



Thomas Hobbes: philosophy's bad boy reassessed

Nicholas Williams

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Essay from the year 2005 in the subject English Language and Literature Studies - Culture and Applied Geography, grade: 1,0, University of Heidelberg (Anglistisches Seminar), course: British Institutions (Landeskunde), language: English, abstract: Broadly speaking, Thomas Hobbes' image of man was genuinely pessimistic. The proof for this claim may be found in the first book of Leviathan, in which Hobbes explains his view of the human nature, its soul and its mechanisms. Leviathan was not Hobbes' first attempt to give such a general overview, and when he claimed that "Homo homini lupus" (Man is a wolf to man), it was firstly not him who coined the phrase (it first appeared around 1500), and secondly not in Leviathan but nine years earlier in De Cive. The idea that "Man is a wolf to man" sums up many of Hobbes' theories in a single phrase. However, it should be noted that the sentence so often quoted as summarising Hobbes' theories continues, "Man is an arrant wolf to man, and man to man is a God." The second half is often forgotten but it is vitally important to remember it in order to fully understand what might be seen as the first coherent and scientific political theory. How can man to man be a wolf and a God simultaneously? Hobbes' image of man was not only pessimistic but ambiguous too.



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