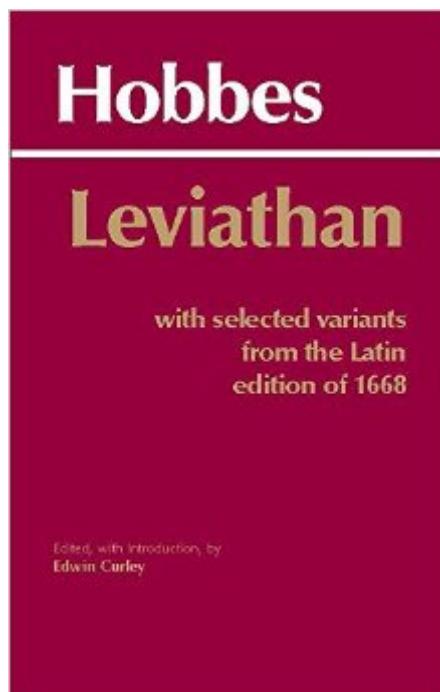


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# Leviathan: With Selected Variants From The Latin Edition Of 1668 (Hackett Classics)



## **Synopsis**

Designed to meet the needs of both student and scholar, this edition of Leviathan offers a brilliant introduction by Edwin Curley, modernized spelling and punctuation of the text, and the inclusion, along with historical and interpretive notes, of the most significant variants between the English version of 1651 and the Latin version of 1668. A glossary of seventeenth-century English terms, and indexes of persons, subjects, and scriptural passages help make this the most thoughtfully conceived edition of Leviathan available.

## **Book Information**

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## **Customer Reviews**

There are lots of editions of Leviathan around, so why buy this one? The things the editor, Ed Curley, has done to make this edition accessible yet scholarly, like:

1. Updated spelling and punctuation. Although I personally miss Hobbes' original spelling (see the Penguin edition for that), as a teacher I appreciate Ed's making it easier for beginners and ESL students to read Hobbes' words.
2. Index. Most editions do not have one.
3. Glossary. Hobbes used many terms that are now archaic, and Ed's brief but clear glossary helps clarify the text.
4. Ed's Introduction. Curley is one of the most careful and knowledgeable commentators on Hobbes, and he briefly but expertly introduces some of the major themes of the book.
5. Latin variants. Hobbes wrote Leviathan in English and in Latin, and there are some interesting differences between the two versions. Ed presents many of these in the footnotes, plus he includes English translations of the Appendices of

the Latin version.

This is one of the few books in western thought that cannot receive enough praise. It is all at the same time a compilation of classical and medieval thought, a biting commentary and critique of 17th century Europe (England in particular), an exploration of philosophy as science, and to top it all off the first truly modern work of political philosophy. This is one of those works that anyone who truly wants to call themselves educated must read, whether their focus of studies is philosophy, politics, literature, science or even mathematics. The fundamental nature of this work is to construct a reasoned materialistic account of human behavior starting from basic definitions and postulates (very similar to geometry). From these basic principles Hobbes constructs an account of human psychology based on human desires which then culminates in man's need to leave the natural state of the world into the constructed society, which Hobbes calls the Leviathan. I cannot even attempt to give a summation of the steps of Hobbes's argument here that would do him justice, but suffice it to say that Hobbes's conclusion is that in order to be happy and safe man must give up his rights to a strong sovereign. This is a conclusion that may not look modern or attractive at all to most readers, but Hobbes's reasoning is so clear and detailed that it forces the reader to, if not agree with all of his principles, at least take them very seriously. This is one of those books that forces one to reexamine all of their assumptions about the world. Hobbes is also one of those misunderstood authors who are portrayed as being cold and ruthless, but are simply trying to provide their readers with an accurate and analytic account of humanity's problems and hopefully providing solutions. If all of this hasn't scared you away yet I do have to say that Leviathan is not an easy book to read. Its thought is difficult and its language is archaic, but for those who are willing to accept the work this book can be very interesting and rewarding. Hobbes might be a dense writer, but unlike many philosophical writers, he is a very clear and concise and often surprisingly witty and wry. There are two editions that I recommend. The first is the Hackett edition. Not only does it take the liberty of changing the varied spellings of Hobbes's 17th century English, but it also includes textual variances from the earlier Latin edition of the work. Some of these variants are significant and should be taken into consideration by the serious student. The other is the Cambridge Student Edition, which is the edition I used because I'm one of those students that enjoy reading the early English texts with their strange spellings. The disadvantage of this edition is that it does not include the Latin variations. The introductions and supplementary material in both of these editions are fine, but my personal favorite is the introduction written by Michael Oakeshott which can be found in a collection of his essays entitled, "Hobbes on Civil Association". Another work which greatly

elucidates some of Hobbes's strong almost vehement reactions to anything democratic is Hobbes's "Behemoth" in which he provides his account of the English Civil War. If you are really interested in Hobbes I also highly recommend his work "De Cive". Hobbes is hard, but he is unavoidable for anyone interested in understanding our modern world and our world in general. You may even find that, like myself, you just can't get enough of Hobbes.

Hobbes's LEVIATHAN is not only the most important work of political philosophy ever written in English, it is the work - even more than the writings of Francis Bacon - that kicked off the English tradition in philosophy. Many other claims are made for it, some praiseworthy, some negative. Its materialism caused countless authors to condemn its atheism, while its cold equations reduced man to his "price", in the eyes of many kicking off the tradition that ended with von Mises, Hayek, and Gary Becker (whether fair or not). He is also one of the earliest major figures in the social contract and natural law traditions. On almost every level it remains one of the most original and important books in the history of philosophy, and might be, even today, the most important philosophical book ever written in English, whether you agree with a word he writes. The problem with is that it often clumps editions under a single roof. And editorial comments might have nothing to do with the version one is about to purchase. I own five editions of Hobbes's masterpiece, yet I don't own the best edition, the one edited by Noel Malcolm and which is referred to in the editorial reviews section: Thomas Hobbes: Leviathan (Clarendon Edition of the Works of Thomas Hobbes). I would love to own this, but I simply don't have \$300 to drop on a book, even in three volumes. But if Malcolm's intro is anything up to the level of what he did with Hobbes's CORRESPONDENCE, it qualifies as something that any serious student of Hobbes should read. The five editions I own are the ones edited by Curley (Hackett), Tuck (Cambridge), Macpherson (Penguin), Shapiro (Yale), and Martinich (Broadview). Until Oxford graces us with a paperback edition of the Malcolm, I would recommend these five in this order: Curley or Tuck, Martinich, Shapiro, and Macpherson. There is little reason to prefer Leviathan: With Selected Variants from the Latin Edition of 1668 to Hobbes: Leviathan: Revised student edition (Cambridge Texts in the History of Political Thought), or vice versa. Both have outstanding introductions, both contain variants of the text, and both have excellent commentary and bibliographies. I generally find I prefer the Cambridge to the Hackett simply because it has a better binding. But you can really toss a coin and do as well with one edition as the other. A. P. Martinich has been as active as any Hobbes scholar as there is today, having written two introductions to his thought, a Hobbes dictionary, a book on Hobbes's religious beliefs, and the best recent biography on Hobbes. His edition of LEVIATHAN, Leviathan, revised

edition (Broadview Editions), is an outstanding one. WARNING: Broadview also publishes an abridged edition of LEVIATHAN, so take care to buy the correct edition. I'm not much of a fan of the Shapiro edition that was produced in the overall outstanding Rethinking the Western Tradition series published by Yale University Press. The weakness of that series is that the press rarely expends much effort in providing an improved or definitive text of any of the works in the series. The press relies on public domain texts. In this case the text is largely just the 1651 text with modernized spelling, unlike, say, the Hackett edition produced by Curley, which included variants in the later Latin translation that Hobbes himself made. The value of the Yale edition lies in the four original essays appended to the text. I find that the essays are often worth the cost of the book even if the version of the text is rather pedestrian, such as their edition of Descartes. I do not recommend the Penguin edition edited by C. B. Macpherson. I do, however, recommend purchasing a rather cheap used edition of the Penguin edition simply in order to get the introduction by Macpherson. One of the great members of the political Left of the previous generation, Macpherson was the author of a profoundly important book entitled **THE THEORY OF POSSESSIVE INDIVIDUALISM: FROM HOBBES TO LOCKE**. While some of his specific historical claims about possessive individualism cannot be supported by close readings of the philosophers in question, there still is no question that he has identified and trenchantly critiqued undeniable trends in the liberal tradition (using "liberal" in the more precise sense of those who are defenders of property rights and a free market, so that Ronald Reagan is quite properly considered a classic liberal). While Macpherson is not always correct in what he says of Locke and Hobbes, his essays are always worth reading and of the greatest interest. Likewise, moving to the far Right of the political spectrum, the older edition of LEVIATHAN featuring the famous intro by Michael Oakeshott cannot be recommended at all. Oakeshott's introduction, however, remains essential reading. Four essays on Hobbes have been collected in *Hobbes on Civil Association*, but the better way to acquire both the famous intro and Oakeshott's other famous essay on Hobbes, along with the best of the rest of his essays, is by purchasing his *Rationalism in Politics* and other essays. I hope this helps prospective purchasers of Hobbes's great work of political philosophy. Even though I am politically far to the left of Hobbes, I find nearly every page of his work to be fascinating. I virtually never agree with Hobbes, but I never find him boring. Some on the Right do not want to claim Hobbes as a conservative, based on his atheism and his belief in an all powerful central government (or leviathan) to keep people from destroying one another, but his central assumptions - that people are driven by self-interest, that something like a market dominates society, that sympathy and compassion should not be motives for behavior - are shared by today's Right. There is a way, however, of analyzing both Hobbes and

almost all other prominent political thinkers, and that is by asking: "Who do you trust?" Hobbes is unusual for a conservative in trusting government self-interested, self-seeking individuals. One could ask the same question of Locke, Rousseau, Marx, Bentham, Rawls, de Maistre, Mill, Jefferson, Lincoln, Nozick, and so on, asking what force in society they most trusted to foment to public good. Most conservatives today tend to trust the unregulated free market and to distrust government. I tend to distrust government, but even distrust the market (which I don't believe either is or ever could be truly free) even more. Rousseau also distrusted government, but distrusted the market even less, while Jefferson distrusted government, but saw the market as a source of evil. Lincoln, on the other hand, both trusted, to a degree, the market and central government, and in fact saw the two working hand in hand (Lincoln at his most typical was the government building a transcontinental railroad by handing out contracts to private corporations). As far as I know, no one has attempted a history of political thought in this vein, but I think it would produce some fascinating results. But regardless of how one reads political history, Hobbes will remain one of the 3 or 4 most important figures with whom to come to terms.

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