

## **Hobbes: Security Lies in the Concentration of Power would be contractually handed into the hands of one Man with no strings attached**

Thomas Hobbes employed the social contract perspective to argue for unlimited sovereignty that defenders of the monarchy argued for on the grounds of tradition & divine right. Underlying Leviathan is particular theory of human nature: Humans beings are complex causal mechanisms, motivated exclusively by self-interest, never by impersonal moral principle. Consequently, the state of nature (i.e., conditions in the world prior to the institution of govt.) is an amoral condition in which all attempt to satisfy their purely selfish appetites. Alas, however, the realities of limited resources make this impossible and human beings come into conflict. The result is a jungle-like existence that is, in Hobbes famous words, *“solitary, poor, brutish and short.”* Given the fact that humans are equal enough in strength, mental shrewdness, and vulnerability to render the negligible strengths of others, everyone is dissatisfied with this state of affairs. Wanting above all else the security & freedom from fear that is impossible in a state of nature, humans desperately seek an alternative to their miserable state of existence. Since they are fortunately rational as well as selfish, humans realize that peace with their fellows is necessary for insecurity of the state of nature that prompts us to accept the civilizing coercion of external govt. The insecurity of the state of nature can be eliminated only when humans submit to absolute & undivided govt. power. If humans were trustworthy, a mutual promise to refrain from violence would suffice to provide security which humans desire to obtain. But given their amoral nature, *“covenants, without the sword, are but words, and of no strength to secure man at all.”* Given total selfishness of humans, matters must be so arranged that it will never be to anyone’s advantage to break his promise. This is possible only if there is an absolute & unlimited govt. to enforce promise. Anything less invites anarchy. Thus, sovereignty is unlimited & undivided. Having consented (or having agreed that it would be rational to so consent) to absolute sovereignty, citizens can justifiably revolt only when the sovereign can no longer protect their lives & physical security. Tyranny of a govt. that assures its citizens physical protection is less obnoxious than tyranny of the amoral law of the jungle & its resultant monarchy.

## **Locke: Govt. depends on the consent of the governed.**

John Locke saw humans as motivated by feelings of benevolence & empathy as well as self-interest; people have the capacity to renounce their selfish interests for the demands of an objective morality that could be used as a standard for judging the legitimacy of the actual laws of a society. Commitment to natural law tradition which saw all existing laws as subject to appraisal by an objective & self-evident code of morality that is inherent in rational fabric of universe. Human beings are God’s property. Because of this, no human being can rightfully have complete control over another human being, who has such natural rights as the rights to life, liberty, & property. It is these natural rights which provide God’s ordained limits to the power of any govt. over its subjects. Locke built his philosophy upon foundations of his conception of humans’ state of nature. Locke recognizes (1) their right to life, ownership of goods “mixed with labor”; (3) God-given right to punish transgressors of natural law. In fact, there are 2 distinct rights: (a) *“The one of punishing the crime, for restraint and preventing the like offense, which right of punishing is in everybody; [b] the other of taking reparation, which belongs only to the injured party.”* While painting a more optimistic picture of state of nature than Hobbes, Locke too saw such a state as one that rational people would find less desirable than the institution of govt. authority for protecting life & property, & punishing transgression of natural law. This is so because in a state of nature, there is no uniform & impartial administration of natural law & often inadequate force for punishing its transgressors. In order to remedy the inadequacies of the state of nature, a government is required to lay down uniform and specific laws which follow from the laws of nature, to interpret & administer these laws, & to enforce them. In essence, a legislature, judiciary, & executive are required. Realizing the need for these govt. functions, humans in a state of nature would find it reasonable to delegate their own natural right of enforcing the natural law to some centralized govt. as long as no single branch of govt. is given absolute power, for absolute power. Absolute power is an invitation to tyranny. *Interestingly, natural rights, not utility or self-realization, were taking as the primary starting point for moral reasoning by both Locke & Hobbes. While natural rights plays a central role in Kantian ethics, Kant’s view of morality is much broader in scope than found in modern natural rights theory.*

Differences: Hobbes: People are motivated exclusively by their purely selfish machines (complex causal mechanisms) & never be impersonal moral principle. Locke: Humans are motivated by feelings of benevolence & empathy as well as by self-interest. People have the capacity to renounce selfish interests for the demands of an objective morality that could be used as a standard for judging the legitimacy of the actual laws of a society.

(2) While Locke & Hobbes starting point of political philosophy is individual moral & political thinking, Locke’s natural man recognizes the more legitimacy of the natural rights of others people because of natural law. Hobbes humans are by nature competitive & war-like in a state where there is no artificial, human-made conventions exist. Since what people fear most is death & misery caused by material want & powerlessness, & because wealth & power are scarce resources, people-whose desire for security is unlimited, will naturally fight with one another to get as much wealth & power as they can.

(3) Locke ridiculed Hobbes’ contention that individual security requires absolute power. Rather, Locke believed in majority rule and saw contractual surrender of individual authority to centralized govt. as a two-step procedure: (a) there is the commitment to abide by will of majority; (b) specific features & relative powers of various branches of govt. are decided upon by will of majority. Insisting only on govt. *“checks & balances”* & separation of powers, Locke did not think it essential that the majority choose a specific form of govt. Locke was not in principle the power to make law into hands of one or a few, but preferred dual legislatures, consisting of *“hereditary nobility,” “assembly of representatives chosen pro tempore by people”* & single hereditary person having constant, supreme executive power.

Natural Law Theory & Virtue ethics assume that humans naturally strive to reach a state of peace & contentment, unfettered by material things. Hobbes assumes the opposite because we can never have enough security, we’re constantly striving for more wealth & power. In Greek & Thomistic thought natural law theory was perceived as derivable from some general concept of human nature. With the advent of individualistic moral & political thinking with Hobbes & Locke, the notion of natural rights took on an individualistic character detached from a comprehensive theory of the good life.