

## Need to Know Information for Hobbes

<http://plato.stanford.edu/entries/hobbes-moral/>

Also go to <http://www.btinternet.com/~glynhughes/squashed/hobbes.htm> for excerpts from the *Leviathan*

### Hobbes's Moral and Political Philosophy

Hobbes is famous for his early and elaborate development of what has come to be known as "social contract theory", the method of justifying political principles or arrangements by appeal to the agreement that would be made among suitably situated rational, free, and equal persons. He is infamous for having used the social contract method to arrive at the astonishing conclusion that we ought to submit to the authority of an absolute—undivided and unlimited—sovereign power.

Hobbes's moral philosophy has been less influential than his political philosophy, in part because that theory is too ambiguous to have garnered any general consensus as to its content. Most scholars have taken Hobbes to have affirmed some sort of personal relativism or subjectivism; but views that Hobbes espoused divine command theory, virtue ethics, rule egoism, or a form of projectivism also find support in Hobbes's texts and among scholars. Because Hobbes held that "the true doctrine of the Lawes of Nature is the true Morall philosophie", differences in interpretation of Hobbes's moral philosophy can be traced to differing understandings of the status and operation of Hobbes's "laws of nature", which laws will be discussed below.

### The State of Nature

To establish these conclusions, Hobbes invites us to consider what life would be like in a *state of nature*, that is, a condition without government. Perhaps we would imagine that people might fare best in such a state, where each decides for herself how to act, and is judge, jury and executioner in her own case whenever disputes arise—and that at any rate, this state is the appropriate baseline against which to judge the justifiability of political arrangements. Hobbes terms this situation "the condition of mere nature", a state of perfectly private judgment, in which there is no agency with recognized authority to arbitrate disputes and effective power to enforce its decisions.

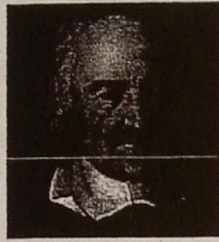
Hobbes's near descendant, John Locke, insisted in his *Second Treatise of Government* that the state of nature was indeed to be preferred to subjection to the arbitrary power of an absolute sovereign.

But Hobbes famously argued that such a "dissolute condition of masterlesse men, without subjection to Lawes, and a coercive Power to tie their hands from rapine, and revenge" would make impossible all of the basic security upon which comfortable, sociable, civilized life depends. There would be "no place for industry, because the fruit thereof is uncertain; and consequently no culture of the earth; 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; and which is worst of all, continuall feare, and danger of violent death; And the life of man, solitary, poore, nasty, brutish, and short." If this is the state of nature, people have strong reasons to avoid it, which can be done only by submitting to some mutually recognized public authority, for "so long a man is in the condition of mere nature, (which is a condition of war,) as private appetite is the measure of good and evil." Although many readers have criticized Hobbes's state of nature as unduly pessimistic, he constructs it from a number of individually plausible empirical and normative assumptions. He assumes that people are sufficiently similar in their mental and physical attributes that no one is invulnerable nor can expect to be able to dominate the others. Hobbes assumes that people generally "shun death", and that the desire to preserve their own lives is very strong in most people. While people have local affections, their benevolence is limited, and they have a tendency to partiality. Concerned that others should agree with their own high opinions of themselves, people are sensitive to slights. They make evaluative judgments but often use seemingly impersonal terms like 'good' and 'bad' to stand for their own personal preferences. They are curious about the causes of events, and anxious about their futures; according to Hobbes, these characteristics incline people to adopt religious beliefs, although the content of those beliefs will differ depending upon the sort of religious education one has happened to receive.

With respect to normative assumptions, Hobbes ascribes to each person in the state of nature a liberty right to preserve herself, which he terms "the right of nature". This is the right to do whatever one sincerely judges needful for one's preservation; yet because it is at least possible that virtually anything might be judged necessary for one's preservation, this theoretically limited right of nature becomes in practice an unlimited right to potentially anything, or, as Hobbes puts it, a right "to all things". Hobbes further assumes as a principle of practical rationality, that people should adopt what they see to be the necessary means to their most important ends.



THE *VERY* SQUASHED VERSION OF...



Thomas Hobbes, 1651

**Leviathan**

*"...the life of man, solitary, poor, nasty, brutish, and short"*

God's natural world is imitated by man in making the great LEVIATHAN or COMMON-WEALTH or STATE which is but an artificial man, with sovereignty as soul, officers as joints, reward and punishment as nerves, wealth as strength, laws as reason.

All our thoughts are derived from things outside ourselves, and our knowledge and our dreams is but an interpretation of that. Speech was invented by God himself that we might learn from each other, and reason - for true and false are attributes of speech, not of things. Reasoning is a mathematical process, which many scholars are ignorant of. A science is certain when a man can demonstrate the truth of it to others. All discourse aims to gain knowledge, which is not mere 'belief in'. Knowledge is either of fact, or of consequences, which is called science. The power of man is his ability to obtain some future good, and all men have all mankind have a perpetual and restless desire after power.

As religion is only found in man, so its seed must be in man. Men live always in fear, and make gods of things to praise and blame for their condition.

All men have some great skill or ability, but when they conflict in their desires without an agreed Sovereignty to rule them their life is but solitary, poor, nasty, brutish, and short. There is a law of nature that every man protect himself, and this right they transfer entirely to the Sovereign Power, be it an assembly of men, or, preferably, one man.

**Thomas Hobbes Quotes:**

*"During the time men live without a common power to keep them all in awe, they are in that conditions called war; and such a war, as if of every man, against every man."*

*"Force and fraud are in war the two cardinal virtues."*

*"I put for the general inclination of all mankind, a perpetual and restless desire of power after power, that ceaseth only in death."*

*"In the state of nature profit is the measure of right."*

*"It is not wisdom but Authority that makes a law."*



## Need to Know Information for Locke

<http://www.sparknotes.com/philosophy/johnlocke/section2.rhtml>

<http://plato.stanford.edu/entries/locke-political/>

### **John Locke (1632-1704)**

Locke's political theory was founded on **social contract** theory. Unlike **Thomas Hobbes**, Locke believed that human nature is characterized by **reason and tolerance**. Like Hobbes, Locke believed that human nature allowed men to be selfish. This is apparent with the introduction of currency. In a natural state all people were equal and independent, and everyone had a **natural right** to defend his "**Life, health, Liberty, or Possessions**", basis for the phrase in America; "Life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness".

Like Hobbes, Locke assumed that the sole right to defend in the state of nature was not enough, so people established a **civil society** to resolve conflicts in a **civil way** with help from government in a state of society. However, Locke never refers to Hobbes by name and may instead have been responding to other writers of the day. Locke also advocated **governmental separation of powers** and believed that revolution is not only a right but an obligation in some circumstances. These ideas would come to have profound influence on the Constitution of the United States and its Declaration of Independence.

In the *Two Treatises of Government*, he defended the claim that men are by nature free and equal against claims that God had made all people naturally subject to a monarch. He argued that people have rights, such as the right to life, liberty, and property, that have a foundation independent of the laws of any particular society. Locke used the claim that men are naturally free and equal as part of the justification for understanding legitimate political government as the result of a social contract where people in the state of nature conditionally transfer some of their rights to the government in order to better insure the stable, comfortable enjoyment of their lives, liberty, and property. **Since governments exist by the consent of the people in order to protect the rights of the people and promote the public good, governments that fail to do so can be resisted and replaced with new governments.** Locke is thus also important for his defense of the right of **revolution**. Locke also defends the principle of majority rule and the separation of legislative and executive powers. In the *Letter Concerning Toleration*, Locke denied that coercion should be used to bring people to (what the ruler believes is) the true religion and also denied that churches should have any coercive power over their members. Locke elaborated on these themes in his later political writings, such as the *Second Letter on Toleration* and *Third Letter on Toleration*.

### **The Law of Nature**

Perhaps the most central concept in Locke's political philosophy is his theory of natural law and natural rights. The natural law concept existed long before Locke as a way of expressing the idea that there were certain moral truths that applied to all people, regardless of the particular place where they lived or the agreements they had made. The most important early contrast was between laws that were by nature, and thus generally applicable, and those that were conventional and operated only in those places where the particular convention had been established. This distinction is sometimes formulated as the difference between natural law and positive law.

### **State of Nature**

Locke's theory of the state of nature will thus be tied closely to his theory of natural law, since the latter defines the rights of persons and their status as free and equal persons. The stronger the grounds for accepting Locke's characterization of people as free, equal, and independent, the more helpful the state of nature becomes as a device for representing people. Still, it is important to remember that none of these interpretations claims that Locke's state of nature is only a thought experiment, in the way Kant and Rawls are normally thought to use the concept. Locke did not respond to the argument "where have there ever been people in such a state" by saying it did not matter since it was only a thought experiment. Instead, **he argued that there are and have been people in the state of nature.** (Two Treatises 2.14) It seems important to him that at least some governments have actually been formed in the way he suggests. How much it matters whether they have been or not will be discussed below under the topic of consent, since the central question is whether a good government can be legitimate even if it does not have the actual consent of the people who live under it; hypothetical contract and actual contract theories will tend to answer this question differently.

<http://www.btinternet.com/~glynhughes/squashed/locke.htm>



THE *VERY* SQUASHED VERSION OF...



John Locke, 1690

***Essay Concerning Human Understanding***

*"I have always thought the actions of men the best interpreters of their thoughts"*

Let us suppose the mind to be a blank paper void of without any ideas. All our knowledge comes from experiences which enter simple and unmixed, and which the mind has the power to repeat, compare and unite to an almost infinite variety, and so can make at will new complex ideas. But it cannot make new ideas, nor destroy those that are there. Ideas are produced from primary qualities, viz. solidity, extension, figure, motion or rest, and number. Secondary qualities are colours, sounds, tastes, etc. From whence it is easy to draw this observation: that the ideas of primary qualities of bodies are resemblances of them, but the ideas produced in us by the secondary qualities have no resemblance in them at all. Light, heat, whiteness, or coldness are no more really in things than sickness or pain is in manna. Perception is often altered by our experience, as when we see a globe as a circle, but take it to be spherical, it is the first operation of our intellectual faculties, and the inlet of all knowledge into our minds. We can also discern and distinguish between several ideas, if ideas are clear. The comparing of ideas one with another is the operation of the mind upon which all understanding of relation depends. By composition, the mind puts together several simple ideas into complex ones. By abstraction we apply general terms to similar experiences, as when we call the colour of snow or chalk by the same name. The mind is wholly passive in the reception of all its simple ideas; even large and abstract ideas such as space, time and infinity, are derived from sensation or reflection. It is plain that perceptions are produced by exterior causes affecting our senses, but those that lack the physical organs of any sense never can have the ideas belonging to that sense produced in their minds. Or senses bear witness to the truth of each other's report concerning the existence of sensible things without us and around us.

**John Locke Quotes:**

*"Though the familiar use of the Things about us, takes off our Wonder; yet it cures not our Ignorance."*  
—An Essay Concerning Human Understanding (III. vi. 9)

*"...he that will not give just occasion to think that all government in the world is the product only of force and violence, and that men live together by no other rules but that of beasts, where the strongest carries it...must of necessity find another rise of government, another original of political power..."*  
—from *The Second Treatise of Civil Government* John Locke

*All mankind... being all equal and independent, no one ought to harm another in his life, health, liberty or possessions.*

*Government has no other end, but the preservation of property.*

*To love our neighbor as ourselves is such a truth for regulating human society, that by that alone one might determine all the cases in social morality.*