The Beliefs Of Thomas Hobbes

Ever thought of what it would be like to live in a world where you are totally free to do whatever you want with no one to control you? Sounds magnificent right? How the life of the humans in the state of nature where no authoritative power exists would be is one of the most fundamental questions of philosophy. However, according to Thomas Hobbes, it is the complete opposite. In this paper, I am going to argue that Hobbes claim is true and I will do this by first presenting more than one contradiction against Hobbes's claim on the state of nature, and I will then argue that these contradictions fail for more than one reason.

This paper is divided into 4 parts. First, I will introduce Thomas Hobbes and what he believes. Second, I will define the state of nature and what it means according to Hobbes. Third, I will state the people contradicting Hobbes's claim. Lastly, I will argue why these contradictions fail.

Thomas Hobbes, who lived between 1588 and 1679, was an English philosopher who was considered to be one of the main founders of modern political philosophy. Hobbes viewed the state of nature as the 'natural condition of mankind' is what would life be like if there were no government, no taxes, no laws, and no power to restrain human beings from acting out. The state of nature is a 'war of all against all,' in which humans are constantly trying to abolish each other in pursuit of obtaining power (Kavka, 1983, 297.) Life in the state of nature is 'nasty, brutish and short.' However, many revisionists such as Richard Tuck, do not agree with Hobbes's claim, they believe that the main reason that causes war does not lie in an issue of wants or needs, but in the lack of "common moral language." (Abizadeh, 2011, 299.) Thus, some people might argue that we can live in a state of nature where we will be independent and mature and once we fix the issue concerning moral language, we will live a peaceful life where we are all happy and satisfied. Also, it is mentioned that Hobbes views the state of nature that way because he was "quite clearly a psychological egoist" (Abizadeh, 2011, 300.) Human action, according to Hobbes's theory, is always the result of their yearning for something that an individual view it to be good or bad for themselves (Abizadeh, 2011, 300.) Not only was this the only person contradicting Hobbes's claim, but also the famous Jean-Jacques Rousseau who was a Genevan philosopher, writer and composer. Rosseau criticized Hobbes intensely by stating that he was a man that "has no idea of goodness, he must be naturally wicked; that he is vicious because he does not know virtue." (Rosseau, 1755, 19.) Rousseau argued that in the state of nature individuals exist closer, where they are peaceful and pity one another. It is thus the absence of unpleasant social traits such as pride, fear, or envy. Rosseau then provides an example of Caribbean citizens, who live in a state of nature and are the least subject to any kind of jealousy and are considered the "most peaceable of people in their amours" (Rosseau, 1755, 21).

However, I believe this is wrong and endorse Hobbes's belief instead. Hobbes believes that the state of nature leads to war for many reasons. First, because even the purely kind individuals, without a ruler to protect them, will thus be fearful of death and tentative towards others' intentions (Abizadeh, 2011, 299.) Second, the state of nature certainly leads to war as the effect of rivalry over scarce resources. I find this claim plausible because whether you are a kind or mean person when it comes to your basic needs such as food, water, and shelter you will do whatever it takes to survive. Even if it means killing someone for those basic needs. Hobbes

calls this “Limited altruism” (Kavka, 1983, 293.) In this type of nature humans are all equal, they have the access to the same things, and they are the ones who are able to decide what is right and what is wrong. They are equally free, and so equally able to do and use whatever they request that will help them acquire what they wish. Consequently, every individual’s need is quite similar, and they will want the same things because humans are naturally survivors. Since they will try to get what other individuals want just like them, they will distrust each other and will thus be in permanent conflict. This is why the Hobbesian state of nature is considered as a state of war, a “war of every man, against every man” (Betts, 1994, 80.)

Another reason, is that humans naturally desire, power, fame, and authority. In the state of war, the desire of power or feeling powerful is highly important because it is the basic approach of getting what you desire. Hence, every man will strive for power and they will attempt to have, increase, and stabilize it. In chapter X of the Leviathan, it says that “reputation of power is power” (Hobbes, 2016, 1). Not only will people seek power but they will want others to respect that power. Therefore, human beings in these circumstances are very much motivated to use their right to survive, and to fight each other so that they can gain power. In such a situation, men do not live peacefully, and cooperation is not conceivable (Griveaud, 2011, 2.) That is why I believe that it is not because Hobbes is an egoist is that he thinks this way, it is because he is rational and puts realistic situations and realistic ways of how people will react to those types of situations.

Another rational explanation which Hobbes calls “Natural equality” is that humans aren’t equal in their mental and physical powers, the weaker among us are more prone to getting killed (Kavka, 1983, 292.) For example, you can compare a child’s physical and mental powers to an adult’s, it would not be possible.

Lastly, “Advantage of anticipation” the fact that we don’t trust each other will lead to one of us attacking first, even if the attacked individual didn’t have the intention of hurting us. For example, imagine living in a state where you can steal people’s belongings without putting into concern if they need those things, or assaulting one another simply because you can. We will live in a world we well will have to watch over backs the whole time (Kavka, 1983, 293.) Therefore, I believe that an authoritative figure should be present in order to avoid all those issues. A governmental system is much-needed, so when people decide to rob, assault, or kill a system will be present to punish them for their actions and maintain the law and order of the country. They are essential because they protect the weaker class of the society, and when the system is put correctly, humans will be provided with a stable environment where they are safe, peaceful, and can freely co-exist.

In conclusion, I believe that Thomas Hobbes’s disagreement of living in a state of nature is valid for the reasons presented above. Hobbes’s state of nature argument was mainly related to his view of humans, portraying them as selfish and only interested in their own concerns and obtaining power. hence, he was a strong supporter of the governmental system, because as mentioned this state would lead to war. Some as stated argued about Hobbes’s validity about the state of nature, but he left us with powerful and plausible justification on why he believes what he believes. The state of nature is the state of destruction of mankind. Hobbes took critical and early steps toward the identification and clarification of central issues in the theory of rational conflict and cooperation such as the state of nature. To the significant extent that such theory contributes to our understanding of moral and political phenomena (Kavka, 1983, 310.)