



ABSTRACTS: VOLUME 5, SPECIAL ISSUE

ABSTRACT

Leviathan and The English Civil Wars

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Background: This paper discusses parts of Thomas Hobbes's Leviathan, in which he develops an ideal form of governance state, his famous “Commonwealth”. Despite elements of despotism and autocratic rule, this state differs from contemporary monarchies of Europe. It also differs from an experimental republican system, which follows the English civil wars. While the ideal state envisioned by Hobbes differs largely from the realities of his age, his “state of nature” characterized by a war of all against all is often compared to the English civil war.

Objectives: This paper asks the question about the influence of the English civil war on Hobbes’ political philosophy, particularly because of his proximity to the exiled court of Charles II in France. Although Leviathan advocates for a monarchical state as a solution to the war of all against all, it estranges Hobbes from the royalist circles in France. He subsequently asks the republican government in England for and receives permission to return to England. He spent the last nine years of republican rule in England living there until the monarchy was restored in 1660. Therefore, the question about situating Leviathan and its author within its historical context must be approached in a more subtle way than the dichotomy of ‘royalist’ vs. ‘republican’.

Methods: To answer this question, I used close textual analysis of the Leviathan, while connecting it to historical events and to intellectual circles of the time. Two sources of particular importance are Jeffrey Collins’ *The Allegiance of Thomas Hobbes and Leviathan* and the *Wars of the Three Kingdoms* (Mortimer/Scott). Both investigate Hobbes’ interactions with the intellectual circles around Charles's court in exile and post-restoration, as well as other circles in England.



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Results: Paper offers a more subtle way to understand Hobbes's reaction to the English civil war and his place in it.

Conclusions: To answer this question, the work Leviathan was not influenced by his time, it was a manifestation of it, his views as a loyal monarchist who has an interest in the return of the monarchy, and an interest in enforcing the idea of the absolute monarchy in minds of people as well. Coming at a time of religious war Hobbes also had a noticeable secular outlook on government which can also be seen as the influence of the time in his work.

Key Words: History, England, Britain, English Civil war, Thomas Hobbes.

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