **not of war but of peace**. It is only **pre-political**; it is **not pre-social**.

**Conception of Law of Nature:** The State of Nature is **governed by Law of Nature**. It is nothing but a system of law **prior to the civil law** and not something against it. It is a **moral law based on reason** to **regulate the conduct of men** in their natural condition. One of the fundamentals of Law of Nature is the **equality of men**. This equality is not in intellect, physical might or possessions but equality in personal liberty or independence. It is the **equality in life, liberty and property**. In the state of nature, it was the law of nature that regulated men. It is identified with reason. It is the **“spark of divine nature”**. Its objective is to **preserve society**. Law of Nature ***“willeth the preservation of all mankind”***

**Conception of Natural Rights:** **Life, Liberty and Estate of men** are the natural rights. Right to Property is **sacred**. Originally, God had given the world to men in common. But men **mixed his labour with earth** and it became his property. It is **fruit of his labour**. By mixing his labour with something, man removes that thing from common ownership. The government cannot take away the property of a man without his consent. He **justifies unequal** distribution of world's wealth. Right to property is **prior to the state**. Right to property is a **natural right**. The society and **state did not create** property. Rather vice versa. Thus it paved the foundation of **modern individualism**. This inspired the **Marxian Theory** of Surplus Value. But it may be true in the case of an agrarian society not in an industrialized society.

**Conception of Government:** **Consent** is the basis of government. Government is formed by the consent of the people. It is an **agent of society**. The people are the sovereign. They have the power to alter the legislature. The government is based on **division of powers**. The legislature and executive must be separate in their functions, powers and personnel. This is important to prevent abuse of power. It can be Monarchy, Aristocracy or Democracy. **Democracy** is the best form of rule.

Since the government cannot take away property without consent, it also means that **“no taxation without representation.”**

**Resistance** against the government is necessary in case of arbitrary use of power, when the government is inefficient and when it fails to secure the rights of the people. When the government is dissolved, the community is free to set up a new government or even a new constitution.

The state and the church should be separate. Church should not interfere in the affairs of the state. The state should not bother about the religious beliefs of the people. (***A Letter Concerning Toleration***)

**Locke on Social Contract:** The concept of Social Contract is described in 'Second Treatise on Civil Government'. To explain the contract, Locke uses the term 'Trust' or **Fiduciary Trust**'. According to him, the purpose of the Contract is **Protection and Preservation of Property**. The process of the Contract is such that **each individual contracts with each to constitute a community**. The method is such that **each individual agrees to give up those natural rights for interpreting and executing the law of nature**. It is made **to the community as a whole and not an individual or body of persons**. Its features are such that it can be **entered only once** and it is **unanimous**.

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Essay:

3. John Locke: Discuss the **Social Contract Theory**. 06
4. John Locke: **Compare** and contrast the **social contract theory** of Thomas Hobbes and John Locke. 08.

Short Essay:

4. John Locke: bring out <> view on **sovereignty**. 05 2008
5. John Locke: view on **natural rights**. 04 03

Short Answer:

1. Locke: On **private property**. 03



**JEAN JACQUES ROUSSEAU (1712 – 1778)**

was a major Swiss philosopher, writer, and composer of the Enlightenment, whose political philosophy influenced the French Revolution and the

development of liberal, conservative, and socialist theory. With his *Confessions*, *Reveries of a Solitary Walker*, and other writings, he invented modern autobiography and encouraged a new focus on the building of subjectivity that bore fruit in the work of thinkers as diverse as Hegel and Freud. His novel *Julie, ou la nouvelle Héloïse* was one of the best-selling fictional works of the eighteenth century and of great importance to the development of romanticism. He also made important contributions to music as a theorist and a composer, and was reburied alongside other French national heroes in the Panthéon in Paris, sixteen years after his death, in 1794.

Deserted by his father in an early age, he was sensitive, emotional, and self-conscious type of individual uncontrollable by man or institutions. Rousseau was a spoilt child of genius. His genius was first exposed when he responded to an essay competition titled 'Has The Progress Of Science And Arts Contributed To Corrupt Or Purify Morals.' Rousseau took an unconventional line and said that morals had deteriorated. He got the first prize but the essay created a lot of sensation in a society dominated by the spirit of Art and Science. To clarify his views, he started writing and speaking. To prove himself, he led an anti-social life in the slums of Paris.

In the year 1755, he wrote a scholarly article on Political Economy in the French Encyclopedia. This was characteristically different from his earlier works and he recognized the usefulness of property, society and government. Between 1756 and 1762, he wrote *The Nouvelle Héloïse*, *The Emile* and *The Social Contract*. These writings were extremely effective because of support of **popular sovereignty**, appeal to the masses of the nation, emotionality and literary style. The then France was suffering from an irresponsible divine-right autocracy, a demoralised nobility, a degraded church, a rich but over-taxed middle-class and a discontent intelligentsia flared by the writings of men like Voltaire.

There was a general spirit of revolt. Rousseau was not for moderate changes. He was for the total abolition of the social privileges and equal rights to the middle and lower classes. His ideals logically led to the Revolution. Rousseau concluded his life with his works *Confessions*, *dialogues* and *Reveries*.

Influence on Rousseau: He read Plato, Locke, Montesquieu, Hobbes and Grotius. He did not fully agree with the latter two. From Plato he liked the Greek type of democracy.

In his *Discourses on the Origin of Inequality* (1754) he said there are two types of inequality. One is Natural inequality and the other is political inequality. The first one is based on birth, age; bodily strength etc. the later is based on wealth, honour and power. He said that in the state of nature, there was no inequality. It originated with the institution of private property. Man in the state of nature was innocent, happy, solitary and content. But the social institution made him evil.

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**Rousseau on Human Nature:** Human nature is **essentially good**. There are two primary instincts. One is the instinct for self-love or **self preservation**. The other is the instinct of sympathy, gregariousness or **mutual help**. There is a possibility of **clash** between the two. The individual adjusts this conflict by developing his **Consciousness**. It is guided by **Reason**. It helps man to realize what is right and what is wrong. So long as man follows his natural instincts, he is good. But self-love may degenerate into **pride**. It overpowers a man's reason and perverts a man's true nature. To go back to nature, he must renounce pride which is generated by **degenerate art and culture** of artificial society. To do this, he may have

another gift of nature, **liberty or freedom** of choice. By the wise choice, he can transform his nature and realize his true nature.

**Rousseau on State Of Nature:** Rousseau believed that the natural state was always **better than the civil state**. His conception of the State of Nature was similar to the actual pre-social historical conditions. His natural man lived a **solitary, happy and care-free life**. He knew **neither speech nor dress**. He was **free, independent, contented** and self-sufficient. He was a **non social being**. He had **neither family nor property**. He followed **not reason but self interest**. But like Hobbes it was **not a state of war**. The **noble savage** was in the form of **paradise**, before the advent of **the serpent, which came in the form of property**, institution of **family** arising out of the desire to form family. It gave rise to **inequality**, formation of **society**, enactment of **laws and government**. **“The first man who having enclosed a piece of ground to himself and said “this is mine” was the real founder of civil society”**. Thus the noble savage lost its natural equality and freedom. Family, property, society, law and government had come to stay. The great problem was to harmonise these institutions with the liberty, the equality and the individualism of the state of nature.

**Rousseau on Formation of Political Society:** To harmonise individual liberty with the social institutions, the political society was formed. The reconciliation is possible only **on the basis of a contract** to which each member gave their consent. The individuals met together and surrendered their natural rights by saying **“Each of us puts his person and all his power in common under the supreme direction of the general will and we receive each member as an indivisible part of the whole”**. The society became a moral and collective body. It is called by its members by the name **State** when it is passive, **Sovereign** when it is active and **Power** when compared with other states. Each surrendered himself to the whole community and not to anybody in particular. Thus individual liberty is preserved. Whatever he gives to others, **he receives back from them**. He **loses to gain**. He **receives as much as he gives**. **Equality** is created. Two kinds of relationships emerge here. There is a **relationship between him and other individuals** who are co-sovereign. There is a **relationship between him and the created sovereign** also. Thus **the sovereign is a party** to the contract. The social contract leads to sovereignty of the people. The political society became sovereign. The sovereignty is located in the General Will.

**Theory of General Will:** To understand the theory of general will, we must distinguish between **‘actual will’** and **‘real will’**. The actual will of the individuals is his impulses and irrational will. It is based on self-interest and is not related to the well being of the community. It is narrow and self-conflicting. On the



other hand, the real will of the individual is a rational will. It represents his real interest in relation to the general welfare of the society. The real will of the individual, therefore, promotes harmony between the individual and the society. It represents true freedom of the individual. The **General Will is the sum-total of the real wills of the individuals in the society**. It represents the common interest of the community. It represents public spiritedness. General Will should be distinguished from Will of All. General Will considers only the common interests of the individuals. But Will of All considers the private interests also. The General Will is the organized social will of the community. The will of all is the mass of unorganized particular wills of the individuals. It is the sum-total of individual wills. The will of all is a mere aggregate, whereas general will is an organic unity. The General Will has the following characteristics:-

*Unity:* The General Will is a rational will and is not self-contradictory. It is therefore unitary. **Indivisible:** General Will is indivisible. It cannot be divided. If it is divided, it would become sectional. **Permanent:** because it is rational and not impulsive. It springs from the genius of the people. It is the **Right** will, willing the welfare of the society. It is **inalienable**. General Will and Sovereignty are inalienable just like life of an individual is inalienable. It is **unrepresentable**. General Will vests in itself. It is not communicable to another agency.

**Rousseau on Sovereignty:** Rousseau identifies sovereignty of the state with the general will, or with the common interest of the community. Thus he paved a solid base for to the concept of popular sovereignty. This popular sovereign of Rousseau is **infallible, indivisible, unrepresentable and illimitable**. It is **absolute** like that of Hobbes who assigns sovereignty to the head of the state. Rousseau gives it to the **whole community**. Sovereignty of Rousseau is the **Leviathan of Hobbes with its head chopped off**.

**Rousseau on Liberty:** The individual is free in the society because he does not surrender his rights to an outside body. **“Obedience to law is liberty.”** The rights of liberty, equality and property are rights of citizens and not individuals. Liberty is **civil liberty** and not natural liberty. Men are equal by law and not by nature. His freedom is in consonance with the general good of the civil society. **When he is free, he is in chains**. An individual is free in following his real will. Rousseau’s liberty is not a license. It is a relationship between the individual and the society. He is free because he is not slave to his natural impulses.

**Rousseau on Law:** Law is an expression and organ of general will. Nobody in the state is above law. Every body is a member of the sovereign, which is the source of law. The law cannot be unjust. A state is legitimate only when it is ruled by law. It is the expression of the general wills which the expression of the real wills of the citizens.

**Rousseau on State and Government:** According to Rousseau, there is a sharp distinction between the state and the government. The government denotes the individual or the group of individual designated by the community to carry into effect the sovereign will. It is an intermediary body between the subjects and sovereign for mutual correspondence. It is the subordinate agency through which the sovereign people expresses its will and realizes it. The excellence of the government lies in properly realizing the general will of the people. An individual can resist a bad government, but not the state or sovereign, because it cannot be bad. The Government is created by a decree of the sovereign. Being a mere agent of the sovereign, a government is changeable at the sovereign's pleasure. The government does not make law, but only administers them. The form of government is determined by the sovereign. The sovereign people assembled to institute the government firstly vote that a certain form of government can be instituted and then vote certain individuals to the government. In the first step, the assembly is the sovereign. In the second step, it assumes the character of a democratic government.

Rousseau classifies the government into monarchy, aristocracy, democracy and mixed forms. He did not believe that any particular form of government was the best. A government which is good for an industrial society may be bad for an agricultural community. A representative government signifies a sign of political decay. This decay can be checked by periodic assemblies of people. They must decide firstly whether the sovereign people should change the form of government and secondly, whether new officers should be elected. When the sovereign people thus assemble, it supercedes the government automatically. Christianity is unsuitable to the state; particularly Roman Catholicism.

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**His influence:**

In France, Rousseau's ideas of liberty, equality and popular sovereignty led to the **Revolution of 1789**. In America, the theory of social contract played a role and it was recognized in the **Declaration of Independence**. Rousseau was the forerunner of **German Idealism**. **Rousseau represented the passage from a traditional theory rooted in the Middle Ages to the modern philosophy of the state.** Rousseau is also a source of inspiration to Philosophic Anarchy, Socialism, Hegelianism, Federalism, Syndicalism and many other schools of thought.

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**Essay:**

5. Rousseau: Theory of **Social Contract**. 04

**Short Essay:**

1 Rousseau: Critically examine Rousseau's doctrine of **General Will**. 03 05 06 07

6. Rousseau: "**Man is born free and everywhere he is in chains.**"—Discuss. 2008

**Short Answer:**

2. Rousseau as **Nature's child**. 03

3. Rousseau: **General will** 08

