

without contradiction, and the liar that denies himself can be true without any contradiction.

Graham Priest's Solution

Philosopher Graham Priest is a proponent of dialetheism, the notion that there are true contradictions. A true contradiction is one that is simultaneously true and false. In believing this to be the case, dialetheism must reject the well-known and accepted principle of explosion, which states all propositions can be deduced from contradictions, unless it also accepts trivialism, the notion that every proposition is true. However, because trivialism is instinctively false, the principle of explosion is almost always rejected by those who subscribe to dialetheism.

THOMAS HOBBS (1588–1679)

A new philosophical system

Thomas Hobbes was born on April 5, 1588, in Malmesbury, England. Though his father disappeared when he was young, Hobbes's uncle paid for his education, and by the time he was fourteen years old, Hobbes studied at Magdalen Hall in Oxford. In 1608, Hobbes left Oxford and became a tutor for the oldest son of Lord Cavendish of Hardwick. In 1631, while tutoring another family member of the Cavendish family, Hobbes began to focus on his philosophical ideas and wrote his first published piece, *Short Tract on First Principles*.

Hobbes's association with the Cavendish family proved to be quite beneficial. He was able to sit in on parliamentary debates; contribute to discussions about the king, landowners, and Parliament members; and get a firsthand look at how government was structured and influenced. During an incredibly tumultuous time between the monarchy and Parliament, Hobbes was a staunch monarchist and even wrote his first political philosophy, *The Elements of Law, Natural and Politic*, in defense of King Charles I. In the early 1640s, as the conflict escalated into what would become the English Civil Wars (1642–1651), Hobbes fled the country and moved to France, where he would remain for eleven years. It was while he lived in France that Hobbes produced his most important work (including his most famous book, *Leviathan*, published two years after the execution of King Charles I).

Thomas Hobbes was an incredibly individualistic thinker. During the English Civil Wars, while most in favor of the monarchy began to soften their arguments by expressing support for the Church of

England, Hobbes, who was the most prominent royalist, proclaimed his distaste for the church, which led him to become banned by the king's court. Even as a staunch supporter of the monarchy, Hobbes did not believe the king's right to rule was from God; rather, it was a social contract agreed upon by the people.

Hobbes was convinced that there needed to be an overhaul of philosophy, and set out to make a totalizing philosophical system that could provide an agreed-upon basis for absolutely all knowledge. The root of his philosophical system was his belief that all phenomena in the universe could be traced back to matter and motion. However, he rejected that the experimental method and observation of nature could act as a base for knowledge. Instead, his philosophy was deductive and based everything on universally accepted "first principles."

THE PHILOSOPHIES OF THOMAS HOBBS

Views on Knowledge

Hobbes believed that basing philosophy and science on the observations of nature alone was too subjective because humans have the ability to view the world in many different ways. He rejected the work of Francis Bacon and Robert Boyle, who used inductive reasoning from nature to draw scientific and philosophical conclusions. Instead, he believed the purpose of philosophy was to establish a system of truths that were based on foundational, universal principles that could be demonstrated by anyone through language and agreed upon by all.

In searching for a philosophy based on universal principles, Hobbes turned to geometry as a model and claimed it to be the first

universal principle. Because of its deductive reasoning, Hobbes believed geometry to be a model of true science and used this notion of deductive reasoning to create his political philosophy.

Views on Human Nature

Thomas Hobbes did not believe in dualism or the existence of a soul. Humans, according to Hobbes, are like machines; made of material and whose functions could be explained by mechanical processes (for example, sensation is caused by the mechanical processes of the nervous system). As such, Hobbes claimed that humans avoid pain and pursue pleasure in an effort to seek out our own self-interest (which makes humans' judgment extremely unreliable), and that our thoughts and emotions are based on cause and effect and action-reaction. Hobbes believed that human judgment needs to be guided by science, which, in *Leviathan*, he refers to as "the knowledge of consequences."

Society, according to Hobbes, was a similar machine that, while artificial, also followed the same laws, and all phenomena in the entire universe could be explained through the interactions and motions of material bodies.

Fear, Hope, and the Social Contract

Hobbes did not believe morality exists in a human's natural state. So when he speaks of good and evil, he refers to "good" as anything people desire and "evil" as anything people avoid. Based on these definitions, Hobbes then goes on to explain various behaviors and emotions. Hope, according to Hobbes's definition, is the possibility of gaining some apparent good, and fear is recognizing that an apparent good cannot be attained (though this definition is only maintainable when considering humans outside of the constraints of laws and society). Since good and evil are based on individual

desires, rules regarding what makes something good or evil cannot exist.

It is the constant back-and-forth between feelings of hope and fear that Hobbes believed was the defining principle of all human action, and he claimed that one of the two are present in all people at any given time.

Hobbes depicts the “state of nature” as humans having an instinctive desire to gain as much good and power as they possibly can. This desire and a lack of any laws that prevent one from harming others create a state of constant war. And this constant war in the state of nature means humans must be living in constant fear of one another. However, when reason and fear combine, it makes humans follow the state of nature (the desire to gain as much good as one can) and makes humans seek out peace. Furthermore, good and evil cannot exist until a society’s supreme authority establishes these rules.

Hobbes claims the only way peace can truly be achieved is by coming together and creating a social contract in which a group of people agree to have one supreme authority rule over a commonwealth. Within the social contract, fear serves two purposes:

1. It creates the state of war within the state of nature so that a social contract is required.
2. It upholds the peace within a commonwealth (by allowing for the supreme authority to instill fear in everyone through punishing those who break the contract).



Plato was one of the foundational figures in Western philosophy. His musings took the form of dialogues—discussions that ranged across topics as diverse as art, ethics, metaphysics, and theatre. Plato is perhaps most well known for his Allegory of the Cave, although his work ranged far beyond this one thought experiment.