

Hobbes and Locke

# The Great Debate About Human Nature

# Thomas Hobbes

- 1588-1679
- Thomas Hobbes was an English philosopher and political theorist, one of the first modern Western thinkers to provide a secular justification for the political state. His ideas represented a reaction against the decentralizing ideas of the Reformation (1517-1648), which, Hobbes contended, brought anarchy. Hobbes also contributed to modern psychology and laid the foundations of modern sociology by applying mechanistic principles in an attempt to explain human motivation and social organization.

# Hobbes, from *The Leviathan* #1

- “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 (which is principally their own conservation, and sometimes their delectation only) endeavour to destroy or subdue one another. And from hence it comes to pass that where an invader hath no more to fear 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 fruit of his labour, but also of his life or liberty. And the invader again is in the like danger of another.”

#1 =

- If we are all equally able, we'll all become enemies and try to take each other's stuff, and as soon as one person takes it, another will attack him.

# Hobbes #2

- “Again, men have no pleasure (but on the contrary a great deal of grief) in keeping company where there is no power able to overawe 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 endeavours, 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 contemners, by damage; and from others, by the example.”

## #2 =

- People will not get along unless there is some higher authority making them get along.
- People will try to get everyone to respect them (even to the point of destroying each other, if there is no higher power to stop them), by hurting some and letting that be an example to others.

# Hobbes #3

- “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, 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 any other sign of undervalue, either direct in their persons or by reflection in their kindred, their friends, their nation, their profession, or their name.”

#3 =

- YOU TELL ME!

# Hobbes #4

- “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. 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.”

## #4 =

- Whenever there is not an authority making all the people behave, that time is war, even if there's not actual battling going on at all times. The general state is of war.

# Hobbes #5

- “Whatsoever therefore is consequent to a time of war, where every man is enemy to every man, the same 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 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.”

# #5 =

- No one will bother with inventing, farming, building, exploring, researching, making art, improving life, etc., during a state of war, because you never know when it'll be wiped out.
- Therefore life is full of fear, and “solitary, nasty, brutish, and short”!

# Hobbes #6

- “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; 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 he has 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.”

# #6 =

- You may not want to think so badly of humans, but you lock your doors at night, don't you?
- This is not anything to be ashamed of, but just the way we are.

# Hobbes, *The Elements of Law* *Natural and Politic* (1640) #7:

- “This union so made, is that which men call now-a-days a BODY POLITIC or civil society; and the Greeks call it polis, that is to say, a, city. Which may be defined to be a multitude of men, united as one person by a common power, for their common peace, defence, and benefit.  
And as this union into a city or body politic, is instituted with common power over all the particular persons, or members thereof, to the common good of them all...The first thing therefore they are to do, is expressly every man to consent to something by which they may come nearer to their ends; which can be nothing else imaginable but this: that they allow the wills of the major part of their whole number, or the wills of the major part of some certain number of men by them determined and named; or lastly the will of some one man, to involve and be taken for the wills of every man. And this done they are united, and a body politic.”

# Hobbes #7

- So humans join in a civil society or body politic.
- We all give up power to this society, and it rules over us for the good of us all.
- We can have majority vote or elect representatives or just have one man in charge.

# John Locke

- 1632-1704
- John Locke was an Oxford scholar, medical researcher and physician, political operative, economist and ideologue for a revolutionary movement, as well as being one of the great philosophers of the late seventeenth and early eighteenth century.

# Locke, from *The Second Treatise of Civil Government* #1:

- "...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..."

# Locke #1 =

- Governments are really just some people pushing other people around, and the biggest, strongest guys get to be in charge. Like animals!

# Locke #2

- “Adam was created a perfect man, his body and mind in full possession of their strength and reason, and so was capable from the first instance of his being to provide for his own support and preservation, and govern his actions according to the dictates of the law of reason God had implanted in him.  
The freedom then of man, and liberty of acting according to his own will, is grounded on his having reason, which is able to instruct him in that law he is to govern himself by, and make him know how far he is left to the freedom of his own will.”

# Locke #2 =

---

- YOU TELL ME!