

**Excerpts from Thomas Hobbes's**  
***Leviathan***  
(1651)

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 man can thereupon claim to himself any benefit, to which another may not pretend, as well as he. For as to the strength of body, the weakest has strength enough to kill the strongest, either by secret machination or by confederacy with others that are in the same danger with himself . . .

And as to the faculties of the mind . . . men are . . . [more] equal than unequal . . .

***1. According to Hobbes, do people experience equality or inequality in the State of Nature? Use examples to explain.***

From this equality of ability, ariseth equality of hope in the attaining of our 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, . . . endeavor to destroy, or subdue one another . . . 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 fruit of his labor, but also of his life, or liberty . . .

So that in the nature of man, we find three principal causes of quarrel. First, Competition; Secondly, Diffidence; Thirdly, Glory.

The first maketh men invade for Gain; the second, for Safety; and the third, 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 any other sign of undervalue, either direct in their Persons, or by reflexion in their Kindred, their Friends, their Nation, their Profession, or their Name.

***2. What was Hobbes' opinion of the nature of man? Why do they compete? Explain.***

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 of every man, against every man . . . state of nature will return.

**3. According to Hobbes, why does man need a strong government? Explain.**

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*Hobbes describes "the state of nature," a theoretical model of life prior to the formation of the state.*

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 withall. In such condition, there is 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, 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 . . .

**4. According to Hobbes, why must war and "time wherein men live without other security" be avoided? Use examples to explain.**

The Passions that incline men to Peace, are Fear of Death, Desire of such things as are 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 . . .

And because the condition of Man, (as hath been declared in the precedent Chapter) is a condition of Warre of everyone against everyone; in which case everyone 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 such a 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 everything endureth, there can be no security to any man, (how strong or wise soever he be) of living out the time, which Nature ordinarily alloweth men to live . . .

**5. What did Hobbes think would result from people pursuing their Natural Rights?**

. . . If there be no Power erected, or not great enough for our security, every man will and may lawfully rely on his own strength and art, for caution against all other men . . .

The only way to erect . . . a Common Power, as may be able to defend them from the invasion of [foreigners] and the injuries of one another, and thereby to secure them in such sort, as that by their own industry, and by the fruits of the Earth, they may nourish themselves and live contentedly is, to confer all their power and strength upon one Man, or upon one Assembly of men, that may reduce all their Wills, by plurality of voices, unto one Will . . . and therein to submit their Wills, every one to his Will, and their judgments, to his judgment.

**6. According to Hobbes, how can man escape this state of nature? Use examples to explain.**

This is more than Consent, or Concord; it is a real Unity of them all, in one and the same Person, made by Covenant of every man with every man, in such manner, as if every man should say to every man, *I Authorize and give up my Right of Governing myself to this Man, or to this Assembly of men, on this condition, that thou give up thy Right to him, and Authorize all his Actions in like manner.* This done, the Multitude so united in one Person, is called a COMMONWEALTH . . . For by this Authority, given him by every particular man in the Commonwealth, he hath the use of so much Power and Strength ... conferred on him, that by terror thereof, he is enabled to form the wills of them all, to Peace at home, and mutual [aid] against their enemies abroad. And in him consisteth the Essence of the Commonwealth; which (to define it) is *One Person, of whose Acts a great Multitude, by mutual Covenants one with another, have made themselves everyone the Author, to the end he may use the strength and means of them all, as he shall think expedient, for their Peace and Common Defense.*

**7. What “deal” did Hobbes believe people entered into? Explain.**

And he that carryeth this Person, is called SOVEREIGN, and said to have *Sovereign Power*; and everyone besides, his SUBJECT . . .

. . . They that have already Instituted a Commonwealth, being

thereby bound by Covenant . . . cannot lawfully make a new Covenant, amongst themselves, to be obedient to any other, in anything whatsoever, without his permission. And therefore, they that are subjects to a Monarch cannot, without his leave, cast off Monarchy and return to the confusion of a disunited Multitude; nor transfer their Person from him that beareth it to another Man, or other Assembly of men for they . . . are bound, every man to every man, to [acknowledge] . . . that he that already is their Sovereign, shall do, and judge fit to be done, so that [those who do not obey] break their Covenant made to that man, which is injustice; and they have also every man given the Sovereignty to him that beareth their Person, and therefore if they depose him, they take from him that which is his own, and so again it is injustice . . .

***8. According to Hobbes, why would it be unjust overthrow a monarch?***

And whereas some men have pretended for their disobedience to their Sovereign, a new Covenant, made, not with men, but with God, this also is unjust. For there is no Covenant with God, but by mediation of some body that representeth God's Person, which none doth but God's Lieutenant, who hath the Sovereignty under God. But this pretence of Covenant with God is so evident a [lie], even in the pretenders own consciences, that it is not only an act of an unjust, but also of a vile and unmanly disposition . . .

. . . Consequently none of [the sovereign's] Subjects, by any pretence of forfeiture, can be freed from his Subjection.

***9. Who would approve of Hobbes' views? Who would oppose them? Explain, with examples from the readings.***