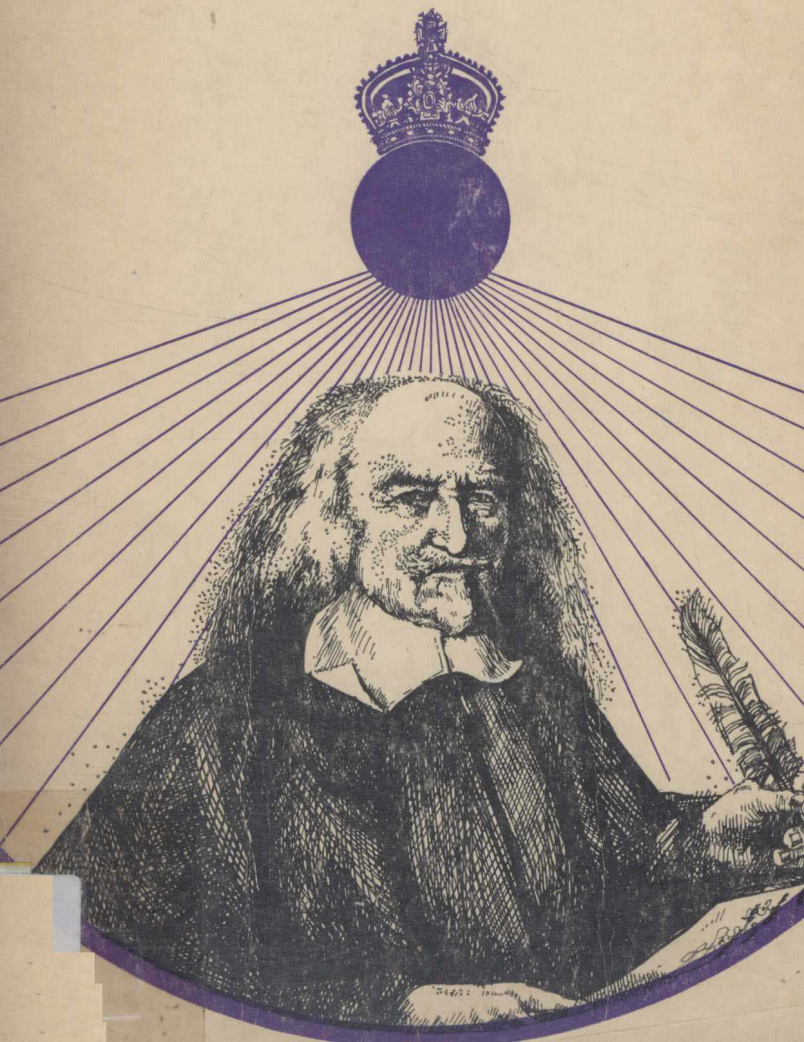


哲学

Hobbes Leviathan



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THOMAS HOBBES

Leviathan

INTRODUCTION BY

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DENT: LONDON

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DUTTON: NEW YORK

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Made in Great Britain

at the

Aldine Press • Letchworth • Herts

for

J. M. DENT & SONS LTD

Aldine House • Albemarle Street • London

This edition was first published in

Everyman's Library in 1914

Last reprinted 1976

Published in the U.S.A. by arrangement

with J. M. Dent & Sons Ltd

This book if bound as a paperback is
subject to the condition that it may
not be issued on loan or otherwise
except in its original binding

No. 691 Hardback ISBN 0 460 00691 6
No. 1691 Paperback ISBN 0 460 01691 1

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*EVERYMAN, I will go with thee,
and be thy guide,
In thy most need to go by thy side*

THOMAS HOBBS

Born at Malmesbury in 1588, the son of a clergyman. Graduated at Oxford, and between 1610 and 1637 went abroad as tutor several times, meeting the illustrious men of the day. Mathematical tutor to Charles II when Prince of Wales, from whom he received a pension. Buried in 1679 at Ault Hucknall Church.

INTRODUCTION

It is a curious irony of intellectual history that so pragmatic a people as the British should have produced *Leviathan* as their greatest masterpiece of political philosophy. This contrast is no doubt the reason why Hobbes was for long imagined to have been a lonely genius swimming against the currents of his time. He is in so many matters of style and attitude the companion of Descartes, Pascal and La Rouchefoucauld, rather than of Bacon or Locke. Only recently have intellectual historians, scraping away layers of accumulated forgetfulness, revealed how extensive was his influence upon seventeenth-century political controversy, and how menacing and persuasive 'Hobbesism' was thought to be. But although these historians have once more restored him to citizenship of his own time, they have not affected our modern sense of his oddity. For to a people convinced of its own essential good nature, he presented an account of human life as a precarious transformation of anti-social passions. To a community whose traditional legal expression was the Common Law, he argued that the essence of law was the command of the Sovereign, a theory appropriate to the emerging practice of Statute Law, and indebted to Roman and continental rather than to English models. Further, he retailed these unusual, indeed often scandalous, opinions with an inescapable rigour and aphoristic brilliance.

It is hardly surprising that he lived the latter part of his life on the very edge of public tolerance, partly under the protection of his equally cynical monarch Charles II. He was publicly (but probably falsely) branded an atheist in the 1660s when Englishmen were casting around for some explanation of why God had stricken the community with plague and fire. Soon after his death his works were included by the University of Oxford in a bonfire of pernicious publications. Hostility to his work did not surprise Hobbes; indeed, being of a combative nature, part of him actively enjoyed it. He believed himself to be the first revealer of important truths in an area where man's passions made the discovery of truth peculiarly difficult and hazardous. But at the end of *Leviathan* we find him claiming

that his work contains nothing 'contrary either to the Word of God, or to good Manners; or to the disturbance of the Publique Tranquillity'. What needs to be explained, then, is why a philosophy so consonant with good manners should have been found so scandalous. And the best place to begin is with the events of Hobbes's life.

We are peculiarly fortunate in the fact that he was a friend of the greatest gossip of seventeenth-century England, John Aubrey, the antiquarian bookseller who has left us memorials of most of his distinguished contemporaries. Some of the entries in Aubrey's *Lives* take up no more than a paragraph, but that is usually enough to reveal character. Aubrey was particularly proud of his friendship with Hobbes, who also came from Wiltshire, and took care to build up a collection of stories which have been the staple of Hobbesian biography ever since. Thomas Hobbes was born at Malmesbury on 5th April 1588, and died in December 1679. A life of ninety-one years is always notable, but in Hobbes's case it is also revealing, because it is clear that he worked hard for his longevity. Aubrey tells us of his exercises: walking up and down hills very fast, and playing tennis, followed by rub-downs, as an aid to health. During the night, when everyone else was asleep, Hobbes would sing 'prick-song' because he believed it was good for his lungs. Here then is a philosopher with a very unphilosophic aversion to death, an aversion that Hobbes eventually posited as fundamental to human nature, and a force for wisdom in human affairs. Nor is this an isolated connection between Hobbes's life and thought; he seems to have been a highly integrated man. Philosophizing was obviously his dominant passion, and the picture we get of him is of a man who spent much of his life purposefully meditating. The 'darting thoughts' he produced had to be quickly written down lest they be forgotten. In later life he would devote the afternoon to recording what he had thought on his morning walks, even when the onset of palsy reduced him to tracing shaky lines on paper by way of aids to memory. These lifelong practices also entered into the composition of *Leviathan*. Aubrey tells us that 'he walked much and contemplated, and he had in the head of his Staffe a pen and inke-horne, carried always a Note-book in his pocket, and as soon as a notion darted, he presently inserted it into his Booke, or else he should perhaps have lost it'. So confident a reliance upon his own thoughts, to the apparent (but merely

apparent) exclusion of immersion in the writings of his predecessors, is a vital clue to his philosophic personality.

Another clue to Hobbes's philosophic personality lies in the way in which his confidence grew throughout his life. His origins were intellectually insignificant. His father was one of the unlettered clergy of Queen Elizabeth's time. He had the misfortune to strike, in a fit of anger, a parson, outside the church door, and fled to London to escape punishment. He was never seen again, and Hobbes's education was taken in hand by his uncle, who had acquired some wealth as a glover, and some respectability as an alderman. After New College Oxford (where Hobbes spent much of his time in booksellers 'gaping on Mappes') he began a lifelong attachment to the Cavendish family. He became page and tutor to the young Earl of Devonshire, who (being, as Aubrey remarks, a 'waster') sent the unfortunate Hobbes off on many errands to borrow money for him. Hobbes was an excellent classicist, and well read in plays and romances; he had many opportunities for reading while waiting in antechambers for his lord. He appears before us at this stage of his life as a damp-footed humanist, much subject to colds and of a somewhat melancholy aspect—a picture relieved only by testimony to his good nature. Then came a turning point in his life, closely related to a famous story retailed by Aubrey: 'He was forty yeares old before he looked on Geometry; which happened accidentally. Being in a Gentleman's Library, Euclid's Elements lay open, and 'twas the 47 El. libri L. He read the Proposition. "By G—," sayd he (he would now and then sweare an emphaticall Oath by way of emphasis) "*this is impossible*." So he reads the demonstration of it, which referred him back to such a Proposition; which proposition he read. That referred him back to another, which he also read. *Et sic deinceps* that at last he was demonstratively convinced of that truth. This made him in love with Geometry.'

The key word here is 'demonstratively': for Hobbes shared fully, even pre-eminently, in the seventeenth-century passion for certainty. What he purported to show in *Leviathan* was a *demonstrative* understanding of the obligations that constitute a state. 'The skill of making, and maintaining commonwealths,' he tells us in Ch. XXI of *Leviathan*, 'consisteth in certain rules, as doth arithmetic and geometry; not, as tennis-play, on practice only: which rules, neither poor men have the leisure, nor men that had had the leisure, have hitherto had the

curiosity, or the method to find out.' And Hobbes was perfectly serious about this claim to be to politics what Euclid was to geometry. At the same time as he evolved from damp-footed humanist to self-confident seventeenth-century rationalist, Hobbes's health improved. With his good nature, his ruddy complexion, his abstemious habits (in regard to wine and women) his regular exercise and his growing reputation, Hobbes in his late maturity appeals to us as a happy figure, worried about little else but the irritation of flies in summer perching upon his bald head.

Certainly his notorious fearfulness did not worry him very much. It was, in many respects, a typical Hobbesian joke. As Aubrey put it: 'His extraordinary Timorousness Mr. Hobs doth very ingeniously confess and attributes it to the influence of his Mother's dread of the Spanish Invasion in 88, she being then with child of him.' 'Fear and I were twins', he claimed late in life; but then, he could never resist a good joke. He even carried this line into the *Leviathan* where, in arguing that subjects have a duty to fight for their sovereigns if commanded, he recommended an exception for 'certain men of feminine courage'. But in an age of trimming, it is difficult to consider as fundamentally fearful a man who sailed so close to the edge of perilous heterodoxy as Hobbes, and as Professor Goldsmith has pointed out, he was already four months old before the Armada was sighted off the coast of England. It is clear that this is but one example of one of Hobbes's most pervasive characteristics: his irony, especially his delight in mocking the expectations people had of him. Thus when Clarendon in Paris remonstrated with him over some doctrines in the *Leviathan*, Hobbes remarked, 'The truth is, I have a mind to go home', implying that his political arguments were no more than a way of making his peace with Cromwell. And when he gave a sixpence to a beggar, and a clergyman asked the notorious sceptic whether he would have done so without Christ's command, Hobbes replied: 'Because I was in paine to consider the miserable condition of the old man; and now my almes, giving him some reliefs, doth also ease me.' One of the themes of Hobbes's life was his love of good conversation. He lamented the absence of this amenity when he lived in the country, for (as Aubrey put it) 'Methinkes in the country, for want of good conversation, one's Witt growes mouldy'. His comment on the greatest philosopher of his age is essentially a piece of conversa-

tional levity: Descartes, he said, 'had he kept himself to Geometry he had been the best Geometer in the world but that his head did not lye for Philosophy'.

But this element of wit and levity in Hobbes should not blind us to the serious, indeed professional, way in which he and his contemporaries considered intellectual matters. The great advances of science at that time were associated with new and improved methods. The fact that these 'methods' were as various as the fact-collecting of Bacon and the deductive thought-spinning of Descartes did not greatly affect the advances made. Hobbes himself was one of these confident men of method. We have seen his love for geometry. This disposed him towards deductive procedures. But the detail of these procedures seems to have been acquired from the scientific school of Padua, whose most celebrated exponent was Galileo. The Paduan method is commonly referred to as 'resoluto-compositive'. It began with resolving the complicated situation to be explained into what were assumed to be its simple elements, and exploring these by imaginary thought-experiments. After such analysis the elements could then be 'composed' by logical steps, as the complexities of the real problem were successively restored. There are clearly affinities between this Paduan procedure and the systematic doubt espoused in Paris by Descartes. All of these methods are 'revolutionary' in the strict sense that they involve starting the whole business of understanding all over again. They reveal a quite new mood in intellectual history, one in which men for the first time rejected their intellectual heritage and began the work of understanding (as they thought) anew. Perhaps the best way of bringing out this point is to observe that the seventeenth century is pre-eminently the time when knowledge was conceived of as if it were a building; rationalist philosophy was the attempt to construct new foundations. Any such task of redevelopment involves a good deal of destruction, so that the site may be cleared. Hobbes joined with all the rest in gleefully clearing away the rubble: Aristotelian and scholastic metaphysics. The new division in philosophy was between those who put their faith in observation of the world, and those who sought to build the house of knowledge upon the solidities of reason: a division, that is, between empiricists and rationalists. This division came also to mark the boundary between those with opposed views of the scope of philosophy. Rationalists regarded philosophy as

the font of certainty, whilst the alternative view was classically expressed by Locke in the preface to the *Essay Concerning Human Understanding*: the philosopher was an underlabourer who could clear away some of the rubble that impeded the truly constructive work of scientists like Newton.

No such modesty impeded Hobbes. The structure he conceived of was deductive throughout, and extended from the metaphysical fundamentals by which the world was conceived entirely in terms of body and motion, to conclusions about the postulates of natural justice. The ambition resembled in scope that of the builders of the Italian Renaissance, who had pulled down old St Peters, the sepulchre of saints, in order to build Michelangelo's masterpiece upon the true principles of classical architecture. So far as political understanding, at least, was concerned, Hobbes was satisfied with his achievement, and declared that political science was no older than his own book *De Cive*, *Leviathan's* predecessor, which had been published nearly a decade earlier in 1642. Such a claim ought to provoke doubt in many of his readers, because the programme Hobbes set himself looks as if it is in principle impossible. For persons and things would seem to be different *kinds* of entity which require to be explained in different *kinds* of ways. We tend to understand material objects in terms of pushes and pulls, causes and effects, whereas human beings, since they have some element of understanding of their own behaviour, have generally been understood in terms of their purposes and intentions. The Aristotelian position was that understanding must adjust itself to the character of what it attends to; and this meant, for example, that the exactitude of geometrical propositions is out of place in construing moral events. Hobbes, by contrast, has but a single manner of understanding and he proposed to apply it to everything. He was thus an ancestor of the modern positivist enterprise which attempts to understand everything in scientific terms, and (in its extreme form) denies the title of understanding to anything else.

In pursuing this programme, Hobbes assumed that man was nothing else but a rather complicated kind of body, and could therefore be understood mechanistically (for there was, as we have seen, no other proper kind of understanding). 'For what is the *Heart*,' Hobbes asks of his reader in the Introduction to *Leviathan*, 'but a *Spring*; and the *Nerves*, but so many *Strings*; and the *Joynts*, but so many *Wheels*, giving motion to the

whole Body, such as was intended by the Artificer?' It might well be thought that an initial bias of this kind would condemn Hobbes to irredeemable crudity in his understanding of human life. For, remembering what a piece of work is man, how noble in reason, how infinite in faculties, how could so angelic a being be apprehended when thought to be nothing more than a complicated bit of mechanism? What place could be found for soul—or indeed for mind itself, condemned, it might seem, not merely to being a ghost in the machine, but a rather cowering ghost at that. Or, let us make a similar charge from another direction: given what anthropologists and historians have revealed to us of the remarkable diversities of action and belief found among men at different times and places, can we take seriously *anything* that purports to be an account of so protean a thing as 'human nature'? And this set of charges, which have very commonly been brought against Hobbes, become all the more serious when we remember that amongst his 'methods' we find Hobbes recommending (at the end of his Introduction to *Leviathan*) that of introspection, the manner of inquiry which would seem most likely to make a man a prisoner of his own cultural circumstances. The real force of these apparently lethal objections explains why it was until recently the fashion to be rather disdainful of Hobbes's account of the character of men.

The disdain is, however, not at all merited. For the knife of Hobbesian analysis cuts into its object at an angle which renders these objections beside the point. Hobbes has an intense interest in movement, and therefore presents us with an account of the mind as a cluster of *activities*: sensing, reasoning, remembering, imagining and so on. The account of human nature which would be vulnerable to much modern criticism would be that which has sometimes been used to justify the naturalness of some laws: to the effect that all human beings (unless perverted) share in certain revulsions, such as that against killing, or admirations, as for family life. These more traditional accounts of human nature attribute a consistent *content* to human mental experiences, and it is easy in historical terms to show that they rest upon a misunderstanding. But Hobbes in no way forecloses on the content of what men may do, say and think; he presents us instead with an account of what it is they are doing *whatever* they are thinking. He tells us that reasoning is the activity of adding and subtracting the

consequences of general names; but these names might concern anything under the sun. Imagining is recombining in the mind of sensations which we have at some earlier point actually experienced. The only limitation placed upon it is that what is constructed must depend upon the materials available for construction, a limit which is merely a logical application of the principle that nothing can come out of nothing. And the same thing applies as Hobbes goes on to describe each facet of mental life. He is consistent in presenting us with nothing more vulnerable to historical criticism than a conceptual elucidation of psychological terms.

The commonest manner of attributing crudity to Hobbes's psychology is to take the view that Hobbes believes men to be essentially selfish animals; but this is a mistake. The reasons why it is a mistake have recently been spelt out in detail by Professor Gert, but the mistake itself is easily shown. Being an individualist, Hobbes looks for the cause of any man's behaviour within the psychology of that man himself. The specific cause of an act is a desire, and a desire is always for some specific and direct object. It is thus not a psychological but a logical principle for Hobbes that 'of the voluntary acts of every man, the object is some good to himself'. This looks superficially like an attribution of selfishness until we remember how Hobbes defines 'good': 'whatsoever is the object of any man's Appetite or Desire; that is it, which he for his part calleth Good.' This model of explanation is, then, entirely formal. What Hobbes means, then, is that the cause of any man's actions must always be some desire of his own, but it need not be what a moralist would call a 'selfish' desire. Indeed, Hobbes includes amongst the desires possible to men, 'benevolence' which he defines as 'desire of good to another'. It is a mistake, then, to think that Hobbes attributed the desperate character of the human situation to universal selfishness—even though it is perfectly true that Hobbes, with his cynical temperament, does indeed believe that selfish motives are more prominent in men's behaviour than they pretend. But it is very important to distinguish his philosophy from his casual opinions.

It is because Hobbes maintains this clear and explicit concentration upon the activities of the mind that he rejects (in Ch. XI) the common philosophical view that there exists a *summum bonum* or ultimate human good which might constitute a criterion of ethical judgment. The reason is that to be

a human being is equated with the activities that make up the human mind: 'Nor can a man any more live, whose desires are at an end, than he, whose Senses and Imagination are at a stand.' Hence it is a mistake to make Hobbes any kind of utilitarian, for this would be to make Hobbes believe in a determinate content of the mind's aspiring. It is true that Hobbes talks of human felicity, and some have seen this as the object of men's desiring; but only through carelessness. 'Felicity,' Hobbes tells us (Ch. XI), 'is a continuall progresse of the desire, from one object to another; the attaining of the former, being still but the way to the later.' Felicity then is what happens when men keep on attaining whatever they pursue, but cannot itself be an object of pursuit (unless it be Felicity the girl next door). If we keep these considerations in mind we shall not be misled by some of Hobbes's mechanistic metaphors into thinking that he conceives of man as a robot. His account of human behaviour is more subtle than it looks at first glance.

Whoever opens the first few pages of *Leviathan* will quickly recognize the breathless celerity with which the author takes him through the various attributes of man and the forms of his knowledge. The compression follows from the fact that Hobbes is here merely summarizing the foundation of his grand scheme of philosophy, which extends from the fundamental principles of understanding, to the elaboration of the connection between the logic of understanding on the one hand, and a conception of the world as nothing else but body and motion on the other. The work of resolution in the Paduan method has, in other words, been completed, and is largely taken for granted in *Leviathan*. The site has been cleared and what we are being offered is the spectacle of intellectual construction. And as he builds Hobbes is eager to arrive at the state of nature which will be the ground plan of the larger political structure. What is this state of nature? Part of the answer is that it is one of the standard conventions of seventeenth-century political argument. In a world where political dispute was often rendered fruitless by the abundance of mutually contradictory biblical texts, disputants of a philosophical temperament had tried to clinch their arguments by resting their case upon an analysis of the fundamentals of human nature, and then by imagining human life as it might have been in more primitive times before men had invented the institution of government. In other words, the philosophical question, 'what is the rationality of

the institution of government?' had been transposed into: 'given a collection of men without government, how might we imagine that they would rationally have decided to construct such a thing?' As the state of nature was actually described in countless political writings of the century, it referred to a rather scattered agricultural existence lived out in the green temperate zone, based partly upon what explorers had discovered in North America, and partly upon an adaptation of pastoral literature found in classical writings and contemporary painting. The convention of pastoral was suitable because it omitted soldiers, kings, an executioner, a tax collector, a judge, or any other of the more conspicuous officers of civil society. Since most of the writers who employed the state of nature went on to argue for the necessity of government, they had also to explain why it was that men left such agreeable surroundings. The usual kind of argument was to point to men's proclivity for violence and self-aggrandisement, and to argue that unless political institutions were created to moderate these tendencies men would be limited to the primitive existence of savages. But they sought to moderate this picture, because too much emphasis upon the unpleasantness of the state of nature might make more tolerable the iniquities of rulers. They sought to argue (as Milton put it in his 'Leisure of Kings and Magistrates') that 'if the king or magistrate proved unfaithful to his trust, the people would be disengaged'. Locke's *Second Treatise*, published in 1689, was to present this type of argument in its classic form.

To the extent that it rests upon the analogy of contract, the argument has, of course, one significant element of unreality: for in any actual contract there is always a third party (the state itself) to whom the aggrieved party can appeal for an impartial judgment. But in a supposed contract between government and people there is no appeal—except perhaps to the judgment of providence by way of victory in civil war. The English Puritans did indeed interpret their success in the Civil War as God's pronouncement upon the justice of their cause. But simplifications of this kind were not available to any philosophical writer using these materials. Anyone writing at this higher level had to find some ingenious twist which would allow him to overcome the problem, but none of them transformed the available materials with quite the brutal lucidity we find in Hobbes.

For in Hobbes, the state of nature is not merely a conventional property of political argument but also a thought-experiment in the Paduan tradition. It is directly deduced from the account of human nature already elaborated, and derives from the fact that each human being is to himself an independent world living in circumstances of radical uncertainty, particularly uncertainty about the attitudes and intentions of other human beings. The way such an entity comprehends himself is by taking note of contrasts: if he has long been hungry bread and water will satisfy him as no banquet can when he has long been sated. In relation to other men the element of contrast becomes a process of learning by comparison. Seeing other men uttering words he will understand himself as a man amongst others. Finding he looks down on most of them he will distinguish himself as tall and them as short; finding he utters many words to their one he will contrast his loquacity with their taciturnity. But in general these comparative understandings will result not from pure curiosity but from what Hobbes discovers to be the most pleasurable emotion men can experience, that of feeling superior to other men. A feeling of inferiority is, correspondingly, one of the most unpleasant of sensations. Feeling superior is a passion Hobbes calls 'glorying', and it is so pleasant that men who do not get enough of it will often indulge in fancied superiorities, which Hobbes called 'vainglorying'. Here then, deduced from the very nature of man, is a description of that feature of human behaviour which Christians had called Pride, and attributed to the Fall of Man, and had tried to correct by enjoining humility upon the faithful. It is this feature of his doctrine which links Hobbes with one important part of the Christian tradition, particularly as represented by St Augustine.

Social life is, then, a matter of proud men jostling each other. And on this score, Hobbes thinks himself to be describing the inescapable human condition rather than just the state of nature, for he is very much aware of the fact that while men enjoy social life, they pay for it by the pain of many small inferiorities. But in the state of nature the pains of feeling inferior have the additional hazard of becoming direct threats to life and liberty. For in so primitive and niggardly a condition of life, men find themselves competing for the scarce necessities of life; and because men are both proud and insecure, there is no point at which they are likely to sit back in the full

confidence of having adequate provision. Desire grows from the appetite it feeds upon, and even those who might temperamentally be inclined to satisfaction at a modest level are forced to compete with the rest in order to retain what they already have. The scarcity that really interests Hobbes is not simply that of material resources, which is the main preoccupation of the science of economics, but rather that of things limited by the force of human evaluation: the best watered land, the finest promontory, the prettiest girl in the village, or the possession of power. These are the scarcities made by pride rather than by need.

Even these powerful considerations do not exhaust the causes of misery in the state of nature. For Hobbes diagnoses a further cause of insecurity in something he calls Diffidence. In the seventeenth century this word signified not, as now, mere shyness or timidity, but quite literally a lack of trust. Diffidence arises from the fact that men are equal in their vulnerability, fundamentally ignorant of the purposes of their fellows, and in competition with one another: 'and 'there is no way for any man to secure himself, so reasonable, as anticipation; that is, by force, or wiles, to master the persons of all men he can, so long, till he sees no other power great enough to endanger him'. Fearing danger from a neighbour, then, a man may anticipate by striking first; whilst his neighbour, himself fearing danger or perhaps a first strike, will himself seek to remove the danger by quick action, and so on. And although this kind of behaviour may be tolerable in international relations (where it is known as the doctrine of the preventive strike) it is, for the vulnerable inhabitant of the state of nature, a matter of constant fear of violent death.

Such is the state of nature which Hobbes deduced from his first premises. In such a state human beings may co-operate only in the briefest and most precarious way, and the sheer desperation of life prevents men from acquiring any of the advantages of an advanced culture, particularly those advantages which he lists so dramatically in Ch. XIII as including instruments of navigation, arts, letters, commodious buildings and so on. This is the passage in which he thrusts home his point by describing the state of nature as a state of war, and the life of man 'solitary, poore, nasty, brutish and short'.

It is with the state of nature as with Hobbes's account of human psychology: many readers have dismissed it as an over-