

Hobbes, Leviathan

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Pages 9-11, 40-49 (especially the definitions of 'pity' and 'cruelty' on 46), 66-70, 75-81, 93-111, 125-138

Methodology: read thyself, p. 10

What's the State of Nature (SN) like?

- I. PHYSICAL CIRCUMSTANCES: moderate scarcity
- II. PERSONAL CIRCUMSTANCES
 - a. Rough equality
 - b. Egoistic motivation ("looking out for #1")
 - c. Glory seekers (looking *to be* #1)
- III. SOCIAL CIRCUMSTANCES: complete freedom, i.e. no obligations

AS FOR PERSONAL

As for (a):

- Everyone can kill everyone else; about equally wise (though we think ourselves wiser)

As for (b):

- i. *Competition for survival & happiness* → seek power to subdue others
 - Kill them first, **p. 76.**
- ii. *Diffidence* → seek security → seek power
 - Evidence: **p. 96**
- iii. *Psychological egoism:*
 - "Voluntary acts of every man, the object is some *good to himself*" (p. 100, 110)
 - Definitions of pity and cruelty, **p. 46**
 - Magnanimity, liberality, hope, courage and confidence proceed from conscience of power.
 - All virtues and laws of nature are contrary to our "natural passions that carry us to partiality, pride, revenge, and the like" (p. 125)

As for (c)

- Glory consists in the knowledge of, and sentiment of, superiority, **p. 45**
- The need for glory is satisfied by either
 - a. Demonstrating power, which is an act of violence, or
 - b. Being praised by others.
 - If one doesn't receive praise one extracts it by demonstrating one's superiority.

What happens when two glory-seekers meet?

What is required of those who are not glory seekers?

AS FOR SOCIAL

- i. No justice or injustice, **p. 97, top**
- ii. No property; just what you can get your hands on.
- iii. "Every man has a right to every thing, even to one another's body", (p. 98)
- iv. Right of Nature: right to survive (p. 98).

ALL OF THIS LEADS TO WAR OF ALL AGAINST ALL (bottom, 97), "solitary, poor, ..." top 96.

So what should we do?

GET OUT OF THE STATE OF NATURE - SEEK PEACE

How do we achieve it?

Answer: Laws of Nature, **p. 97, bottom**

Laws of Nature: Precepts that forbid one to do what is destructive of one's own life, (p. 98)

1. Seek peace; attack if you can't get it.
2. Lay down your rights if others will. "Be contented with so much liberty against other men as he would allow other men against himself (p. 99).
3. Keep your covenants.

Attempt #1 to get out of the SN: Try to make contracts with others to desist from violence.

Problem: Fear that the other will break the contract → preemptive breaking of contract.

Attempt #2, and the Solution: Give power to a sovereign → fear is taken away → Contracts are kept → peace! p. 108, 129.

What if I don't want to enter the contract?

- You have no contract with anyone. It is therefore not unjust to kill you (p. 132-3).

By this no one acquires any right, but is more able to carry out his original right to get what he wants without others being an obstacle. This means that you are to *give up some of your liberty* so that you can more fully get what you want. Paradoxically, you give up liberty (the liberty to do whatever you want without justified complaint from another) to get liberty (the liberty to have the opportunity to actually do what you want, within boundaries).

Is the Sovereign Bound to the People?

1. A contract requires a power to enforce it; otherwise there is no obligation.
2. But there can be no power greater than the sovereign.
3. Therefore, there is no contract between the people and the sovereign; he is under no obligation to them.

The sovereign can restrain action that tends to the destruction of the society. He may also restrain free speech because opinions lead to action, and some actions disrupt the peace.

Objections

Objection #1: The fool, p. 109

Response: Reason commands to do that which avoids your destruction; the fool tends to his destruction, thus defying a law of nature.

Objection #2: Why can we not have informal groups organize rather than a sovereign?

Response: Two scenarios

- You're in a small group → a bigger group defeats you
- You're in a big group → a smaller, better organized group defeats you
- There will always be in-fighting

Objection #3: Other animals, like bees and ants, are social creatures. Why not suppose we're like them? (p. 127-8)

Response:

- The short answer: Look inside yourself and you'll see: we're just different sorts of creatures.
- The long answer: pp. 127-8

Overall objection: We're not the sorts of creatures you think we are. Our personal circumstances are different than what you say. Thus, the SN isn't as bad as you make it out to be.

- But then: what, exactly, did Hobbes get wrong about people (or one of the other circumstances in the SN)?