Thomas Hobbes

A. Background

1. Lived in England during a time of great political turmoil

a. the debate over the source of power of the monarchy

King Charles asserted he “divine right of Kings”

Parliament struggled with their role and the role of the King

b. England had a Civil War to determine who would rule

Parliament prevailed

King Charles was executed

2. Hobbes became Interested in the definition of authority, how it is justified, and how individual liberty can be maintained within it

B. Hobbes’ “State of Nature”

1. Within the state of nature each of us are individuals who are equal (in the sense that we can kill each other)

2. We are also born with an equal desire for goods, glory, respect, etc. ..

a. this puts us with competition with each other that creates a constant state of individual versus individual

b. chaotic and insecure

3. To escape this state of nature we voluntarily and rationally band together to protect ourselves from each other and from external threats

C. Creating a Leviathan

1. “ I" becomes "we"

a. The individual authorizes that they will be "re-presented" by a person who will embody their will

Once you have consented to be governed you can never leave

You are permanently tied to your fellow citizens

b. The single face of all is generated by the creation of a commonwealth

That face decides what is in the best interests of the community

It can be a king, oligarchy, democracy, etc. . .

2. Government is there to regulate those who deviate and is entitled to do so

a. Limits:

Because you joined to protect your life you are not required to cooperate in your own execution

The government is still within its rights to execute you

The individual is retaining those rights that they sought to ensure by the creation of the government

b. There is never a reason to destroy the government because to do so would return us to a state of nature