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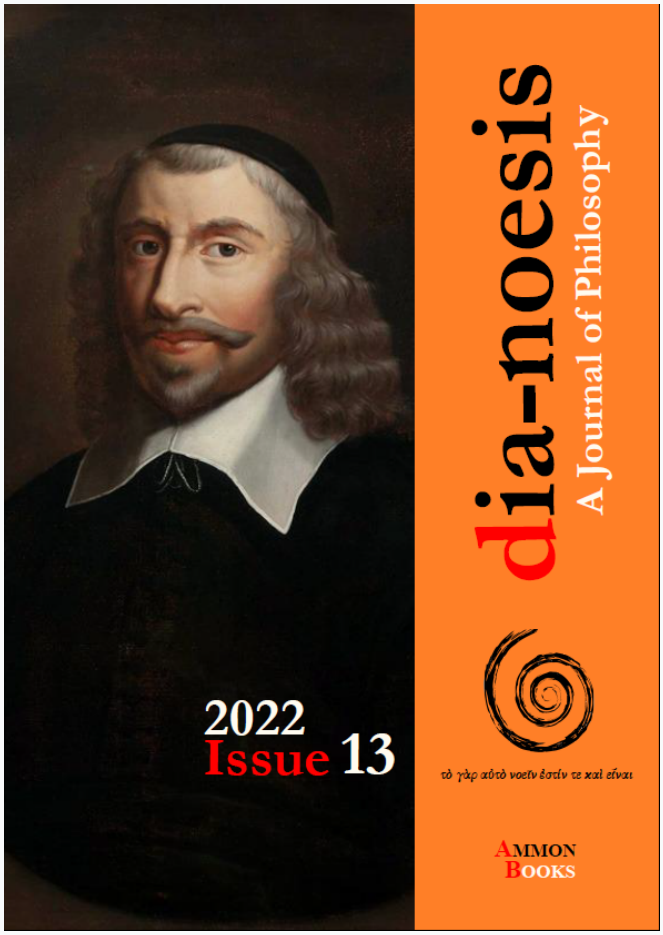
Thomas Hobbes: Individualism, Freedom, Sovereignty



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Nick Tsampazis

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The cognitive grounds of Hobbes' Leviathan

Nick Tsampazis,
Doctor of Philosophy,
Aristotle University of Thessaloniki
ntsampaz@sch.gr

Abstract: Hobbes is inspired by the mechanistic materialism of his time but is not convinced by the validity of empirical knowledge. There is no truth outside language. His own scientific method produces true propositions through rigorous logical processing of both lingual and empirical material. Leviathan is a direct product of this method as applied to the field of politics.

Keywords: Leviathan, state of nature, scepticism, language, experience, science, Sovereign, law

To the antiquity itself I think nothing due. If we will reverence the age, the present is the oldest.
Thomas Hobbes

The actions of men proceed from their opinions.
Thomas Hobbes

If men had the use of reason they pretend to, their commonwealths might

be secured, at least from perishing by internal diseases.
Thomas Hobbes

The limits of my language mean the limits of my world.
Ludwig Wittgenstein

Thomas Hobbes is considered the founder and foremost representative of modern political philosophy. His political thought amounts to a paradigm shift. *Leviathan*, the work in which his political philosophy finds its fullest and most mature expression, has been called a masterpiece of political philosophy—possibly the only one in the English language.[1] Hobbes engages in dialogue with political writers of antiquity and the Middle Ages and breaks new ground in modern political philosophy. He poses the core question of politics alongside the question of man attempting to transform his scientific political solution to the former into redemption proper as regards the latter. Hobbes attempts the construction of a political universe. To this end, adopting much of the scientific mechanistic thinking of his time, he focuses on the elementary psychic and biological dynamics of man, portraying it as compatible with a restrictive conception of politics, which evolves around the concentration and use of power.[2]

His style is biting, arrogant and dogmatic. Poignant in his polemic, as in his struggle to express himself tersely and with

[1] Michael Oakeshott, "Introduction to Leviathan", *Hobbes on Civil Association*, Liberty Fund, Indianapolis, 1975, 3.

[2] We could argue that Hobbes shrinks the domain of civilization in order to fit it into an equally shrink conception of politics. Researching connections between Hobbes and Machiavelli, Leo Strauss writes about the former: "[...] pedestrian hedonism, sobriety without sublimity and subtlety, protected or made possible by power politics [...]" (Leo Strauss, "What is Political Philosophy?", *An introduction to Political Philosophy*, ed. Halail Gildin, Wayne State University Press, Detroit, 1989, 50). Michael Oakeshott, on the other hand, discovers a noble magnanimous individualism in Hobbes' image of man.

precision, a gift cultivated through long and painstaking study and thought—Hobbes published his first book at the age of 44. Disputing the cognitive and moral-political skepticism of his time, he seeks solid answers. He rejects the classical Aristotelian tradition and any transcendental grounds. He seeks to be innovative and finds in the spirit of the New Science of Bacon and Galileo the tool he needs, taking it upon himself to further enhance it. The outcome is a sort of sui generis Euclidean political vision.[3]

[3] Leo Strauss, trying to determine the position of Hobbesian philosophy in the context of modernity, writes: "His philosophy as a whole may be said to be the classic example of the typically modern combination of political idealism with a materialistic and atheistic view of the whole (Leo Strauss, *Natural Right and History*, The University of Chicago Press, Chicago and London, 1953, 170). Leo Strauss places Hobbes together with Machiavelli in the first wave of modernity. The second wave is represented by Rousseau and the third wave by Marx and Nietzsche. According to Strauss, Hobbes systematizes and deepens Machiavelli's revolution. Hobbes, he notes critically, verges on hedonism and undermines the tradition of classical natural law (ibid., 166-202). Oakeshott trisects western political philosophy into three traditions: "The first of these traditions is distinguished by the master-conceptions of Reason and Nature. It is coeval with our civilization [...] The master-conceptions of the second are will and artifice. It too springs from the soil of Greece. [...] The third tradition is of later birth, not appearing until the eighteenth century [...] Its master-concept is the Rational Will. [...] Plato's *Republic* might be chosen as the representative of the first tradition, and Hegel's *Philosophie des Rechts* of the third, so *Leviathan* is the head and crown of the second" (Michael Oakeshott, "Introduction to Leviathan", *Hobbes on Civil Association*, Liberty Fund, Indianapolis, 7-8). Oakeshott argues that in Hobbes the natural rights of man (those of survival and felicity) cannot be linked to moral obligation. The source of every moral obligation is the will and power of the sovereign. The view expressed here is that the political sovereign constitutes the moral universe of men. Politics creates morality (ibid., 133-140). Howard Warrender also separates natural rights from moral obligations in Hobbesian theory drawing on the well-known distinction made in 14th chapter of *Leviathan*. But instead of the sovereign, he considers the source of moral obligation in hobbesian theory to be God who "speaks" through the moral law (Howard Warrender, *The Political Philosophy of Hobbes. His Theory of Obligation.* Oxford University Press, Oxford, 2000; and Howard Warrender, "A Reply to Mr Plamenatz", *Hobbes Studies*, ed. K. C. Brown ed., Basic Blackwell, Oxford, 1965, 89-100). Sheldon Wolin reads Hobbes in the context of visionary builders of commonwealths, his vision being

The driving force behind Hobbes' endeavor to formulate a diagnosis and treatment of the political and human problem comes down to three constituents. First, his revulsion for and reflection on the bloody religious and national conflicts in Europe and the English Civil War. Second, his critical acceptance of the materialistic, mechanistic spirit of the New Science of Bacon and Galileo. Third, his strong desire to attack generalized skepticism—cognitive, moral and political—which came about in great part as a result of the aforementioned conflicts and scientific achievements.[4] In his

scientific. He attributes to Hobbes a legalistic spirit while pointing to his early innovative philosophical analysis of language and its crucial role in politics. He blames Hobbes for introducing individualism, which undermine the classical concept of political community (Sheldon Wolin, *Politics and Vision. Continuity and Innovation in Western Political Thought*, Princeton University Press, Princeton, 2004, 214-256). C. B. Macpherson, in his influential and controversial interpretation, attributes to Hobbes possessive individualism, an advanced and aggressive free market form of the downing capitalism with afflictive anthropological, political, social and economic consequences (C. B. Macpherson, *The Political Theory of Possessive Individualism. Hobbes to Locke*, Oxford University Press, Oxford, 1962, 9-106).

[4] In more detail, the emphasis in the republican ideal was weekend during the transition from the 15th to the 16th century by the tragic social and religious conflicts leading to the questioning of every moral and political principle. This eventually developed into early modern skepticism, Montaigne being perhaps its best known representative. A key target of skepticism was Aristotle and his belief in the validity of sensory knowledge and the ability of formal reasoning to provide true knowledge of the world. In this context, the Machiavellian realistic view of history and politics took shape. At the turn of the 17th century, the opposition to Aristotle still existed alongside these crystallizations of political realism. It was then that the humanist and still young Hobbes translated Thucydides. Later, in Paris, he came into contact with Cartesian philosophy and the project of overcoming skepticism without returning to Aristotle. Hobbes was influenced and inspired by Descartes' attempt to transcend skepticism by stepping on the latter's radical method of doubt. Descartes relied on the certainty of the cogito and the innate idea of God (i.e., God's certain existence) as a guarantee against the deception of senses. Hobbes criticizes Descartes' solution. Innate ideas are not possible and the existence of God cannot be proven, as it is a logical hypothesis of the mind. Hobbes will look to mathematics for the weapon to attack skepticism (see Richard Tuck, *Hobbes*, Oxford University Press, Oxford, 1989, 1-27).

theory of knowledge, he introduces a new description of the function of reasoning, emphasizing the role played by language. His anthropology also brings something new with his famous description of the state of nature, where human beings as solitary individuals inevitably end up in conflict and misery, even though they own a natural unlimited right to self-preservation and felicity. In his political philosophy, Hobbes rejects any transcendental (religious or naturalistic) definition of politics, assigning it to the technical ingenuity of humans with secular—and rather self-evident—motives and goals. Hobbes criticizes and rejects the teleology and perfectionism of the classics: "There is no [...] *finis ultimus*, utmost aim, nor *summum bonum*, greatest good, as is spoken of in the books of the old moral philosophers".[5] He is on the verge of the naturalistic fallacy, describing the natural human existence materialistically and mechanistically and deriving from it the fundamental and humble right of survival.

Hobbes begins his analysis of human nature by adopting the basic doctrine of empiricism: "there is no conception in a man's mind, which hath not at first, totally, or by parts, been begotten upon the organs of sense. The rest are derived from that original".[6] The cause of sensation is something external "which presses the organ proper to each sense".[7] Hobbes then refers to internal transmutations of sensory material. Here we find imagination and memory: "[The] decaying sense, when we would express the thing itself, I mean fancy itself, we call imagination, [...] but when we would express the decay, and signify that the sense is fading, old, and past, it is called memory".[8] In the human mind there is nothing but

[5] Thomas Hobbes, *Leviathan or the Matter, Forme and Power of a Commonwealth Ecclesiaticall and Civil*, ed. Michael Oakeshott, Basil Blackwell, Oxford, 1946, ch. 11, p. 63. [Hereafter *Leviathan,* 11, 63].

[6] *Leviathan,* 1, 7.

[7] *Leviathan*, 1, 7. We can clearly see here Hobbes's adoption of the fundamental principle of mechanistic materialism, according to which a material body acts upon another material body only by coming into physical contact with it and pushing it.

[8] *Leviathan*, 2, 10.

sensations, thoughts and successions of thoughts.[9] Deviating from the Aristotelian tradition as regards the reliability of sense, Hobbes adopts a skeptical stance stating that "[...] though at some certain distance, the real and very object seem invested with the fancy it begets in us; yet still the object is one thing, the image or fancy is another. So that sense, in all cases, is nothing else but original fancy".[10] There is no way for man to come to unmediated "objective" contact with the outside world. He remains imprisoned in the cave of the mind with nothing but the shadows of things presented to him by sense, memory and imagination. He is "by nature, the victim of solipsism".[11] This cognitive subjectivism is followed by volitional subjectivism. Hobbes writes: "[...] the inclinations of men are diverse [...] as we may see in those things we apprehend by sense, as by tasting, touching, smelling". And volitional subjectivism in turn gives way to moral subjectivism, which manifests itself in terms of hedonism.

[9] *Leviathan*, 4, 17.

[10] *Leviathan,* 1, 8. At another point, Hobbes, recalling Descartes's anxious effort to find a cognitive foundation through the questioning of everything, writes:

> In the teaching of Natural Philosophy, I cannot begin better [...] than from privation? that is, from feigning the world to be annihilated. But, if such annihilation of all things be supposed, it may perhaps be asked, what would remain for any man [...] There would remain to that man ideas of the world, and of such bodies as he had [...] seen with his eyes, or perceive by any other sense? that is to say, the memory and imagination of magnitudes, motions, sounds, colors, as well as of their order and parts. [...] Yet they will appear as if they were external [...] and these are the things to which he would give names, and subtract them from, and compound them with one another. [...] There can be nothing for him to think of but what is past. [...] Though all things be still remaining in the world, yet we compute nothing but our own phantasms" (Thomas Hobbes, "Of Place and Time", *The English Works of Thomas Hobbes*, vol. 1, ed. W. Molesworth, London, 1839, 91-92).

[11] Oakeshott, op. cit., 93.

> Every man, for his own part, calleth that which pleaseth, and is delightful to himself, good; and that evil which displeaseth him: insomuch that while every man differeth from other in constitution, they differ also one from another concerning the common distinction of good and evil. Nor is there any such thing as agathon aplox, that is to say, simply good.[12]

The element of subjectivism has a decisively negative role in the state of nature. In It leads people to selfish one-sidedness and undermines communication between them. The same thing or situation is understood and evaluated differently and even contrastingly by each one, which intensifies competition and conflicts. Subjectivism feeds selfishness and especially the passion for glory.[13]

Reading further into Hobbes's analysis of knowledge and truth, we come across a fundamental separation. According to Hobbes, "there are of knowledge two kinds; whereof one is of fact: the other knowledge of the consequence of one affirmation to another".[14]

The first kind of knowledge has its source in repeated experiences and makes it possible to make predictions, however risky these may be. It is acquired through a processes of mechanistic, non-conscious induction. In most occasions Hobbes calls this knowledge "prudence" and argues that it is also found in animals. He writes: "[Prudence] is not attained by reasoning, but found as well in brute beasts as in

[12] Thomas Hobbes, *Elements of Law Natural and Politic*, ed. Ferdinard Tönnies, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1928, part 1, ch. 7, par. 3 [Hereafter *Elements of Law*, 1, 7, 3].

[13] "So that in the nature of man, we find three principal causes of quarrel. First, competition; secondly, diffidence; thirdly, glory. The first, maketh men invade for gain; the second, for safety; and the third, for reputation. The first use violence, to make themselves masters of other men's persons, wives, children, and cattle; the second, to defend them; the third, for trifles, as a word, a smile, a different opinion, and any other sign of undervalue, either direct in their persons, or by reflection in their kindred, their friends, their nation, their profession, or their name" (*Leviathan*, 13, 81-82).

[14] *Leviathan*, 9, 53. It is important that events also subsumes historical events.

man; and is but a memory of successions of events in times past, wherein the omission of every little circumstance altering the effect, frustrateth the expectation of the most prudent". [15] At another point he writes about prudence: "Sometimes a man desires to know the event of an action and then he thinks of some like action past, and the events thereof one after another supposing like events will follow like actions". And he concludes that "[...] such conjecture, through the difficulty of observing all circumstances" could "be very fallacious".[16]

The second kind of knowledge or truth is found in the territory of language: "The first truths were arbitrarily made by those that first of all imposed names upon things, or received them from the imposition of others". [17] We read in *Leviathan*:

> There is a certain *philosophia prima,* on which all other philosophy ought to depend; and consisteth principally, in right limiting of the significations of such appellations, or names, as are of all others the most universal; which limitations serve to avoid ambiguity and equivocation in reasoning; and are commonly called definitions; such as are the definitions of body, time, place, matter, form, essence, subject, substance, accident, power, act, finite, infinite, quantity, quality, motion, action, passion, and divers others, necessary to the explaining of a man's conceptions concerning the nature and generation of bodies. The explication, that is, the settling of the meaning, of which, and the like terms, is commonly in the Schools called *metaphysics* [...].[18]

[15] *Leviathan*, 45, 435-436.

[16] Ibid., 3, 15-16.

[17] Thomas Hobbes, "Of Proposition", *The English Works of Thomas Hobbes*, vol. 1, ed. W. Molesworth, London, 1839, 36.

[18] *Leviathan*, 46, 440. The philosophia prima according to Aristotle (Aristotle, *Metaphysics*, 1003a21-22) studies Existence in its entirety, the ontological background of all that is as such (being qua being). It investigates the first causes and fundamental principles of existing beings (ibid., 982b9-10). In Hobbes this research takes the form of "right

It is crucial that the fundamental semantic definitions to the maximum extend are beyond question. If not so, the subsequent process of reasoning based on them loses credibility, as its causal consequence alone is not enough. The process and nature of reasoning is described as follows by Hobbes:

> When a man reasoneth, he does nothing else but conceive a sum total, from addition of parcels; or conceive a remainder, from subtraction of one sum from another; which, if it be done by words, is conceiving of the consequence of the names of all the parts, to the name of the whole; or from the names of the whole and one part, to the name of the other part. [...] These operations are not incident to numbers only, but to all manner of things that can be added together, and taken one out of another. [...] the logicians teach the same in consequences of words; adding together two names to make an affirmation, and two affirmations to make a syllogism; and many syllogisms to make a demonstration; and from the sum, or conclusion of a syllogism, they subtract one proposition to find the other. Writers of politics add together factions to find men's duties; [...] In sum, in what matter soever there is place for addition and subtraction, there also is place for reason; and where these have no place, there reason has nothing at all to do.[19]

Reasoning in Hobbes is a mental tool and not a substance that directly provides or reveals truths. It is a mathematical treatment of linguistic references which produces conclusions

limiting of the significations of such appellations, or names, as are of all others the most universal". Ultimate reality is enclosed within the semantic dimension of language. Here we have no empirical verification procedure as an alternative to Aristotle's essentialism. We could say that we have a "scientific" metaphysics in place of "pre-scientific" metaphysics.

[19] *Leviathan*, 5, 25. Oakeshott writes: "For Hobbes, to think philosophically is to reason. Philosophy is reasoning" (op. cit., 17)

that are accepted as absolutely certain by convention.[20] The process of initial rigorous determinations, subsequent rigorous reasoning and reaching conclusions is called science:

> [...] first in apt imposing of names; and secondly by getting a good and orderly method in proceeding from the elements, which are names, to assertions made by connexion of one of them to another; and so to syllogisms, which are the connexions of one assertion to another, till we come to a knowledge of all the consequences of names appertaining to the subject in hand; and that is it, men call Science.[21]

Hobbes attributes a similar process to philosophy: "Philosophy is defined to be the knowledge of effects acquired by true ratiocination, from knowledge first had of their causes and generation; And of such causes or generation as may be, from former knowledge of their effects or appearances".[22] This scientific and philosophical knowledge is not empirical knowledge but formally sound logical production of propositions from verbal terms and propositions from other propositions. Hobbes does not accept empirical knowledge—even experimental knowledge—as true knowledge.[23] Real science is confined at the level of language and meanings. Truth is judged by the internal correctness of

[20] However, he sometimes seems to forget the conventional character of the conclusions:" "[...] nothing is produced by reasoning aright, but general, eternal, and immutable truth" [...] nothing is produced by reasoning aright, but general, eternal, and immutable truth" (*Leviathan*, 45, 435).

[21] *Leviathan*, 5, 29.

[22] Thomas Hobbes, "Of Sense and Animal Motion", *The English Works of Thomas Hobbes*, vol. 1, ed. W. Molesworth, London, 1839, 387. In Hobbes' time, philosophy and science had not yet been separated. For the confusion between science, philosophy and mathematics in Hobbes, see Wolin, op. cit. p. 224-225; Oakeshott, op. cit. 19.

[23] "Experience concludeth nothing universally. If the signs hit twenty times for once missing, a man may lay a wager of twenty to one of the event; but may not conclude it for a truth" (*Elements of Law*, 1, 4, 10). See Richard Tuck, *Hobbes*, Oxford University Press, Oxford, 1989, 49-50.

the logical connection of propositions and words. [24] The reasoning process possesses certainty when it has a demonstrable character, in accordance to the model of mathematical reasoning. Demonstrability is synonymous with the logical production of certain knowledge. Hobbes writes:

> Of arts, some are demonstrable, others indemonstrable; and demonstrable are those the construction of the subject whereof is in the power of the artist himself, who, in his demonstration, does no more but deduce the consequences of his own operation. The reason whereof is this, that the science of every subject is derived from a precognition of the causes, generation, and construction of the same; and consequently where the causes are known, there is place for demonstration, but not where the causes are to seek for. Geometry therefore is demonstrable, for the lines and figures from which we reason are drawn and described by ourselves; and civil philosophy is demonstrable, because we make the commonwealth ourselves. But because of natural bodies we know not the construction, but seek it from the effects, there lies no demonstration of what the causes be we seek for, but only of what they may be.[25]

[24] Hobbes characteristically writes: "Truth is the same with a true Proposition" (Thomas Hobbes, *De Cive. English Version*, ed. Howard Warrender, Clarendon Press, Oxford, 1987, ch. 18, par. 4). [Hereafter *De Cive*, 18, 4].

[25] Thomas Hobbes, "Six Lessons to the Professors of the Mathematics", *The English Works of Thomas Hobbes*, vol. 7, ed. W. Molesworth, London, 1839, 183-184. A short time later, John Locke will include "demonstrative knowledge" in the category of certain knowledge, but in a subordinate position to "intuitive knowledge", as it is less clear and distinct. According to him, ideas are cognitively more solid entities than the words attached to them. Ideas, products of the senses, are in a closer and more direct relationship with "things" and represent them in a more reliable way. Locke partially accepts that sense is reliable and that ideas correspond to things (John Locke, *An Essay Concerning Human Understanding*, ed. P. Nidditch, Clarendon Press, Oxford, 1975, 4, 4, 4). According to him, ideas are cognitively more solid entities than words

Hobbes argues that science or art acquire their demonstrative character when their first principles can be established conventionally or arbitrarily by man himself (as a divine creation) by an act which makes them known and certain. In this sense, geometry and political philosophy are demonstrative, while physical science is not. Since natural

attached to them. Ideas, products of the senses, are in a closer and more direct relationship with "things" and represent them in a more reliable way. Locke partially accepts that sense is reliable and that ideas correspond to things (ibid., 4, 4, 4). The word represents the idea, that is, it represents the representative of the thing. The word stands in a more distant and indirect relation to things. According to Locke, words are often and easily misused resulting in error (John Locke, *Essay*, 3, 10, 1-34). He questions their role, in contrast to Hobbes's tendency to base the entire cognitive process on them. In Locke, clarity and distinctness of ideas and relationships between them provide true, certain knowledge, as in Descartes. Locke speaks of "perfect clearness and distinctness" of intuitive knowledge (ibid., 4, 2, 6). According to him, "Knowledge [...] seems to me to be nothing but the perception of the connexion and agreement, or disagreement and repugnancy of any of our Ideas" (ibid., 4, 1, 2). When "perfect clarity and distinctness" is not possible in the agreement or disagreement of two ideas, that is, when the mind cannot achieve the highest degree of knowledge, intuitive knowledge, it turns to the second choice of certain knowledge, i.e. demonstrative knowledge. Locke puts it this way:

> When the Mind cannot so bring its Ideas together, as by their immediate Comparison, and as it were Juxta-position, or application one to another, to perceive their Agreement or Disagreement, it is fain, by the Intervention of other Ideas (one or more, as it happens) to discover the Agreement or Disagreement, which it searches; and this is that which we call Reasoning. [...] Certainty depends so wholly on this Intuition, that in the next degree of Knowledge, which I call Demonstrative, this intuition is necessary in all the Connexions of the intermediate Ideas, without which we cannot attain Knowledge and Certainty (ibid., 4, 2, 1-2).

For both Locke and Hobbes then, reasoning is an important part of science and knowledge. In Locke, however, reasoning contains the element of intuition, which appears at every step of its course and supports it. Intuition is related to the criterion of clarity and distinctness. This criterion is both logical and empirical. The demonstrative potential of reasoning is not purely logical, as in Hobbes, who rejects experience as a criterion of true knowledge. Mathematical logic in Locke is important, it offers truth and certainty, but it has limits.

beings (whose ultimate causes are unknown or hypothetical) pre-exist natural science, the latter has no option but to comply and operate demonstratively on the basis of first principles, hypothetical and imposed by nature. Speaking of natural science elsewhere, Hobbes is more illuminating:

> [Physics] is the finding out by the appearances or effects of nature, which we know by sense, some ways and means by which they may be, I do not say they are, generated. The principles, therefore, upon which the following discourse depends, are not such aw we ourselves make and pronounce in general terms, aw definitions; but such, aw being placed in the things themselves by the Author of Nature, are by us observed in them; and we make use of them in single and particular, not universal propositions. Nor do they impose upon us any necessity of constituting theorems.[26]

In natural science, therefore, the validity of the demonstrative process is undermined from the outset. In geometry and political philosophy, however, the first principles are cognitively completely transparent, since they were constructed and established exclusively by the disciplines themselves. It was a human mind that formulated the axioms of demonstrative Euclidean geometry, and a human mind can also formulate transparent principles for building a state. Consequently, formally correct causal reasoning based on such principles can produce demonstrable conclusions. Experience, here, seems to have no involvement at all.[27]

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[26] Thomas Hobbes, "Of Sense and Animal Motion", *The English Works of Thomas Hobbes*, vol. 1, ed. W. Molesworth, London, 1839, 388.

[27] This evokes in Locke's own attempt to show that moral propositions are demonstrable in the same way that mathematical propositions are. Locke relies on mixed modes them being non-empirical, constructed solely by the mind itself. We find something similar in Locke in his attempt to show the provable character of moral propositions according to the model of mathematical propositions. Locke relies on mixed modes which are non-empirical ideas and constructed exclusively by the mind

The most certain scientific knowledge of geometry and political philosophy is not innate but acquired: "[...] reason not, as sense and memory, born with us; nor gotten by experience only, as prudence is; but attained by industry".[28]

This means that in the natural state people generally cannot develop reason, at least en masse. In the state of nature, because of the *bellum omnium contra omnes*, "there is [...] no arts; no letters; no society". [29] In this worlike environment there is no education, positive laws or any agent enforcing natural law. Hobbes describes natural law as follows:

> A law of nature, *lex naturalis,* is a precept or general rule, found out by reason, by which a man is forbidden to do that, which is destructive of his life, or taketh away the means of preserving the same; and to omit that, by which he thinketh it may be best preserved.[30]

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itself (John Locke, *An Essay Concerning Human Understanding*, ed. P. Nidditch, Clarendon Press, Oxford, 1975, 4, 3, 18).

[28] *Leviathan*, 5, 29.

[29] Deviating from the Aristotelian tradition of natural sociability, Hobbes writes: "Man is made fit for Society not by Nature, but by Education" (*De Cive*, 1, 2). Nevertheless, people in the natural state he describes have an empirical mechanistic logic (prudence) and language. This is an indication that there is some kind of relationship between them. There is a rudimentary natural "society" of unsociable people. Hobbes speaks of a stable family in the natural state (Richard Allen Chapman, "Leviathan Writ Small: Thomas Hobbes on the Family". *The American Political Science Review*, Vol. 69, No 1, 1975, 76-90). But also, exercise of power between people is, in the last analysis, a form of relationship between them.

[30] *Leviathan*, 14, 84: The first two and fundamental laws of nature are described as follows:

> Every man, ought to endeavour peace, as far as he has hope of obtaining it; and when he cannot obtain it, that he may seek, and use, all helps, and advantages of war. The first branch of which rule, containeth the first, and fundamental law of nature; which is, to seek peace, and follow it. The second, the sum of the right of nature; which is, by all means we can, to defend ourselves. From this fundamental law of nature, by which men

Natural law is discovered by reason, which means it is scientific or philosophical knowledge. Therefore, it is difficult to know it and observe it in the state of nature, since people there generally do not develop themselves cognitively beyond prudence. Besides, natural law only obligates *in foro interno* and, thus, its observance depends on the will or ability of the people themselves. According to Hobbes, "The laws of nature [...] are not properly laws, but qualities that dispose men to peace and obedience".[31] The voluntarist Hobbes, introducing a kind of early legal positivism, grounds real law more in the will of the legislator than in its moral content. While natural laws have a broad moral dimension ("consist in equity justice, gratitude and other moral virtues"[32]), they do not obligate *in foro externo*, in other words they are not laws in the full sense of the term, unlike positive laws:

> When a commonwealth is once settled, then are they actually laws, and not before; [...] for it is the sovereign power that obliges men to obey them. [...] Reciprocally also, the civil law is a part of the dictates of nature. For justice, that is to say, performance of covenant, and giving to every man his own, is a dictate of the law of nature [...] and

are commanded to endeavour peace, is derived this second law; that a man be willing, when others are so too, as far-forth, as for peace, and defence of himself he shall think it necessary, to lay down this right to all things; and be contented with so much liberty against other men, as he would allow other men against himself. [...] This is that law of the Gospel; whatsoever you require that others should do to· you, that do ye to them. And that law of all men, quod tibi fleri non vis, alteri ne feceris. (*Leviathan*, 14, 83)

At another point Hobbes summarizes natural laws in the golden rule of ethics: "The laws of nature therefore need not any publishing, nor proclamation; as being contained in this one sentence, approved by all the world, Do not that to another, which thou thinkest unreasonable to be done by another to thyself" (*Leviathan*, 26, 177).

[31] *Leviathan*, 26, 174.

[32] Ibid.

> therefore obedience to the civil law is part also of the law of nature.[33]

Observance of the natural law and consequently moral behavior is fulfilled through the observance of the positive law.[34] Humanity's non-observance of natural law in the state of nature paradoxically contradicts the usual association of the famous Hobbesian anthropological pessimism with the natural state. Indeed, in the state of nature the behavior of many people outwardly resembles the behavior of people who exhibit malice within lawful society. In general, people in a social environment are presented by Hobbes in an Augustinian manner as morally deficient (but without the Fall). [35] But such behavior in the natural state cannot be characterized as morally deficiency since people at that early stage are generally incapable of manifesting any kind of morality. [36] Human behavior in natural conditions results from the synergy of external material data with the psychobiological traits of human nature. It is only takes a small number of people to exhibit aggressive behavior (regardless of the cause) for that to be generalized by the need for others to respond accordingly based on their natural

[33] *Leviathan*, 26, 174. In this key passage, the voluntarism and conventionalism prevalent in Hobbes's work is full revealed. Elsewhere he relates natural and positive laws as follows: "Natural are those which have been laws from all eternity; and are called not only natural, but also moral laws; consisting in the moral virtues, as justice, equity, and all habits of the mind that lead to peace, and charity; [...] Positive, are those which have not been from eternity; but have been made laws by the will of those who have had the sovereign power over others; and are either written, or made known to men, by some other argument of the will of their legislator" (*Leviathan*, 26, 186).

[34] "Civil law is to every subject, those rules, which the commonwealth hath commanded him, [...] for the distinction of right, and wrong; that is to say, of what is contrary, and what is not contrary to the rule" (*Leviathan, 26, 173*).

[35] For example, he says that men "naturally love liberty, and dominion over others" (*Leviathan*, 17, 109).

[36] On Hobbes's "anthropological pessimism" in relation to the natural state, see Michael Oakeshott, "Introduction to Leviathan", *Hobbes on Civil Association*, Liberty Fund, Indianapolis, 1975, 63-64; and Richard Tuck, op. cit., 55.

right to survival. L'enfer, c'est les autres. This behavior is generalized by the very dynamics of the system governing the state of nature. In the state of nature the machine of nature is defective. The equal power of people,[37] their natural right or freedom to satisfy their natural needs and to pursue survival by any means,[38] the scarcity of sought-after goods,[39] and subjectivism (cognitive, volitional, moral)[40] constitute, in combination with each other, an explosive mixture that leads to the condition of *homo homini lupus*. "Nature itself is the author of (man's) ruin".[41] This situation is summarized by

[37] "Nature hath made men so equal, in the faculties of the body [...] From this equality of ability, ariseth equality of hope in the attaining of our ends. And therefore if any two men desire the same thing, which nevertheless they cannot both enjoy, they become enemies; and in the way to their end, which is principally their own conservation, and sometimes their delectation only, endeavour to destroy, or subdue one another" (*Leviathan*, 13, 80-81).

[38] "The right of nature, which writers commonly call *jus naturale*, is the liberty each man hath, to use his own power, as he will himself, for the preservation of his own nature; that is to say, of his own life; and consequently, of doing any thing, which in his own judgment, and reason, he shall conceive to be the aptest means thereunto" (*Leviathan*, 14, 84). Elsewhere Hobbes is more specific: "[...] before the institution of commonwealth, every man had a right to every thing, and to do whatsoever he thought necessary to his own preservation; subduing, hurting, or killing any man in order thereunto" (*Leviathan*, 28, 203).

[39] "From this equality of ability, ariseth equality of hope in the attaining of our ends. And therefore if any two men desire the same thing, which nevertheless they cannot both enjoy, they become enemies; and in the way to their end, which is principally their own conservation, and sometimes their delectation only, endeavour to destroy, or subdue one another" (*Leviathan*, 13, 81).

[40] "All men in the State of nature have a desire, and will to hurt, but not proceeding from the same cause, neither equally to be condemn'd; for one man according to that naturall equality which is among us, permits as much to others, as he assumes to himself (which is an argument of a temperate man, and one that rightly values his power); another, supposing himselfe above others, a will have a License to doe what he lists, a and challenges Respect, and Honour, as due to him before others, (which is an Argument of a fiery spirit). This mans will to hurt ariseth from Vain glory, and the false esteeme he hath of his owne strength; the other 's, from the necessity of defending himselfe, his liberty, and his goods against this mans violence" (*De Cive*, 1, 4).

[41] Michael Oakeshott, op. cit., 38.

Hobbes in a famous passage, according to which man experiences "continual fear, and danger of violent death" and his life is in general "solitary, poor, nasty, brutish, and short". [42] If the necessary and sought-after goods where available in sufficient abundance, people's behavior might have been different. Man in the state of nature is not so much bad in himself as trapped in problematic relationships with the environment and other people. In the context of these relationships he is objectively unable to survive or live without terror, misery and indignity. As Michael Oakeshott puts it: "the predicament for Hobbes is actually caused, not by an internal defect in human nature, but by something that becomes a defect when a man is among men". [43] Man in natural condition is a victim, regardless of his outward behavior. His cognitive deficiency and the consequent absence of a moral dimension in his actions remove from him any moral responsibility for the sufferings in the state of nature and his own. Hobbes himself states that "because [men] receive not their education and use of reason from nature" we cannot say "that men are naturally evil".[44]

According to Hobbes, "all men as soon as they arrive to the understanding of this hateful condition, doe desire (even nature it selfe compelling them) to be freed from this misery. But that this cannot be done except by compact".[45] The state

[42] *Leviathan*, 13, 82.

[43] Michael Oakeshott, "Introduction to Leviathan", *Hobbes on Civil Association*, ibid., 63-64.

[44] *De Cive*, Preface, 33. This comment by Hobbes should deter Rousseau, the most famous exponent of the "natural goodness" of man, from criticizing Hobbes for "[including] in savage man's care for his self-preservation the need to satisfy a multitude of passions which are the product of society" (Jean-Jacques Rousseau, "Discours on the Origins of Inequality", *The Collected Writings of Rousseau*, vol. 3, transl. & eds Christopher Kelly & Allan Bloom, Dartmouth College Press, Hanover and London, 1992, 35).

[45] *De Cive*, Preface, p. 34. The analogy with Rousseau's statement is interesting: "By leaving the state of nature, we force our fellows to leave it, too. No one can remain in it in spite of the others, and it would really be leaving it to want to remain when it is impossible to live there, for the first law of nature is the care of preserving oneself (Jean-Jacques Rousseau, "Emile or on Education", *The Collected Writings of Rousseau*,

of nature is the basis of the scientific conception and description of Leviathan. Hobbes needs a critical mass of premises that can support his political edifice. The state of nature is a set of solid initial definitions on the conditions of human life that inevitably prevail outside society. On this basis, Hobbes will unfold the nexus of institutions and behaviors in *Leviathan* in a strictly logical manner. As we have said, Leviathan is meant to be a political solution to the human problem as a whole. This resolution is only possible because man has language. Language, according to Hobbes, stabilizes the fluid content of the mind and gives man the ability to meditate on himself, that is, to reflect.[46] The exit from the state of nature and the coming of Leviathan is a product of humanity's reflection. Thus the experience of the state of nature is lingually formulated as "man's problem".

But here a methodological issue arises. According to Hobbes, as we have seen, certain knowledge presupposes "a priori" formation of initial lingual determinations of the type of Euclidean axiomatic assumptions. Hobbes states that state-building (like Euclidean geometry) can be accomplished on the basis of arbitrary initial assumptions set exclusively by the builder himself, since the work is his own in both cases. It does not require the mediation of experience, which is crucial in natural science and defines it. On this, Hobbes is not consistent. Commenting on his own construction of Leviathan, he states that he grounds "the civil right of sovereigns, and both the duty and liberty of subjects, upon the known natural inclinations of mankind, and upon the articles of the law of nature".[47]

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vol. 13, transl. & eds Christopher Kelly & Allan Bloom, Dartmouth College Press, Hanover and London, 2010, 342).

[46] "Language [...] makes introspection possible" (Michael Oakeshott, op. cit., 23).

[47] *Leviathan*, "A Review and Conclusion", 465-466. In *De Cive* he writes on this: "Concerning my Method, I thought it not sufficient to use a plain and evident style in what I had to deliver, except I took my beginning from the very matter of civill government, and then proceeded to its generation, and form, and the first beginning of justice; for every thing is best understood by its constitutive causes; for as in a watch, or some such small engine, the matter, figure, and motion of the wheels,

The natural inclinations of mankind is an empirical fact that determines the definitions to a certain extent. This reliance on empirical facts is a feature of natural science, as we have seen. Evaluating such references in Hobbes, Leo Strauss concludes that he ultimately regards political science an empirical science distinct from the more "pure" sciences of demonstration. Leo Strauss probably overemphasizes the role of experience in political science: "At any rate, Hobbes emphatically stated that political science may be based on, or consist of, 'experience' as distinguished from 'demonstrations'".[48] In fact, by describing the epistemological status of political science, Hobbes introduces a third category of science, which combines natural science with the pure sciences of certainty modeled on Euclidean geometry. In political science, the original definitions are affected by empirical data, but not to the decisive extent of the natural sciences. These empirical data are in turn subject to the free interpretative action of the political scientist. This position is closer to that of Sheldon Wolin. According to him, in relation to the "nature" of natural science "the 'nature' of politics [...] permitted a freer hand in imposing names and assigning meanings".[49]

cannot well be known, except it be taken in sunder, and viewed in parts; so t make a more curious search into the rights of States, and duties of Subjects, it is necessary, (I say not to take them in sunder, but yet that) they be so considered, as if they were dissolved, (i.e.) that we rightly understand what the quality of human nature is, in what matters it is, in what is not fit to make up a civill government, and how men must be agreed among themselves, that intend to grow up into a well-grounded State" ("The Preface", 32).

[48] Leo Strauss, op. cit., 174 n.

[49] Sheldon Wolin, *Politics and Vision*, ibid., 221.

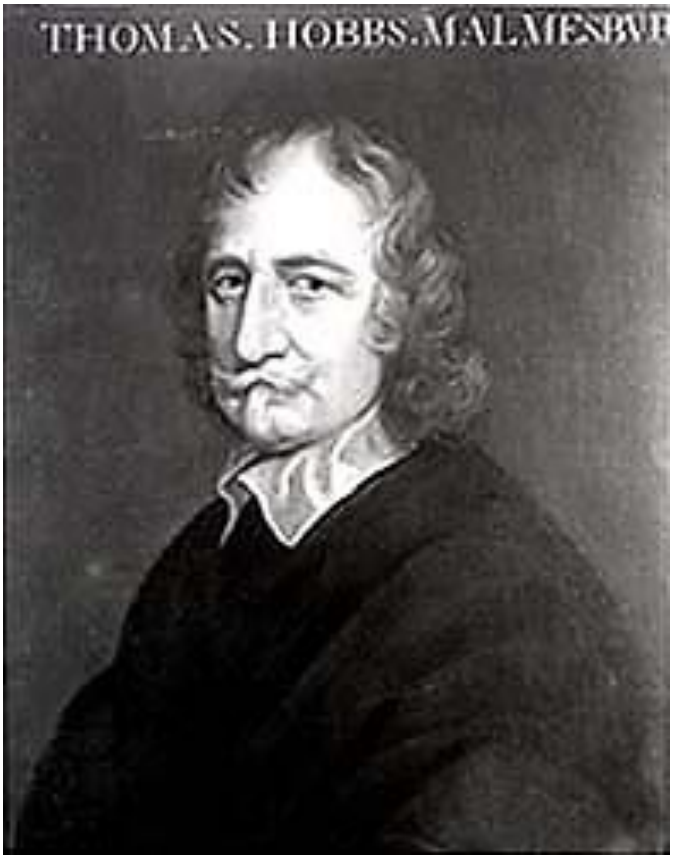
Conclusion

Hobbesian political science tries to solve the problem of man's existence in the world: man, while he is not and cannot be social, cannot survive or be happy outside society. This paradoxical and tragic situation, which is revealed to us by experience, enters language. It is called "state of nature" or "natural condition". After articulating it lingually, Hobbes subjects it to a process of reasoning, using as guiding thread the basic principle of self-preservation. The solution is called Leviathan. Leviathan is an unprecedented society of unsociable people, which has the ability to preserve itself and secure its members' survival with the least cost in pleasure.

Hobbes himself succinctly describes the problem, its solution, and their logical relationship:

> The final cause, end, or design of men, who naturally love liberty, and dominion over others, in the introduction of that restraint upon themselves, in which we see them live in commonwealths, is the foresight of their own preservation, and of a more contented life thereby; that is to say, of getting themselves out from that miserable condition of war, which is necessarily consequent, as hath been shown, to the natural passions of men, when there is no visible power to keep them in awe, and tie them by fear of punishment to the performance of their covenants, and observation of (the) laws of nature. [...] For the laws of nature, as *justice, equity, modesty, mercy* and in sum *doing to others as we would be done to,* of themselves, without the terror of some power, to cause them to be observed, are contrary to our natural passions, that carry tis to partiality, pride, revenge, and the like. And covenants, without the sword, are but words, and of no strength to secure a man at all. Therefore notwithstanding the laws of nature (which every one hath then kept, when he has the will to keep them, when he can do it safely) if there be no power

erected, or not great enough for our security; every man will, and may lawfully rely on his own strength and art, for caution against all other men.[50]



[50] *Leviathan*, 17, 109.