

The Contradictions of Human Nature

Examined Through Hobbes and Nietzsche

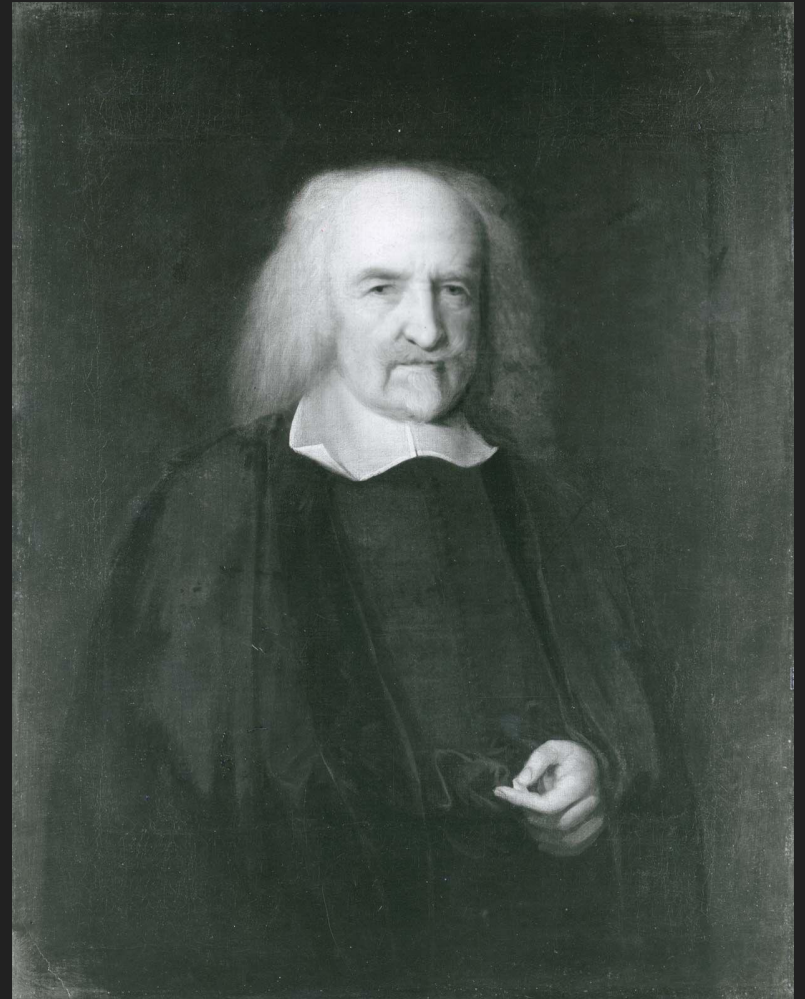
Honors Program Thesis, Presented by Jack Garvin, Advised by Dr. Street

Introduction to Hobbes

Thomas Hobbes was an English philosopher in the 16th and 17th centuries

The English Civil War occurred when he was young and left a strong impression of him

Hobbes' work focuses on how to maintain order, and prevent the kind of chaos he lived through

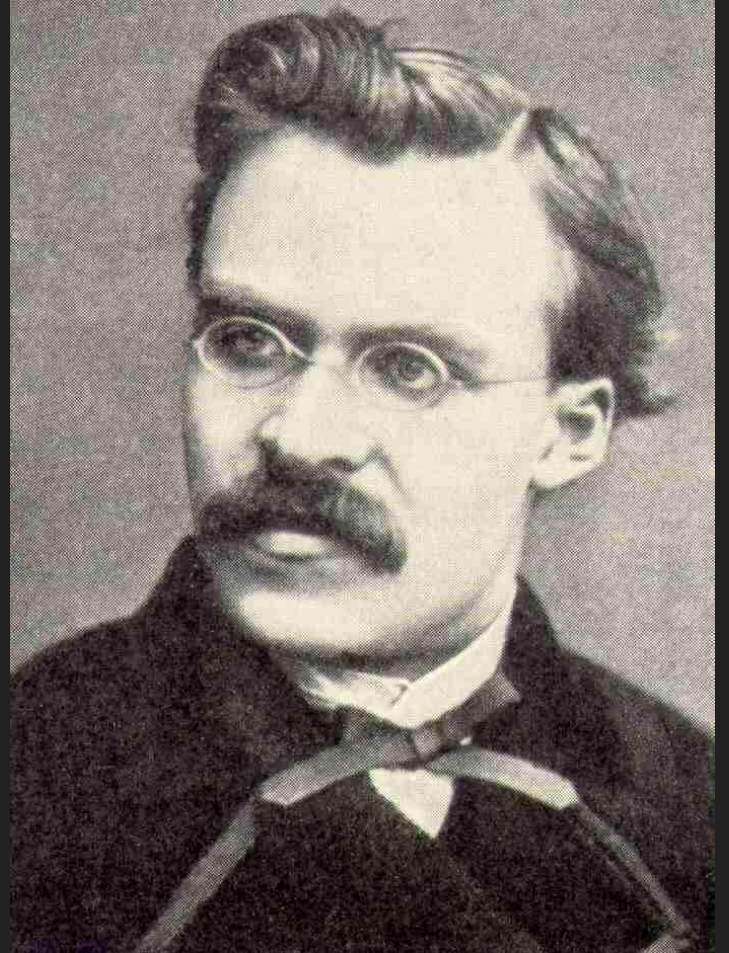


Introduction to Nietzsche

Nietzsche was a German philosopher who lived in the 19th century

His writings focus on the individual and the role of the individual's will

Philosophy was not nihilism, and focused on finding individual meaning instead of universal meaning



The World According to Nietzsche

Aristocratic Morality:

“The knightly-aristocratic ‘values’ ... that goes considerably beyond what is necessary for maintaining life, on war, adventure, the chase, the dance, the tourney—on everything, in fact, which is contained in strong, free, and joyous action.”

Priestly Morality:

The revolt of the slaves in morals begins in the very principle of *resentment* becoming creative and giving birth to values—a resentment experienced by creatures who, deprived as they are of the proper outlet of action, are forced to find their compensation in an imaginary revenge.”

Nietzsche's Conclusions

Aristocratic morality- held by the few, unrestrained, based on life

Priestly morality- held by the few, manipulate the majority through fear/resentment

Vast majority of people do not have agency, not aristocrats, manipulated by the priestly caste

Prioritizes the aristocrats

The World According to Hobbes

Humanity's Natural State:

“And from this diffidence of one another, there is no way for any man to secure himself, so reasonable, as Anticipation; that is, by force, or wiles, to master the persons of all men he can....So that in the nature of man, we find three principal causes of quarrel. First, competition; Secondly, Diffidence; Thirdly, Glory.”

Humanity Under the Leviathan:

“Feare and Liberty are consistent; as when a man throweth his goods into the Sea for Feare the ship should sink, he doth it nevertheless very willingly... And generally all actions which men doe in Commonwealths, for Feare of the law, or actions, which the doers had Liberty to omit.”

Hobbe's Conclusions

People are naturally at war - generally equal in ability, motivated by glory and competition

People can be controlled - ruled by the sovereign through fear

Vast majority do not have agency, forced into conflict by the natural state of humanity or controlled by fear of an autocrat

Prioritizes control through fear

These views compared:

Nietzsche:

Believed that a minority of people thrived in conflict

Believed that a minority of people controlled others through fear

Believed that the majority had very little agency, most people are stepping stones for aristocrats or puppets of priests

Hobbes:

Believed that a minority of people created conflict

Believed that a minority of people should be encouraged to control others through fear

Believed that the majority had very little agency, most people are victims or humanities natural state of war or the subjects of the sovereign

Grim Possibilities

Extremely similar conclusions on human nature, just distinct priorities

Lots of misery - violence and chaos of Nietzsche's vision and brutal tyranny in Hobbes' vision.

What can be done to prevent this suffering?