

Cambridge University Press

978-0-521-43780-6 - Thomas Hobbes: On the Citizen

Edited and Translated by Richard Tuck and Michael Silverthorne

Excerpt

[More information](#)

Liberty

Cambridge University Press

978-0-521-43780-6 - Thomas Hobbes: On the Citizen

Edited and Translated by Richard Tuck and Michael Silverthorne

Excerpt

[More information](#)

Cambridge University Press

978-0-521-43780-6 - Thomas Hobbes: On the Citizen

Edited and Translated by Richard Tuck and Michael Silverthorne

Excerpt

[More information](#)

Chapter I

On the state of man without civil society

1. Introduction. 2. The beginning of civil society is from mutual fear. 3. Men are by nature equal with each other. 4. Where the will to do each other harm arises. 5. Discord from comparison of talents. 6. And from more than one man's wanting the same thing. 7. Definition of right. 8. A right to an end gives a right to the necessary means. 9. By natural right each man is judge of the means to his self-preservation. 10. By natural right all things belong to all men. 11. A right of all men to all things is useless. 12. The state of men outside Society is war. The definitions of War & Peace. 13. War is incompatible with men's preservation. 14. By natural right, one may Compel anyone who is in one's power to give a guarantee of future obedience. 15. Nature dictates that peace is to be sought.

1. The faculties of human nature may be reduced to four kinds: Physical force, Experience, Reason, Passion.¹ They are the starting point of the doctrine which follows. We shall first describe the attitude men have towards each other, being endowed with these faculties; and ask whether they are born fit [*apti nati*] for society and for preserving themselves from each other's violence, and which faculty makes them so. We shall go on from there to explain the policy which they had inevitably to adopt for that purpose, and to lay out the conditions of society and Peace among men, which are simply the fundamental *laws of nature* under another name.

2. The majority of previous writers on public Affairs either assume or seek to prove or simply assert that Man

The title in the first edition is 'The Elements of Philosophy, Section Three, On the Citizen'. A complete account of variant readings between the first (1642) and second (1647) editions may be found in the critical apparatus in Warrender (1983).

¹ The 1642 edition begins: 'In the previous section the whole of human nature has been described, comprising the faculties of both body and mind; they may all be reduced to four *kinds*; which are, Physical force, Experience, Reason and Passion. We shall begin the present section with a consideration of the human condition, namely, what attitude men have towards each other, being gifted with these natural endowments. And whether . . .'. See the introduction, pp. xiii–xiv.

Cambridge University Press

978-0-521-43780-6 - Thomas Hobbes: On the Citizen

Edited and Translated by Richard Tuck and Michael Silverthorne

Excerpt

[More information](#)*Liberty*

is an animal (*) born fit for Society, – in the Greek phrase, Ζῶον πολιτικόν.² On this foundation they erect a structure of civil doctrine, as if no more were necessary for the preservation of peace and the governance of the whole human race than for men to give their consent to certain agreements and conditions which, without further thought, these writers call laws. This Axiom, though very widely accepted, is nevertheless false; the error proceeds from a superficial view of human nature. Closer observation of the causes why men seek each other's company and enjoy associating with each other, will easily reach the conclusion that it does not happen because by nature it could not be otherwise, but by chance. For if man naturally loved his fellow man, loved him, I mean, as his fellow man, there is no reason why everyone would not love everyone equally as equally men; or why every man would rather seek the company of men whose society is more prestigious and useful to him than to others. By nature, then, we are not looking for friends but for honour or advantage [*commodum*] from them. This is what we are primarily after; friends are secondary. Men's purpose in seeking each other's company may be inferred from what they do once they meet. If they meet to do business, everyone is looking for profit not for friendship. If the reason is public affairs, a kind of political relationship develops, which holds more mutual fear than love; it is sometimes the occasion of faction, but never of goodwill. If they meet for entertainment and fun, everyone usually takes most pleasure in the kind of amusing incident from which (such is the nature of the ridiculous) he may come away with a better idea of himself in comparison with someone else's embarrassment or weakness. Even if this is sometimes harmless and inoffensive, it is still evident that what they primarily enjoy is their own glory [*gloria*] and not society. But the more usual thing in this social kind of gathering is that people who are not there are attacked, their words and actions, their whole

² Aristotle, *Politics*, I.2, 1253a3.

Cambridge University Press

978-0-521-43780-6 - Thomas Hobbes: On the Citizen

Edited and Translated by Richard Tuck and Michael Silverthorne

Excerpt

[More information](#)*Man without civil society*

manner of life, is scrutinized, judged, condemned and exposed to witty scorn; people who are there and talking with the others are not spared the same treatment as soon as they leave, so that it was a good policy that someone had to be always the last to make his exit. These are the true delights of society; we are drawn to them by nature, that is, by the passions innate in every animal, until as a result of bad experience or good advice one finally finds (though some people never do) that one's appetite for present pleasures is spoiled by memories of the past; and without these delights the most eloquent talkers on these topics are dull and dry. And if people happen to be sitting around swapping stories, and someone produces one about himself, every one of the others also talks very eagerly about himself; if one of them says something sensational, the others bring out sensations too, if they have any; if not, they make them up. To speak finally of those who profess to have more wisdom than other men, the Philosophers: at their gatherings everyone lectures everyone else, in fact everyone wants to be thought a Master; otherwise not only do they fail, like other men, to love their companions, they actively pursue their resentments against them. So clear is it from experience to anyone who gives any serious attention to human behaviour, that every voluntary encounter is a product either of mutual need or of the pursuit of glory; hence when people meet, what they are anxious to get is either an advantage for themselves or what is called εὐδοκιμεῖν, which is reputation and honour among their companions. Reason reaches the same conclusions from the actual definitions of *Will*, *Good*, *Honour* and *Interest* [*Utilis*]. For since a society is a voluntary arrangement, what is sought in every society is an Object of will, i.e. something which seems to each one of the members to be Good for himself. Whatever seems Good is pleasant, and affects either the organs (of the body) or the mind. Every pleasure of the mind is either glory (or a good opinion of oneself), or ultimately relates to glory; the others are sensual or lead to something sensual, and can all be comprised under the

Cambridge University Press

978-0-521-43780-6 - Thomas Hobbes: On the Citizen

Edited and Translated by Richard Tuck and Michael Silverthorne

Excerpt

[More information](#)*Liberty*

name of advantages. All society, therefore, exists for the sake either of advantage or of glory, i.e. it is a product of love of self, not of love of friends. However, no large or lasting society can be based upon the passion for glory. The reason is that glorying, like honour, is nothing if everybody has it, since it consists in comparison and pre-eminence; nor does association [*societas*]³ with others increase one's reason for glorying in oneself, since a man is worth as much as he can do without relying on anyone else. It is true that the advantages of this life can be increased with other people's help. But this is much more effectively achieved by Dominion over others than by their help. Hence no one should doubt that, in the absence of fear, men would be more avidly attracted to domination than to society. One must therefore lay it down that the origin of large and lasting societies lay not in mutual human benevolence but in men's mutual fear (*).

Born fit] *Since we see that men have in fact formed societies, that no one lives outside society, and that all men seek to meet and talk with each other, it may seem a piece of weird foolishness to set a stumbling block in front of the reader on the very threshold of civil doctrine, by insisting that man is not born fit for society. Something must be said in explanation. It is indeed true that perpetual solitude is hard for a man to bear by nature or as a man, i.e. as soon as he is born. For infants need the help of others to live, and adults to live well. I am not therefore denying that we seek each other's company at the prompting of nature. But civil Societies are not mere gatherings; they are Alliances [Foedera], which essentially require good faith and agreement for their making. Infants and the uninstructed are ignorant of their Force, and those who do not know what would be lost by the absence of Society are unaware of their usefulness. Hence the former cannot enter Society because they do not know what it is,*

³ *Societas* is normally translated 'society'. Where 'association' seems more appropriate, the Latin word is given in parentheses.

Cambridge University Press

978-0-521-43780-6 - Thomas Hobbes: On the Citizen

Edited and Translated by Richard Tuck and Michael Silverthorne

Excerpt

[More information](#)*Man without civil society*

and the latter do not care to because they do not know the good it does. It is evident therefore that all men (since all men are born as infants) are born unfit for society; and very many (perhaps the majority) remain so throughout their lives, because of mental illness or lack of training [disciplina]. Yet as infants and as adults they do have a human nature. Therefore man is made fit for Society not by nature, but by training. Furthermore, even if man were born in a condition to desire society, it does not follow that he was born suitably equipped to enter society. Wanting is one thing, ability another. For even those who arrogantly reject the equal conditions without which society is not possible, still want it.

In men's mutual fear] *The following objection is made: it is not true that men could combine into society through mutual fear; to the contrary, if they had been so afraid of each other, they could not even have borne the sight of each other. The objectors believe, I think, that fearing is nothing but being actually frightened. But I mean by that word any anticipation of future evil. In my view, not only flight, but also distrust, suspicion, precaution and provision against fear are all characteristic of men who are afraid. On going to bed, men lock their doors; when going on a journey, they arm themselves because they are afraid of robbers. Countries guard their frontiers with fortresses, their cities with walls, through fear of neighbouring countries. Even the strongest armies, fully ready for battle, open negotiations from time to time about peace, because they fear each other's forces and the risk of being beaten. Men take precautions because they are afraid – by running away and hiding if they see no alternative but most often by using arms and instruments of defence; the result is that when they do risk an advance, each tries to probe the other's mind. And then if they do fight, a commonwealth comes into being as the result of victory; and if they make an agreement, a commonwealth comes into being through an accord.*

3. The cause of men's fear of each other lies partly in their natural equality, partly in their willingness to hurt

Cambridge University Press

978-0-521-43780-6 - Thomas Hobbes: On the Citizen

Edited and Translated by Richard Tuck and Michael Silverthorne

Excerpt

[More information](#)

Liberty

each other. Hence we cannot expect security from others or assure it to ourselves. Look at a full-grown man and see how fragile is the structure of his human body (and if it fails, all his force, strength and Wisdom fail with it); see how easy it is for even the weakest individual to kill someone stronger than himself. Whatever confidence you have in your own strength, you simply cannot believe that you have been made superior to others by nature. Those who have equal power against each other, are equal; and those who have the greatest power, the power to kill, in fact have equal power. Therefore all men are equal to each other by nature. Our actual inequality has been introduced by civil law.

4. In the state of nature there is in all men a will to do harm, but not for the same reason or with equal culpability. One man practises the equality of nature, and allows others everything which he allows himself; this is the mark of a modest man, one who has a true estimate of his own capacities. Another, supposing himself superior to others, wants to be allowed everything, and demands more honour for himself than others have; that is the sign of an aggressive character. In his case, the will to do harm derives from vainglory [*inanis gloria*] and over-valuation of his own strength. For the first man, it derives from the need to defend his property and liberty against the other.

5. Intellectual dissension too is extremely serious; that kind of strife inevitably causes the worst conflicts. For even apart from open contention, the mere act of disagreement is offensive. Not to agree with someone on an issue is tacitly to accuse him of error on the issue, just as to dissent from him in a large number of points is tantamount to calling him a fool; and this is apparent in the fact that the bitterest wars are those between different sects of the same religion and different factions in the same country [*respublica*], when they clash over doctrines or public policy. And since all the heart's joy and pleasure lies in being able to compare oneself favourably with others and form a high opinion of oneself, men cannot

Cambridge University Press

978-0-521-43780-6 - Thomas Hobbes: On the Citizen

Edited and Translated by Richard Tuck and Michael Silverthorne

Excerpt

[More information](#)

Man without civil society

avoid sometimes showing hatred and contempt for each other, by laughter or words or a gesture or other sign. There is nothing more offensive than this, nothing that triggers a stronger impulse to hurt someone.

6. But the most frequent cause why men want to hurt each other arises when many want the same thing at the same time, without being able to enjoy it in common or to divide it. The consequence is that it must go to the stronger. But who is the stronger? Fighting must decide.

7. Amid so many dangers therefore from men's natural cupidity, that threaten every man every day, we cannot be blamed for looking out for ourselves; we cannot will to do otherwise. For each man is drawn to desire that which is Good for him and to Avoid what is bad for him, and most of all the greatest of natural evils, which is death; this happens by a real necessity of nature as powerful as that by which a stone falls downward. It is not therefore absurd, nor reprehensible, nor contrary to right reason, if one makes every effort to defend his body and limbs from death and to preserve them. And what is not contrary to right reason, all agree is done justly and *of Right*. For precisely what is meant by the term *Right* is the liberty each man has of using his natural faculties in accordance with right reason. Therefore the first foundation of natural *Right* is that *each man protect his life and limbs as much as he can*.

8. But a *right* to an end is meaningless, if the *right* to the means necessary to that end is denied; it follows that since each man has the *right* of self-preservation, he has also the *right to use any means and to do any action by which he can preserve himself*.

9. By natural law *one is oneself the judge* whether the means he is to use and the action he intends to take are necessary to the preservation of his life and limbs or not. For if it were contrary to right reason that I should be my own judge of my danger, someone else would judge it; since someone else is judging a matter that concerns me, then on the same grounds that we are equal by nature, I will be judge of what concerns him. Therefore

Cambridge University Press

978-0-521-43780-6 - Thomas Hobbes: On the Citizen

Edited and Translated by Richard Tuck and Michael Silverthorne

Excerpt

[More information](#)*Liberty*

it is a requirement of right reason, i.e. of natural right, that I make a judgement whether his view of the matter is helpful to my preservation or not.

10. Nature has given *each man a right to all things*. That is, in the pure natural state (*), or before men bound themselves by any agreements with each other, every man was permitted to do anything to anybody, and to possess, use and enjoy whatever he wanted and could get. The argument is as follows: whatever anyone wants seems good to him precisely because he wants it, and it may either contribute to his preservation or at least seem to do so (and in the last article we made him the judge of whether it really does so or not, so that whatever he judges necessary is to be deemed to be so). By article 7 also, things are done *by right of nature*, and are held to be so done, if they necessarily contribute to the protection of life and limb. It follows that all men are permitted to have and to do all things in the state of nature. And this is what is meant by the common saying, *Nature has given all things to all men*. This is also the basis of the conclusion that in the state of nature the Measure of right [*ius*] is Interest [*Utilitas*].

In the pure natural state, etc.] *This must be understood as meaning that nothing that one does in a purely natural state is a wrong against anyone, at least against any man. Not that it is impossible in such a state to sin against God or to violate the Natural Laws. For injustice against men presupposes Human Laws, and there are none in the natural state. The attentive reader will notice that the truth of the proposition so understood has been demonstrated in the last few articles. But because in certain cases the harshness of the conclusion expels the memory of the premises, I will compress the argument and enable it to be taken in at a glance. Each man has a right of self-preservation (by article 7), therefore he also has the right to use every means necessary to that end (by article 8). The necessary means are those that he shall judge to be so himself (by article 9). He therefore has the right to do and to possess everything that he shall judge to be*