Leviathan

Chapter XIII: Of the Natural Condition of Mankind as Concerning Their Felicity and Misery

By Thomas Hobbes (1588-1679)

Nature has made me so equal in the faculties of body and mind that though one man may be stronger of body or quicker of mind than another, the difference between men is not so considerable that it cannot be made up through some means. The weakest has strength enough to kill the strongest, either by secret conspiracy or by joining forces with others. As to the faculties of the mind, I find yet a greater equality among men than that of strength. Common sense comes from experience, which in time equally rewards all men. It is the vanity of one’s own wisdom, which makes men believe there are none so wise as themselves.

From this equal ability comes an equal hope of getting what we want. Therefore if any two men desire that same thing, which only one can have, they become enemies and endeavor to destroy of subdue one another. An invader who fears only the power of another single man will band together with others to take from the one not only his possessions, but also his life or liberty. And in turn, the invader may expect the same again.

Distrust causes every man to live I fear of another and no man’s strength or intelligence can ensure security over all other men. Men have no pleasure---on the contrary, much grief---in living together when there is no power to keep them all in check. Without this common power, every man is at war with every man. This state of war is not only battle, or the act of fighting, but a period of time when there is a common willingness to fight. In such a condition there s no industry because realizing its products become uncertain---no cultivation of the earth, no commerce by is worst of all, continual ear, and danger of violent death. The life of man would be solitary, poor, nasty, brutish, and short.

If there is he who doubts that nature has and men apt to invade and destroy on another, consider of his own experience; when sleeping, he locks his doors; when in his own house, he locks his chest---and he does this when he knows there are laws and public officers to revenge all does injuries. Does he not there as much accuse mankind by his actions as I do by my words?

It may be that there never was such a time and condition of war as this over the entire world---and I believe it never was generally so, but there are many places where they live so now. Moreover, it can be perceived what life would be like when there is no common power to fear by examining the life of men that have formerly lived under a peaceful government that has degenerated into civil war. And through all time, independent kings and sovereign states, continually jealous, adopt the state and posture of gladiators, their weapons, pointing, their eyes fixed on one another---their forts, garrisons, and guns upon the frontiers of their kingdoms, and continual spies upon their neighbors, all in a posture of war. And so is the condition man finds himself in a state of nature.