

Rights in Hobbes

1 Euclid's *Elements* Book 1: Definitions

1. A point is that which has no part.
2. A line is breadthless length.
3. The ends of a line are points.
4. A straight line is a line which lies evenly with the points on itself. ...
5. A circle is a plane figure contained by one line such that all the straight lines falling upon it from one point among those lying within the figure equal one another.

2 Euclid's *Elements* Book 1: Postulates

Let the following be postulated:

1. To draw a straight line from any point to any point.
2. To produce a finite straight line continuously in a straight line.
3. To describe a circle with any center and radius.
4. That all right angles equal one another.
5. That, if a straight line falling on two straight lines makes the interior angles on the same side less than two right angles, the two straight lines, if produced indefinitely, meet on that side on which are the angles less than the two right angles.

3 Justice as giving each his own

the ordinary definition of justice in the Schools [is -m]g] ... that *justice is the constant will of giving to every man his own*. And therefore where there is no *own*, that is, no propriety, there is no injustice; and where there is no coercive power erected, that is, where there is no commonwealth, there is no propriety; all men having right to all things: therefore where there is no commonwealth, there nothing is unjust. (*Leviathan*, [1651] 15.3)

4 The right to all things (*Leviathan* 14.4)

1. Suppose there is such a thing as justice in the state of nature. (We are supposing this in order to see if a contradiction follows; if it does, the supposition must be wrong.)
2. Then people in the state of nature would have things as their own. (The ordinary definition of “justice,” see above)
3. Then people in the state of nature would have *exclusive claim rights* to some things. (From the meaning of having something as “one’s own”.)
4. Everyone has a right to use any thing that they think will help to preserve their lives. (The right of nature, *Leviathan* 14.1.)
5. The state of nature is so dangerous that several people will think they need to use any particular thing to preserve their lives, especially when the “thing” is someone’s life. (*Leviathan* chapter 13.)
6. Therefore, in the state of nature, several people would have the same right to use any thing, meaning they would all be at liberty to use it. (This follows from points 4 and 5.)
7. Point 6 contradicts point 3. (3 says there would be *some* things that only one person is at liberty to use; 6 says there would be *no* things that only one person is at liberty to use.)
8. Since the original supposition leads to a contradiction, it must be false. Therefore, there is no such thing as justice in the state of nature. (Assuming that justice involves having things as one’s own.)