

SAMPLE for MIDTERM

“It may seem strange, to some man that has not well weighed these things, that nature should thus dissociate, and render men apt to invade and destroy one another. And he may, therefore, not trusting to this inference made from the passions, desire perhaps to have the same confirmed by experience. Let him therefore consider with himself – when taking a journey, he arms himself, and seeks to go well accompanied; when going to sleep, he locks his doors; ...”

*This was an answer some years ago; it is a bit chaotic but nonetheless got an “A”.*

Source: Hobbes, LEVIATHAN

In this passage Hobbes is essentially urging his readers to consider the truth of his premises in constructing the political entity known as the Leviathan. He is saying that it may seem to some unfounded for him to describe the state of nature and the violent inclinations of men in such an absolute manner. Yet he urges the reader to consider whether or not what he says are not self-evident truths, which each individual can find in him or herself, and that this is in fact a constant possibility of war between people even when there are police, laws, etc...Our actions (e.g. we lock our doors) betray that our understanding is what Hobbes says that it is.

The significance of this passage in Hobbes' thought is that he believes that he has created a scientific method, beginning with axioms or definitions, which as in geometry are indisputable and are the truth that each individual can find internally. The proof of these axioms is that they are confirmed in our daily life. There is thus – he thinks – a rigorous scientific way to overcome each individual's tendency to look out only for himself and in overcoming this to erect a civil community, which involves all members contracting with one another and where a sovereign represents and enforces the interest of each.