

Hobbes, Thomas. (1651) *Leviathan* (excerpt). In S.M. Cahn (ed.), *Exploring Philosophy: An Introductory Anthology, 4th Ed.* (New York: Oxford University Press): 567-573.

****Note:** *punctuation and some wording edited for clarity*

Of the Natural Condition of Mankind as Concerning their Felicity, and Misery

Nature hath made men so equal, in the faculties of body, and mind; as that though there be found one man sometimes manifestly stronger in body, or of quicker mind than another, yet when all is reckoned together, the difference between man and man is not so considerable, as that one many can thereupon claim to himself any benefit, to which another may not pretend as well as he. For as to the strength of the body, the weakest had strength enough to kill the strongest, either by secret machination, or by confederacy with others, that are in the same danger as himself.

And as to the faculties of the mind (setting aside the arts grounded upon words, and especially that skill of proceeding upon general and infallible rules, called science [which very few have, and but in few things], as being not a native faculty, born with us, nor attained, [like] prudence, while we look after someone else), I find yet a greater equality amongst men, than that of strength. For prudence, is but experience, which equal time equally bestows upon all men, in those things they equally apply themselves unto. That which may perhaps make such equality incredible is but a vain conceit of one's own wisdom, which almost all men think they have in a greater degree than the vulgar, that is, than all men but themselves, and a few others, whom by fame, or for concurring with themselves, they approve. For such is the nature of men, that howsoever they may acknowledge many others to be more witty, or more eloquent, or more learned; yet they will hardly believe there be many so wise as themselves. For they see their own wit at hand, and other men's at a distance. But this proveth rather that men are in that point equal, [rather] than unequal. For there is not ordinarily a greater sign of the equal distribution of any thing than that every man is contented with his share.

From this equality of ability, ariseth equality of hope in the attaining of ends. And therefore if any two men desire the same thing, which nevertheless they cannot both enjoy, they become enemies; and in the way to their end (which is principally their own conservation, sometimes their delectation¹ only), endeavor to destroy, or subdue one another. And from hence it comes to pass, that where an invader hath no more to dear, than another man's single power; if one plant, sow, build, or possess a convenient seat, others may probably be expected to come prepared with forces united to dispossess and deprive him, not only of the fruits of his labor, but also of his life or liberty. And the invader again is in the like danger of another.

And from this diffidence of one another, there is no way for any man to secure himself [as] reasonable as anticipation; that is, by force or wiles to master to persons of all men he can, so long [until] he see no other power great enough to endanger him: and this is no more than his own conservation requireth, and is generally allowed. Also because

¹ Enjoyment, pleasure

there be some that, taking pleasure in contemplating their own power in the acts of conquest, which they pursue farther than their security requires, [and] others, that otherwise would be glad to be at ease within modest bounds, should not by invasion increase their power, [those latter people] would not be able, long time, by standing only on their defense, to subsist. And by consequence, such augmentation of dominion over men, being necessary to a man's conservation, it ought to be allowed him.

Again, men have no pleasure, but on the contrary a great deal of grief in keeping company, where there is no power able to over-awe them all. For every man looketh that his companion should value him at the same rate he sets upon himself, and upon all signs of contempt or undervaluing, naturally endeavors, as far as he dares (which amongst them that have no common power to keep them in quiet, is far enough to make them destroy each other), to extort a greater value from his contemners² by damage, and from others, by the example.

So that in the nature of man, we find three principle causes of quarrel. First, competition; secondly, diffidence³; thirdly; glory.

The first, maketh man invade for gain; the second, for safety; and the third, for reputation. The first use violence, to make themselves masters of other men's persons, wives, children, and cattle; the second, to defend them; the third for trifles, as a word, a smile, a different opinion and another other sign of undervalue, either direct in their persons or by reflection in their kindred, their friend, their nation, their profession, or their name.

Hereby it is manifest that during the time men live without a common power to keep them all in awe, they are in that condition which is called war; and such a war as is every man against every man. For WAR consisteth not in battle only, or the act of fighting, but in a tract of time, wherein the will to contend by battle is sufficiently known: and therefore the notion of time is to be considered in the nature of war, as it is in the nature of weather. For as the nature of foul weather lieth not in a shower or two of rain, but in an inclination thereto of many days together: so the nature of war consisteth not in actual fighting, but in the known disposition thereto, during all the time there is no assurance to the contrary. All other time is PEACE.

Whatsoever therefore is consequent to a time of war, where every man is enemy to every man, the same is consequent to the time wherein men live without other security than what their own strength and their own invention shall furnish them withal. In such condition, there is no place for industry, because the fruit thereof is uncertain, and consequently no culture of the earth⁴, no navigation, nor use of the commodities that may be imported by sea, no commodious building, no instruments of moving and removing such things as require much force, no knowledge of the face of the earth, no account of time, no arts, no letters, no society; and which is worst of all, continual fear and danger of violent death; and the life of man, solitary, poor, nasty, brutish, and short.

² those who view him with contempt

³ insecurity about one's social standing

⁴ agriculture

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 [his own case:] when taking a journey, he arms himself and seeks to go well-accompanied; when going to sleep, he locks his doors; when even in his house he locks his chests' and this when he knows there be laws and public officers armed to revenge all injuries shall be done him. What opinion [does he have] of his fellow subjects when he rides armed; of his fellow citizens when he locks his doors; and of his children and servants, when he locks his chests[?] Does he not there as much accuse mankind by his actions, as I do by my words? But neither of us accuse man's nature in it. The desires and other passions of man are in themselves no sin. No more are the actions that proceed from those passions, till they know a law that forbids them: which till laws be made they cannot know, nor can any law be made, till they have agreed upon the person that shall make it.

It may peradventure⁵ be thought there never was such a time, nor condition of war as this, and I believe it was never generally so over all the world: but there are many places where they live so now. For the savage people in many places of America, except the government of small familiars, the concord whereof dependeth on natural lust, have no government at all, and live at this day in that brutish manner, as I said before. Howsoever, it may be perceived what manner of life there would be where there were no common power to fear, by the manner of life which men that have formerly lived under a peaceful government . . . degenerate into in a civil war.

But though there had never been any time wherein particular men were in a condition of war one against another, yet in all times kings and persons of sovereignty, because of their independenc[e], are in continual jealousies, and in the state and posture of gladiators; having their weapons pointing and their eyes fixed on one another, that is, their forts, garrisons, and guns upon the frontiers of their kingdoms, and continual spies upon their neighbors, which is a posture of war. But because they uphold there the industry of their subjects, there does not follow from it that misery which accompanies the liberty of particular men.

To this war of every man against every man, this is also consequent: that nothing can be unjust. The notions of right and wrong, justice and injustice have there no place. Where there is no common power, there is no law; where no law, no injustice. Force and fraud are in war the two cardinal virtues. Justice and injustice are none of the faculties neither of the body nor mind. If they were, they might be in a man that were alone in the world, as well as his senses and passions. They are qualities that relate to men in society, not in solitude. It is consequent also to the same condition that there be no propriety, no dominion, no 'mine' and 'thine' distinct, but only that to be every man's that he can get, and for so long as he can keep it. And thus much for the ill condition which many by mere nature is actually placed in, though with a possibility to come out of it, consisting partly in the passions, partly in his reason.

⁵ perhaps

The passions that incline men to peace are fear of death, desire of such things as a necessary to commodious living, and a hope by their industry to obtain them. And reason suggesteth convenient articles of peace, upon which men may be drawn to agreement. These articles are they which otherwise are called the Laws of Nature: whereof I shall speak more particularly in the two following chapters.

Of the First and Second Natural Laws, and of Contracts

The right of nature, which writers commonly call *jus natural*, is the liberty each man hath to use his own power as he will himself for the preservation of his own nature, that is to say, of his own life; and consequently, of doing anything which in his own judgment and reason he shall conceive to be the aptest means thereunto.

By liberty is understood, according to the proper signification of the word, the absence of external impediments, which impediments may oft take away part of a man's power to do what he would, but cannot hinder him from using the power left him, according as his judgment and reason shall dictate to him.

A law of nature (*lex naturalis*) is a precept, or general rule, found out by reason, by which a man is forbidden to do that which is destructive of his life, or taketh away the means of preserving the same, and to omit that by which he thinketh it may be best preserved. For though they that speak of this subject . . . confound *jus* and *lex*, 'right' and 'law', yet they ought to be distinguished, because 'right' consisteth in liberty to do or to forbear, whereas 'law' determineth and bindeth to one of them: so that law and right differ as much as obligation and liberty, which in one and the same matter are inconsistent.

And because the condition of man (as hath been declared in the previous chapter) is a condition of war of every one against every one, in which case every one is governed by his own reason, and there is nothing he can make use of that may not be a help unto him in preserving his life against his enemies, it followeth that in that condition, every man has a right to every thing, even to one another's body. And therefore, as long as this natural right of every man to every thing endureth, there can be no security to any man, how strong or how wise soever he be, of living out the time which nature ordinarily alloweth men to live. And consequently it is a precept, or a general rule of reason, that every man ought to endeavor peace, as far as he has hope of attaining it, and when he cannot obtain it, that he may seek and use all helps and advantages of war. The first branch of which rule containeth the first and fundamental law of nature, which is to seek peace and follow it. The second, the sum of the right of nature, which is, by all means we can, to defend ourselves.

From this fundamental law of nature, by which men are commanded to endeavor peace, is derived this second law: that a man be willing, when others are so too, as farforth, as for peace, and defense of himself he shall think it necessary, to lay down this right to all thing, and be contented with so much liberty against other men as he would allow other men against himself. For as long as every man holdeth this right, of doing any thing he liketh, so long are all men in the condition of war. But if other men will not lay down their right as well as he, then there is no reason for any one to divest himself of his: for that were to expose himself to prey (which no man is bound to) rather

than to dispose himself to peace. This is that law of the Gospel, *whatsoever you require that other should do for you, that do ye unto them.*

Of Other Laws of Nature

From that law of nature by which we are obliged to transfer to another, such right as being retained hinder the peace of mankind, there followeth a third: which is this, that man perform their covenants made: without which covenants are in vain, and but empty words, and the right of all men to all things remaining, we are still in the condition of war.

And in this law of nature, consisteth the fountain and origin of justice. For where no covenant hath preceded, there hath no right been transferred, and every man has right to every thing, and consequently, no action can be unjust. But when a covenant is made, then to break it is unjust, and the definition of injustice is no other than the not performance of covenant. And whatsoever is not unjust, is just.

But because covenants of mutual trust, where there is fear of not-performance on either part . . . are invalid, though the original of justice be the making of covenants, yet injustice actually there can be none till the cause of such fear be taken away, which while men are in the natural condition of war cannot be done. Therefore before the names of 'just' and 'unjust' can have place, there must be some coercive power to compel men equally to the performance of their covenants, by the terror of some punishment, greater than the benefit they expect by the breach of their covenant, and to make good that propriety, which by mutual contract men acquire in recompense of the universal right they abandon: and such power there is none before the erection of a commonwealth. And this is also to be gathered out of the ordinary definition of Justice in the Schools: for they say that justice is the constant will of giving to every man his own. And therefore where there is no own, that is, no propriety, there is no injustice; and where there is no coercive power erected, that is, where there is no commonwealth, there is no propriety; all men hav[e natural] right to all things, therefore where there is no commonwealth, there nothing is unjust. So that the nature of justice consisteth in keeping of valid covenants: but the validity of covenants begins not [except] with the constitution of a civil power, sufficient to compel men to keep them: and then it is also that propriety begins . . .

The fool hath said in his heart, 'there is no such thing as justice,' and sometimes also with his tongue, seriously alleging that, every man's conservation and contentment being committed to his own care, there could be no reason why every man might not do what he thought conduced to one's benefit. He does not therein deny that there be covenants, and that they are sometimes broken, sometimes kept, and that such breach of them may be called injustice, and the observance of them justice; but he questioneth whether justice, taking away the fear of God (for the same fool hath said in his heart there is no God) may not sometimes stand with that reason which dictateth to every man his own good, and particularly then, when it conduceth to such a benefit, shall put a man in a condition to neglect not only the dispraise and reviling, but also the power of other men . . . This specious reasoning is nonetheless false.

For the question is not of promises mutual, where there is no security of performance on either side, as when there is no civil power erected over the parties promising, for such promises are no covenants; but either where one of the parties has performed already, or where there is power to make him perform, there is the question whether it be against reason, that is, against the benefit of the other to perform or not. And I say it is not against reason. For the manifestation whereof, we are to consider: first, that when a man doth a thing, which notwithstanding any thing can be foreseen and reckoned on, tendeth to his own destruction, howsoever some accident which he could not expect, arriving may turn it to his benefit; yet such events so not make it reasonably or wisely done. Secondly, that in a condition of war (wherein every man to every man, for want of a common power to keep them all in awe, is an enemy), there is no man [who] can hope by his own strength or wit to defend himself from destruction, without the help of confederates; where every one expects the same defense by the confederation that any one else does, and therefore he which declares he thinks it reason[able] to deceive those that help him can [reasonably] except no other means of safety than what can be had from his own single power. He therefore that breaketh his covenant, and consequently declareth that he thinks he may with reason so do, cannot be received into any society that unite themselves for peace and defense [except] by the error of them that receive him; nor when he is received be retained by [the society] without [them] seeing the danger of their error, which errors a man cannot reasonably reckon upon as the means of his security. And therefore if he be left or cast out of society, he perisheth; and if he live in society, it is by the errors of other men, which he could not foresee nor reckon upon, and consequently against the reason of his preservation; and so, as all men that contribute not to his destruction, forbear him only out of ignorance of what is good for themselves.