

Excerpt from *Leviathan*

By Thomas Hobbes (1588-1679)

Of Man, Being the First Part of *Leviathan*.

Chapter XI

Of the Difference of Manners

By manners I mean not here decency of behaviour, as how one man should salute another, or how a man should wash his mouth, or pick his teeth before company, and such other points of the 'small morals'; but those qualities of mankind that concern their living together in peace and unity. To which end we are to consider that the felicity of this life consisteth not in the repose of a mind satisfied. For there is no such *finis ultimus* (utmost aim), nor *summum bonum* (greatest good), as is spoken of in the books of the old moral philosophers. Nor can a man any more live whose desires are at an end than he whose senses and imaginations are at a stand. Felicity is a continual progress of the desire from one object to another, the attaining of the former being still but the way to the latter. The cause whereof is that the object of man's desire is not to enjoy once only and for one instant of time, but to assure for ever the way of his future desire. And therefore the voluntary actions and inclinations of all men tend not only to the procuring, but also to the assuring, of a contented life, and differ only in the way; which ariseth partly from the diversity of passions in divers men, and partly from the difference of the knowledge or opinion each one has of the causes him produce the effect desired. 1

So that in the first place I put for a general inclination of all mankind a perpetual and restless desire of power after power, that ceaseth only in death. And the cause of this is not always that a man hopes for a more intensive delight than he has already attained to, or that he cannot be content with a moderate power; but because he cannot assure the power and means to live well which he hath present, without the acquisition of more. And from hence it is that kings, whose power is greatest, turn their endeavours to the assuring it at home by laws or abroad by wars; and, when that is done, there succeedeth a new desire, in some of fame from new conquest, in others of ease and sensual pleasure, in others of admiration or being flattered for excellence in some art or other ability of the mind. 2

Competition of riches, honour, command, or other power, inclineth to contention, enmity, and war; because the way of one competitor, to the attaining of his desire, is to kill, subdue, supplant, or repel the other.

Particularly, competition of praise inclineth to a reverence of antiquity. For men contend with the living, not with the dead, to these ascribing more than due, that they may obscure the glory of the other. 3

Desire of ease, and sensual delight, disposeth men to obey a common power, because by such desires a man doth abandon the protection that might be hoped for from his own industry and labour. Fear of death, and wounds, disposeth to the same, and for the same reason. On the contrary, needy men, and hardy, not contented with their present condition, as also all men that are ambitious of military command, are inclined to continue the cause of war, and to stir up trouble and sedition, for there is no honour military but by war, nor any such hope to mend an ill game as by causing a new shuffle. 4

Desire of knowledge, and arts of peace, inclineth men to obey a common power; for such desire, containeth a desire of leisure, and consequently protection from some other power than their own. 5

Desire of praise disposeth to laudable actions, such as please them whose judgment they value; for, of those men whom we condemn, we condemn also the praises. Desire of fame after death does the same. And though after death there be no sense of the praise given us on earth, as being joys that are either swallowed up in the unspeakable joys of Heaven or extinguished in the extreme torments of hell, yet is not such fame vain; because men have a present delight therein, from the foresight of it, and of the benefit that may redound thereby to their posterity, which, though they now see not, yet they imagine; and anything that is pleasure in the sense, the same also is pleasure in the imagination. 6

To have received from one to whom we think ourselves equal greater benefits than there is hope to requite disposeth to counterfeit love, but really secret hatred; and puts a man into the estate of a desperate debtor that, in declining the sight of his creditor, tacitly wishes him there where he might never see him more. For benefits oblige, and obligation is thralldom, and unrequitable obligation perpetual thralldom, which is to one's equal, hateful. But to have received benefits from one whom we acknowledge for superior inclines to love; because the obligation is no new depression: and cheerful acceptation which men call 'gratitude,' is such an honour done to the obliger as is taken generally for retribution. Also to receive benefits, though from an equal or inferior, as long as there is hope or requital, disposeth to love; for, in the intention of the receiver, the obligation is of aid and service mutual, from whence proceedeth an emulation of who shall exceed in benefiting, the most noble and profitable contention possible,

wherein the victor is pleased with his victory, and the other revenged by confessing it. 7

To have done more hurt to a man than he can or is willing to expiate inclineth the doer to hate the sufferer. For he must expect revenge or forgiveness, both which are hateful. 8

Fear of oppression disposeth a man to anticipate or to seek aid by society; for there is no other way by which a man can secure his life and liberty. 9

Men that distrust their own subtilty are, in tumult and sedition, better disposed for victory than they that suppose themselves wise or crafty. For these love to consult the other, fearing to be circumvented, to strike, first. And in sedition, men being always in the precincts of battle, to hold together and use all advantages of force is a better stratagem than any that can proceed from subtilty of wit. 10

Vain-glorious men, such as without being conscious to themselves of great sufficiency delight in supposing themselves gallant men, are inclined only to ostentation, but not to attempt; because, when danger or difficulty appears, they look for nothing but to have their insufficiency discovered. 11

Vain-glorious men, such as estimate their sufficiency by the flattery of other men or the fortune of some precedent action, without assured ground of hope from the true knowledge of themselves, are inclined to rash engaging, and in the approach of danger or difficulty to retire if they can; because, not seeing the way of safety, they will rather hazard their honour, which may be salved with an excuse, than their lives, for which no salve is sufficient. 12

Men that have a strong opinion of their own wisdom in matter of government are disposed to ambition. Because without public employment in council or magistracy the honour of the wisdom is lost. And therefore eloquent speakers are inclined to ambition, for eloquence seemeth wisdom, both to themselves and others. 13

Pusillanimity disposeth men to irresolution, and consequently to lose the occasions and fittest opportunities of action. For after men have been in deliberation till the time of action approach, if it be not then manifest what is best to be done, it is a sign the difference of motives, the one way and the other, are not great: therefore not to resolve then is to lose the occasion by weighing of trifles, which is pusillanimity. 14

Frugality, though in poor men a virtue, maketh a man unapt to achieve such actions as require the strength of many men at once; for it weakeneth

their endeavour, which is to be nourished and kept in vigour by reward.

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Eloquence, with flattery disposeth men to confide in them that have it; because the former is seeming wisdom, the latter seeming kindness. And to them military reputation, and it disposeth men to adhere and subject themselves to those men that have them. The two former having given them caution against danger from him, the latter gives them caution against danger from others. 16

Want of science, that is, ignorance of causes, disposeth, or rather constraineth, a man to rely on the advice and authority of others. For all men whom the truth concerns, if they rely not on their own, must rely on the opinion of some other whom they think wiser than themselves and see not why he should deceive them 17

Ignorance of the signification of words, which is want of understanding, disposeth men to take on trust not only the truth they know not, but also the errors, and which is more, the nonsense of them they trust; for neither error nor nonsense can, without a perfect understanding of words, be detected. 18

From the same it proceedeth that men give different names to one and the same thing, from the difference of their own passions: as they that approve a private opinion call it opinion, but they that mislike it, heresy: and yet heresy signifies no more than private opinion, but has only a greater tincture of choler. 19

From the same also it proceedeth that men cannot distinguish, without study and great understanding, between one action of many men and many actions of one multitude; as for example, between the one action of all the senators of Rome in killing Catiline, and the many actions of a number of senators in killing Cæsar; and therefore are disposed to take for the action of the people that which is a multitude of actions done by a multitude of men, led perhaps by the persuasion of one. 20

Ignorance of the causes and original constitution of right, equity, law, and justice, disposeth a man to make custom and example the rule of his actions; in such manner as to think that unjust which it hath been the custom to punish, and that just of the impunity and approbation whereof they can produce an example, or, as the lawyers which only use this false measure of justice barbarously call it, a precedent; like little children, that have no other rule of good and evil manners but the correction they receive from their parents and masters; save that children are constant to their rule,

whereas men are not so; because, grown strong and stubborn, they appeal from custom to reason, and from reason to custom, as it serves their turn; receding from custom when their interest requires it, and setting themselves against reason as oft as reason is against them; which is the cause that the doctrine of right and wrong is perpetually disputed, both by the pen and the sword; whereas the, doctrine of lines and figures is not so, because men care not in that subject what be truth, as a thing that crosses no man's ambition, profit, or lust. For I doubt not but, if it had been a thing contrary to any man's right of dominion, or to the interest of men that have dominion, 'that the three angles of a triangle should be equal to two angles of a square,' that doctrine should have been, if not disputed, yet by the burning of all books of geometry suppressed, as far as he whom it concerned was able. 21

Ignorance of remote causes disposeth men to attribute all events to the causes immediate and instrumental, for these are all the causes they perceive. And hence it comes to pass that in all places men that are grieved with payments to the public, discharge their anger upon the publicans, that is to say farmers, collectors, and other officers of the public revenue, and adhere to such as find fault with the public government; and thereby, when they have engaged themselves beyond hope of justification, fall also upon the supreme authority, for fear of punishment or shame of receiving pardon. 22

Ignorance of natural causes disposeth a man to credulity, so as to believe many times impossibilities; for such know nothing to the contrary but that they may be true, being unable to detect the impossibility. And credulity, because men like to be hearkened unto in company, disposeth them to lying, so that ignorance itself without malice is able to make a man both to believe lies and tell them, and sometimes also to invent them. 23

Anxiety for the future time disposeth men to inquire into the causes of things; because the knowledge of them maketh men the better able to order the present to their best advantage. 24

Curiosity, or love of the knowledge of causes, draws a man from the consideration of the effect to seek the cause, and, again, the cause of that cause; till of necessity he must come to this thought at last that there is some cause whereof there is no former cause, but is eternal; which is it men call God. So that it is impossible to make any profound inquiry into natural causes without being inclined thereby to believe there is one God eternal; though they cannot have any idea of Him in their answerable to His nature. For as a man that is born blind, hearing men talk of warming themselves by

the fire and being brought to warm himself by the same, may easily conceive and assure himself, there is somewhat there, which men call 'fire' and is the cause of the heat he feels, but cannot imagine what it is like, nor have an idea of it in his mind such as they have that see it, so also by the visible things of this world, and their admirable order, a man may conceive there is a cause of them, which men call God, and yet not have an idea or image of Him in his mind. 25

And they that make little or no inquiry into the natural causes of things, yet, from the fear that proceeds from the ignorance itself of what it is that hath the power to do them much good or harm, are inclined to suppose and feign unto themselves several kinds of powers invisible, and to stand in awe of their own imaginations, and in time of distress to invoke them, as also in the, time of an expected good success to give them thanks, making the creatures of their own fancy their gods. By which means it hath come to pass that, from the innumerable variety of fancy, men have created in the world innumerable sorts of gods. And this fear of things invisible is the natural seed of that which every one in himself calleth religion, and in them that worship or fear that power otherwise than they do, superstition. 26

And this seed of religion, having been observed by many, some of those that have observed it have been inclined thereby to nourish, dress, and form it into laws; and to add to it of their own invention any opinion of the causes of future events by which they thought they should be best able to govern others, and make unto themselves the greatest use of their powers.

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