

primarysourcedocument

Leviathan

Leviathan

Excerpts from *Leviathan*

By Thomas Hobbes

[Hobbes, Thomas. *Leviathan*. 1651. Translated from Latin into English by Thomas Hobbes. 1668. Edited by Edwin Curley. Indianapolis, Ind.: Hackett Publishing Co. 1994.]

I, ch. 13.1-2: Nature hath made men so equal in the faculties of body and mind as that ... 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 strength of body, the weakest has strength enough to kill the strongest. ... And as to the faculties of the mind ... I find yet a greater equality amongst men than that of strength.

I, ch. 14.1-3: The Right of Nature, which writers commonly call *jus naturale*, is the liberty each man hath to use his own power ... for the preservation of his own nature, that is to say, his own life. ... The Law of Nature (*lex naturalis*) is a precept or general rule found out by reason by which a man is forbidden to do that which is destructive of his life or taketh away the means of preserving the same. ... [So] Right consisteth in liberty to do or to forbear, whereas Law determineth and bindeth to one of them, so that law and right differ as much as obligation and liberty.

I, ch. 14.4: The first and fundamental law of nature ... is *to seek peace, and to follow it*, ... the sum of the right of nature, which is *by all means we can to defend ourselves*. (Hobbes's emphasis)

I, ch. 14.5: From this fundamental law of nature, by which men are commanded to endeavor peace, is derived the second law: *that a man be willing, when others are so too, as far-forth as for peace and defence of himself he shall think necessary, to lay down his right to all things, and be contented with so much liberty against other men, as he would allow other men against himself*. (Hobbes's emphasis).

I, ch. 14.8: And therefore there be some rights which no man can be understood by any words or signs to have abandoned or transferred. As, first, a man cannot lay down the right of resisting them that assault him by force, to take away his life, because he cannot be understood to aim thereby at any good to himself.

II, ch. 17.1-2: The final cause, end, or design of men (who naturally love liberty and dominion over others) in the introduction of that restraint upon themselves in which we see them live in commonwealths is foresight of their own preservation, and of a more contented life thereby; that is to say, of getting themselves out from that miserable condition of war which is necessarily consequent to

Leviathan

Published on Natural Law, Natural Rights, and American Constitutionalism (<https://nlprac.org>)

the natural passions of men, when there is no visible power to keep them in awe. ... For the laws of nature (as *justice, equity, modesty, mercy*, and in sum *doing to others as we would be done to*) of themselves, without the terror of some power to cause them to be observed, are contrary to our natural passions, that carry us to partiality, pride, revenge, and the like. And covenants without the sword are but words, and of no strength to secure a man at all. Therefore notwithstanding the laws of nature, ... 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. (Hobbes's emphasis)

Original Author Sort: Hobbes, Thomas

Publication Date: 11651

Topic: [The Early Modern Liberal Roots of Natural Law](#)

Subtopic: [Thomas Hobbes](#)

Source URL: <https://nlprac.org/earlymodern/hobbes/documents/leviathan>