

attack by another nation. When our safety is at risk, liberty is also likely to be curtailed. In the months following the 9/11 terrorist attacks, Americans were willing to give up numerous liberties because they were concerned about the safety of themselves, their families, and their neighbors. Intrusive searches at airports, government wiretaps, and the detention of immigrants all became routinely accepted. Similarly, people who live in neighborhoods infested with drug crime do not have the liberty to walk the streets at night. Safety needs can, therefore, be seen as essential to the maintenance of liberty.

In *The Leviathan* (1651), philosopher Thomas Hobbes says that safety needs are the very reason people have freely sought out the protections offered by a strong government. Without government, people live in the “state of nature” where there is “war of all against all.” In the state of nature, according to Hobbes, life is “solitary, poor, nasty, brutish, and short” (p. xiii). To escape this life-threatening state of nature, people choose to give up significant freedoms to a sovereign (a strong government) to bring order to their world. We create strong police forces, armies, and a system of laws to provide safety for ourselves and our families.

*Justice:* We would like to believe that a fair legal system would provide equal protection and due process for all individuals, regardless of their station in life. People naturally recoil at the thought that those with money and positions of power can do as they wish while average citizens are held to the letter of the law. Philosopher John Rawls writes in *A Theory of Justice* (1971) that “the principles of justice are chosen behind a veil of ignorance” (p. 12). By this, he means we shouldn’t seek to know a person’s station in life before we decide which rights an individual should have and which punishments should be associated with a given act.

Suppose your high school has a rule specifying a three-day suspension from school for any student who defaces school property. Would you want your school principal to make exceptions to this rule for students whose parents are prominent in the community? The notion of justice is that laws (and legal protections) should apply equally to all. Justice demands that all people be given what they are due. The Fourteenth Amendment to the U.S. Constitution declares that a state government does not have the right to “deny to any person within its jurisdiction the equal protection of the laws.”

*Individualism:* Many of the values cherished by Americans suggest that a society works best when individuals follow their own natural inclinations. Ralph Waldo Emerson in his “Essay on Self Reliance” (1841) writes, “nothing is at last sacred but the integrity of your own mind.” Henry David Thoreau in his famous lecture “On Civil Disobedience” (1849) says, “there will never be a really free and enlightened State, until the State comes to recognize the individual as a higher and independent power, from which all its own power and authority are derived, and treats him accordingly.”