the political theories of Thomas Hobbes and Baruch Spinoza

by
Emmanuel E. Marcoglou
Ph.D.

ΑΙ ΠΟΛΙΤΙΚΑΙ ΘΕΩΡΙΑΙ ΤΟΥ THOMAS HOBBES ΚΑΙ ΤΟΥ BARUCH SPINOZA. Ἡ μελέτη αὐτὴ τοῦ κ. Ἐμμανουὴλ Ε. Μάρκογλου, ἐπὶ σειρὰν ἐτῶν Καθηγητοῦ τῶν Πολιτικῶν Ἐπιστημῶν εἰς τὸ Πανεπιστήμιον Fairleigh Dickinson τῶν Ἡνωμένων Πολιτειῶν, ἀποτελεῖ συμβολὴν εἰς τὸν κλάδον τῶν πολιτικῶν θεωριῶν, τῆς πολιτικῆς ἐπιστήμης, καί, εἰδικώτερον, εἰς τὴν ἔρευναν καὶ τὴν μελέτην τῶν πολιτικῶν ἰδεῶν τοῦ 17ου αἰῶνος. Ὁ συγγραφεὺς εἰς τὴν ἐργασίαν του αὐτὴν ἀναπτύσσει τὰς ἐπιρροὰς τῆς προγενεστέρας πολιτικῆς σκέψεως ἐπὶ τῶν ἰδεῶν τοῦ Hobbes καὶ τοῦ Spinoza, ἀναλύει τὰς ἀπόψεις τὰς ὁποίας οἱ δύο αὐτοὶ πολιτικοὶ φιλόσοφοι ἀνέπτυξαν διὰ τὴν ἔννοιαν τῆς δικαιοσύνης, τῆς ἐλευθερίας, τῆς ἀξιοπρεπείας τοῦ ἀτόμου καὶ τῆς δημοκρατίας, προσδιορίζει δὲ τὰ κοινὰ σημεῖα τῶν ἀπόψεών των, ὡς καὶ τὴν συμβολήν των εἰς τὴν διαμόρφωσιν τῆς πολιτικῆς σκέψεως τῆς ἐποχῆς των.

I. INTRODUCTION

Spinoza's personality «appeared to his contemporaries, as it has often since appeared to readers, remote and even obscure. Of all the great seventeenth century philosophers, Spinoza's life and the sources of his thought are least known».[1] Indeed, until quite recently, his writings were almost unknown in Greece.

This is surprising, for history can present few personalities more remarkable than this philosopher of Amsterdam. On the other hand he was a sensitive man who avoided notoriety, whose main works appeared after his death, and, even then, were published anonymously. Also, the manner of his writings was such as not to invite popularity. He shocked his contemporaries in many ways. All men in the seventeenth century had convictions which were inseparable from their anthropomorphic conception of God. When Spinoza tried to substitute this with the notion of necessary and eternal law, he was accused of monstrous impiety. Even friends of his, like Leibnitz, spoke of him with consistent depreciation. Throughout the century which followed his death, the scope and importance of his philosophical contribution were grossly underestimated and misapprehended.

Only Hobbes, an older contemporary of Spinoza, almost as great a thinker, suffered as much under the obloquy of supposed atheism. Hobbes's principles were accused of being «pernicious both to piety and policy, and destructive to all relations of mankind, between prince and subject, father and child, master and servant, husband and wife; and... they who maintain them obstinately, are fitter to live in hollow trees among wild beasts, than in Christian or political society. So God bless us».[2] This was Bishop Bramhall's opinion.

The intention of this study is to present an analysis

1. Rosalie Colie, «Spinoza and the Early English Deists», *Journal of the History of Ideas*, Vol. XX (January, 1959), p. 23.

2. Thomas Hobbes, *The English Works*. Edited by Sir William Molesworth. 11 Vols. (London: John Bohn, 1839-1845), Vol.V, p. 25.

of the political theories of Thomas Hobbes and Baruch Spinoza. A new analysis of those theories has become necessary as a result of the new knowledge which has been gained during the last decades, in the area of political thought.

It is a fact that Hobbes tried to establish his political philosophy on modern natural science. This cannot be traced back to one or other of his predecessors. He was the first who looked for, and found, a new science of man and state. He examined and re-examined with sincerity, clarity and depth, the ideal of civilization in its modern form, and the ideal both of the socialist movement and the bourgeois-capitalist development.

It was Hobbes's moral philosophy which influenced Kant, Rousseau, and Hegel. And his political philosophy is of great importance for modern philosophy, if the elucidation and discussion of the ideal of life is the decisive and primary task of philosophy. Its universal importance, however, cannot but remain unrecognized as long as the method is thought of as the determining feature of his politics. The moral attitude, which supports his political philosophy, is «pre-scientific» in the sense that it is independent of the foundation of modern science. This moral attitude finds its sincerest and fullest expression in Hobbes's political philosophy. Hobbes's *Levathian*, especially, is considered a classic of English literature. It was recognized as a powerful document for the times and also as a permanent contribution to moral and political philosophy.

Hobbes created a strong sovereign, but no authoritarian monster. His sovereign, like everybody, was afraid of death, and tried to satisfy his subjects' needs in order to avoid this end. The state's actions were to be limited. In this, Hobbes may have been the first liberal. The state was powerful, but only to secure order and security, not for self-glorification. The sovereign could not control man's private beliefs; his attention was confined to the outward behavior of man. And an individual could, as an ultimate weapon, resist if his life were in danger, for the sovereign would not be performing the function for which he existed.

Hobbes did not subscribe to the idea of a general good which was the object of men's desires. He did not accept the Aristotelian concept of man's social nature. From its individual, atomistic parts he had constructed an absolutist state. He had not allowed the sovereign to be in anyway restrained by natural law. He had tried to dispose of any theological justification of power. To answer him became a major preoccupation of succeeding writers. His influence faded, but it was restored with the Utilitarians in the nineteenth century.

A similar thesis, with variations, was elaborated by Spinoza. He, like Hobbes, demonstrated how men could be made to live in peace, in spite of enmity and instability; how men, «even when led by passion, may still have fixed and stable laws». The study of power was the key to the understanding of society and politics. The state resulted from human efforts to escape the condition of war, and to seek self-preservation. Thus a contract created a sovereign power. But men were not to surrender all their rights and become sheep. The good sovereign looked after the interest of all his subjects, and did his best to obtain «a union or agreement of minds». The ruler was powerful but he was limited by the fear he felt of his subjects.

According to Spinoza, God was equated with universal nature, and natural right with the power of nature. Spinoza emphasized, more than Hobbes, the importance of reason. Therefore, a political organization should allow a citizen the freest possible use of his reason. A proper state guaranteed not only security but intellectual freedom. As there was a need for enlightened and well-informed citizens, opinion would not be suppressed. An enlightened man would have a better understanding of his conditions and would not be at the mercy of his emotions.

Spinoza advocated religious freedom, separation of church and state, and toleration. He was very much against religious superstition and intolerance. These ideas were received with a torrent of abuse from theologians and their allies. But many poets and imaginative writers found themselves among his adherents. Goethe, Lessing, Auerbach and Heine studied him and admired him. This is not surprising as there is about Spinoza a charm and a power, which strongly appeal to the poetic sense. His friends, however, were intellectual friends who were also attracted by the strength of his character.

Spinoza was really the first political philosopher of modern times to declare himself openly a democrat. This was not so because he idealized the people. It was not a question of a mystic faith in the common man. Spinoza was a democrat because he had come to the conclusion that the democratic way of life was the best to assure the liberty of man. This was indeed a landmark in political thinking.

II. THE LIFE AND WRITINGS OF THOMAS HOBBES

Thomas Hobbes was born in England, in the village of Westport, near Malmesbury, in Wiltshire, on April 5, 1588. He had a happy boyhood in Malmesbury. His father was a friendly, semi-educated vicar who was, later, to lose his position for striking a parson. Thus, the boy was brought up with the financial help of his uncle, Francis, who was well-to-do, and

who sent him to grammar school and later to Oxford.

He studied Latin and Greek, under Robert Latimer, and, after he entered Magdalen-hall in Oxford, at fourteen, geography and astronomy. Many years later his enemies charged that he had not read enough.[1] To this he answered that if he had read as much as the others, he could not have known more than they did.[2] The truth was, Hobbes was very well read. But he did not want to offer evidence of his reading as he did not like to accept the past uncritically. «Though I reverence those men of ancient time», he wrote, «that either have written truth perspicuously, or set us in a better way to find it out ourselves; yet to the antiquity itself I think nothing due. For if we will reverence the age, the present is the oldest.»[3] After receiving his bachelor's degree he became, in 1608, a tutor to the son of William Cavendish, Baron Hardwick, who was to become the first Earl of Devonshire. This was an important milestone in his life as it spared him the poverty which was the usual lot of the tutors in his century.[4] Thanks to his connection with the Cavendish family, which lasted all his life, he was able to meet people like Lucius Cary, Lord Falkland, Lord Herbert of Cherbury, and Ben Jonson. Chatsworth, the Cavendish family estate, was to him a better university than Oxford.[5]

Hobbes was rather a friend than a tutor to his pupil, who was only three years younger than he was, seventeen when their association started, though already married (to a twelve-year-old Scottish heiress who, however, did not take up her marital duties for a few years).[6] In 1610 he and his pupil, who was actually a bachelor, visited Italy and France together to study foreign languages. After their return Hobbes gave himself completely to the study of the classical historians. Thus, he was able, in 1629, to publish his first work, a translation of Thucydides' *Peloponnesian War*. Shortly before he had served for a while as secretary to Francis Bacon.

In 1628 Cavendish, Hobbes's friend and student, died as a result of his «excessive indulgence in good living».[7] Hobbes accepted a position as a cicerone to the son of Sir Gervase Clinton with whom he visited France and Switzerland. He was now forty years old. It was at this time that he discovered Euclid when he saw a copy of his in a Geneva library.[8] Geometry infatuated Hobbes with its unity, logical structure and «beauty» which, according to Matthew Arnold, a born scientist can apply even to the most unpromising subject matter.[9] Algebra, on the other hand, did not make the same impression at all on him. Hobbes was suspicious of all efforts to «arithmetize» geometry.[10] Algebra was, for him, a minor branch of arithmetic, «to the theory whereof two or three Days at most are required, though to the Promptitude of Working, perhaps the Practice of three Months is necessary».[11] Actually, Hobbes greatly underestimated the importance of algebra. His ignorance of algebra—and calculus—led him to an argument with the great mathematician, of his time, John Wallis.[12]

In 1630, Hobbes went back to the Cavendish family as tutor to the young son of the Earl of Devonshire. With his student he went again (his third trip) to Europe. In Pisa he had many meetings with Galileo whom he remembered with respect all his life.[13]

It is at this time, after his return to England, that his political interests assert themselves. In 1640 he wrote two books, *De Corpore Politico, or the Elements of Law*, and *Humane Nature; or the Fundamental Elements of Policie*. Both were published in 1650, having previously circulated in manuscript. Also, in 1640, and as Parliament was to assume power, he thought it expedient to go to France, just in case that his monarchical ideas could be used, by his opponents, as a reason to persecute him. He remained in France for eleven years. While in Paris he published *De Cive*, in 1642. He also entered into a controversy with Descartes. Their differences were fundamental. Descartes accepted spirit as real but wanted to separate it from matter, while Hobbes wanted to banish it from the universe.

Hobbes also entered into a controversy with John Bramhall, Bishop of Derry, who attacked him for

1. Edward, Earl of Clarendon, *A Brief View and Survey of the Dangerous and Pernicious Errors to Church and State, in Mr. Hobbes's Book Entitled Levathian*. 2nd ed. (Oxford: Printed at the Theatre, 1676), Epistle Dedicatory.

2. John Aubrey, *«Brief Lives», chiefly of contemporaries set down by John Aubrey between the years 1669 and 1696*. Edited by Andrew Clark. 2 Vols. (Oxford: The Clarendon Press, 1898), p. 349.

3. Thomas Hobbes, *Levathian or the Matter, Forme and Power of a Commonwealth Ecclesiasticall and Civil*. Edited by Michael Oakeshott. (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1946), p. 467.

4. John Eachard, *The Grounds and Occasions of the Contempt of the Clergy and Religion Enquired into* (London: Printed by W. Godbid for N. Brooke at the Angel in Cornhill, 1670), *passim*.

5. Hobbes, *The English Works*, op. cit., VIII, IV.

6. Francis Bickley, *The Cavendish Family* (Boston: Hougthon Mifflin, 1914), p. 41.

7. Ibid., p. 43.

8. G. R. De Beer, «Some Letters of Thomas Hobbes», *Notes and Records of the Royal Society*, VII (April 1950), p. 205.

9. Matthew Arnold, «Literature and Science», *Discourses in America* (London, 1885), p. 113.

10. Thomas Hobbes, *Seven Philosophical Problems* (1662), in *Works*, op. cit., VII, pp. 67-8.

11. Thomas Hobbes, *Rosetum Geometrum* (1671), translated by Venterus Mandey as Book II of *Mellificium Mensionis* (4th ed., London, 1727), p. 125.

12. G. Udney Yule, «John Wallis, D.D., F.R.S.: 1616-1703», *Notes and Records of the Royal Society*, II (1939), pp. 74-82.

13. Thomas Hobbes, *Elements of Philosophy*, «De Corpore», *Works*, op. cit., I, VIII. Ferdinand Tönnies seems also to believe that Galileo had had great influence on Hobbes.

what he considered the free thought and impiety of *Levathian*.

In 1645 Hobbes was appointed tutor in mathematics to the Prince of Wales, who was living in Paris, as an exile. This aroused fears that Hobbes could prove to be a bad influence. Robert Baillie wrote from Scotland that, «the placeing of Hopes [Hobbes] (a professed Atheist, as they speak) about the Prince as his teacher, is ill taken. . . Let such wicked men be put from about him».[1] The fears, however, proved completely unfounded. The Prince, who became Charles II, did not give any indications of being under Hobbes's influence, except, perhaps, in his love and interest in science. Indeed, in 1652, after Hobbes's *Levathian* came out in 1651, Charles as a result of the general dissatisfaction, which the book created, asked Hobbes to leave the Court, and the sixty-four years old philosopher went back to England.

Back in London continued his studies in geometry and lived in semi-retirement at the Cavendish estate, in Derbyshire. After the Restoration the King, undisturbed by the rumours about Hobbes's «atheism», awarded him a pension of one hundred pounds a year.

In the later part of his life, Hobbes produced a Latin translation of the *Levathian*, which was published in Amsterdam, in 1670. He also distinguished himself by becoming, in a way, the founder of a school of psychological literary criticism. «To Hobbes», wrote Professor Thorpe, «more than to any other single Englishman, later criticism may be said to have owed its distrust for tradition and dogma and its gradual return to the spirit of Aristotle in basing its judgements on a close study of works of literature and on an analysis of facts in relation to literature.»[2] Indeed, Hobbes's style is ironical, witty, and didactic. His ideas have coherence and unity, and, his system has order. And, as Professors Wellek and Warren, the theoreticians of literature, have pointed out, «every work of art imposes an order, an organization, a unity on its material».[3] Hobbes, himself, had this to say about it, «If you will be a philosopher in good earnest, let your reason move upon the deep of your own cogitations and experience; those things that lie in confusion must be set asunder, distinguished and every one stamped with its own name set in order; that is to say, your method must resemble that of the creation.»[4]

Hobbes was faithful to this method. «The *Levathian*», Michael Oakeshott declares, «is a myth, the transposition of an abstract argument into the world of the imagination. In it we are made aware at a glance of the fixed and simple centre of a universe of complex and changing relationships. The argument may not be the better for this transposition, and what it gains in vividness it may pay for in illusion. But it is an accomplishment of art that Hobbes, in the history of political philosophy, shares only with Plato.»[5]

As an old man, Hobbes decided to return to the classics. When he was eighty he translated, in English verse, the *Odyssey* and the *Iliad*. Why and how did he decide to do so? «Because», he says, in his preface, «I had nothing else to do. Why publish it? Because I thought it might take off my adversaries from showing their folly upon my more serious writings, and set them upon my verses to show their wisdom. But why without annotations? Because I had no hope to do it better than it had already been done by Mr. Ogilby.»[6] The translations were not received well in some quarters. John Dryden wrote that Hobbes studied poetry, «as he did mathematics, when it was too late».[7]

During his old age Hobbes spent almost all of his time with the Cavendishes, at their estate. He meditated and read. He smoked moderately and drank very little. Like Spinoza he was a bachelor.

Hobbes died in 1679 at age ninety-one. According to a legend he wished that his tomb would bear this inscription: «Here is the true philosopher's stone». Instead his tomb bears this epitaph, written by himself, «Vir probus, et fama eruditionis Domi forisque bene cognitus».[8]

Even individuals who opposed him all his life like Clarendon and Ross gave him credit for his erudition and character. He knew intimately such people as Cowley, Waller, Cassendi, Harvey, Petty, Pell, Selden and Mersenne. Harrington, not an admirer of Hobbes's politics, complimented him as a man who «is and will in all future ages be accounted the best writer at this day in the world».[9] Most of these men disagreed with either his political theories or his religious beliefs or with both. But they all agreed that Thomas Hobbes was one of the great philosophers of his era.

1. Robert Baillie, *The letters and Journals of Rober Baillie*. Edited by David Laing. 3 Vols. (Edinborough [sic]: The Bannatyne Club, 1841-1842), II, pp. 388, 395.
2. Clarence De Witt Thorpe, *Aesthetic Theory of Thomas Hobbes*. (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1940), p. 8.
3. Rene Wellek and Austin Warren, *Theory of Literature*. (London, 1949), p. 14.
4. Hobbes, *Works*, op. cit., I, XIII.
5. Michael Oakeshott, Introduction, *Levathian*, op. cit., p. XVIII.
6. Hobbes, *Works*, op. cit., X, X.
7. John Dryden, *Fables Ancient and Modern* (London: Printed for Jacob Tonson at Shakespear's Head over — against Katherine Street in the Strand, 1713), «Preface», sig. A3v.
8. Aubrey, op. cit., I, p. 386.
9. James Harrington, *The Common-wealth of Oceana* (London: Printed by J. Streeter for Livewell Chapman, 1656), p. 259.

III. THE LIFE AND WRITINGS OF BARUCH SPINOZA

Baruch Spinoza was born in Amsterdam, in 1632, into a Jewish community of Sephardics. The members of the community had lost most of their traditions, continuing to be Jewish more, perhaps, because they were called so than for any other reason.[1]

Spinoza lived within this little society, of about one thousand peolpe, until he was twenty.[2] He was taught Hebrew in the community school but his native tongue was Spanish.[3] He learned enough Dutch to be able to speak with his Christian friends and also acquired Latin, «the language of priests and scholars». Although as a child he had received religious training, his outlook and character indicate that he felt as a European.

Baruch Spinoza was excommunicated from his community on July 27, 1656, when he was twenty-four years old. Amsterdam's Rabbi Isaac de Fonseca Aboab expelled him from his fellow Jews with these words:

> The chiefs of the council do you to wit, that having long known the evil opinions and works of Baruch de Spinoza, they have endeavored by divers ways and promises to withdraw him from his evil ways, and they are unable to find a remedy, but on the contrary have had every day more knowledge of the abominable heresies practiced and taught by him, and of other enormities committed by him, and have of this many trustworthy witnesses who have deposed and borne witness in the presence of the said Espinoza, and by whom he stood convicted...
>
> With the judgement of the angels and of the saints we excommunicate, cut off, curse and anathematize Baruch de Spinoza, with the consent of the elders and of all this holy congregation, ... with the anathema wherewith Joshua cursed Jericho, with the curse which Elisha laid upon the children, and with all the curses which are written in the law. Cursed be he by day and cursed be he by night. Cursed be he in sleeping and cursed be he in waking,... The Lord shall not pardon him, ..., The Lord shall destroy his name under the sun, ...
>
> And we warn you, that none may speak with him by word of mouth, nor by writing, nor show any favor to him, nor be under one roof with him, nor come within four cubits of him, nor read any paper composed or written by him.[4]

What was the real reason that made the Amsterdam Jewish elders excommunicate Spinoza? Was it that his liberalism offended their orthodoxy? Or, perhaps, they sensed in him the new social forces which were developing the mind of a man who would become the first revolutionary Jewish intellectual? In any case after his excommunication, Spinoza had nothing to do with the Jewish community. His social, economic, and political ideas were opposed to them. They were conservative while he was a republican who, at the same time, advocated the dissolution of the important trading companies. He was against monopolies. The elders could not tolerate radical political and economic ideas nor theological disagreements. They were afraid of him and their act of excommunicating him resulted from their bewilderment and fear.

After his excommunication, in 1656, and until his death, in 1677, he lived within the Christian community, but he never joined any religious group nor was he assimilated to the secular Dutch people. He devoted his time composing his philosophy and making a modest living polishing lenses. His life was completely in agreement with the ethical ideal of his own philosophy. He lived according to his own moral standards.[5]

Baruch's father had allowed him, at the age of eighteen, to study Latin, under Professor Van den Ende. He proved to be a good student. All his outstanding works were written in Latin which, although not elegant, was adequate. Van den Ende actually had started him on a new life by introducing him to the works of Galileo, Copernicus, Harvey, Kepler, and Descartes. Spinoza worked within the philosophical traditions of his time, but was able to transform them completely; yet according to their own rules.[6] The Calvinists who were, potentially, dangerous to him could not understand his Latin, and thus could not make a case against him. And as he did not try to become leader of a school, nobody could be persecuted in his name.[7] Yet, before his excommunication, the Jewish authorities had tried to stop him, as much as they could. Realizing that he did not make enough polishing lenses they had offered him 1,000 florins annually if he would desert Van den Ende and stay in their communion. As he had never been interested in money he turned them down. Many years later, he wrote in *The Ethics* that, «the free man who lives among the ignorant, strives, as far as he can, to avoid receiving favors from them».[8]

Still, it is a fact that at his time the Netherlands tolerated more the practice of unorthodox ideas than any other European nation.[9] Radical writers who

1. Bernard H. M. Vlekke, *Evolution of the Dutch Nation* (New York: Roy Publishers, 1945), p. 186.
2. C. R. Boxer, *The Dutch Seaborne Empire* (New York: Knopf, 1965), p. 129.
3. A. Wolf, *The Correspondence of Spinoza* (New York: Dial Press, 1927), p. 407.
4. Sir Frederick Pollock, *Spinoza: His Life and Philosophy* (2nd ed., London, 1899), pp. 17-8.
5. Jean Luckas, «The Life of the Late Mr. De Spinoza», in *The Oldest Biography of Spinoza*. Edited by A. Wolf (London Allen and Unwin, 1927), pp. 59, 64.
6. Leon Roth, *Spinoza, Descartes and Maimonides* (New York: Russell and Russell, 1963), p. 56.
7. Wolf, op. cit., p. 479.
8. *The Chief Works of Benedict de Spinoza*, Translated from the Latin with an introduction by R. H. M. Elwes, Volumes I and II bound as one (Dover Publications, Inc., New York, 1951), Vol. II, p. 234.
9. Wolf, op. cit. Ep. 7, p. 100.

could not print their books elsewhere did so there.[1] Also, Spinoza could rely on the influence of some powerful friends, members of the ruling class. They were not, exactly, his followers, but he and they were in agreement about so many things that many writers have formed the opinion that he was the political theorist of the party supporting Jan De Witt, the man who ruled de facto the country from 1653 to 1672.

Spinoza published, under his own name, only one book, on the philosophy of Descartes. His *Tractatus Theologico-Politicus* came out, anonymously, in 1670. The *Tractatus de Intellectus Emendatione*, the *Ethics* and the *Tractatus Politicus* were all published in 1677, the year of his death, and after he died. The *Ethics* and the *Tractatus de Intellectus Emendatione*, however, had been completed many years before. Spinoza's fame during the second part of the seventeenth century, and throughout the eighteenth, was entirely based on the *Tractatus Theologico-Politicus*.[2] It had very wide circulation and influenced, greatly, the Enlightenment.[3] The book came out in an underground edition, under the imprint of a fictitious publisher. It created a storm. He was classified, together with Hobbes, as an «atheist». Although Spinoza had many secret disciples, nobody of importance wanted to be publicly identified with his doctrines.[4] John Locke, for example, who was quite familiar with the doctrines of both Hobbes and Spinoza, and who knew well the *Tractatus Theologico-Politicus*, turned against Spinoza, pretending that he hardly knew the book. This is what he considered expedient to write, «I am not so well read in Hobbes or Spinoza as to be able to say what were their opinions in this matter. But possibly there be those who will think your lordship's authority of more use to them in the case than those justly decried names . . .»[5] Leibnitz, who knew Spinoza personally, often denied that he did so. Even Hume, who adhered to his principles,[6] referred to Spinoza as «that famous atheist».[7] Kant did not read the *Ethics*, in spite of its impact on German idealism.[8] After this period it is not possible to measure the influence of Spinoza. In Germany, Nietzsche, among others, acknowledges it.[9] In England, during the first half of the nineteenth century, many Spinozists appeared. Among them were Shelley, George Eliot, Byron, Coleridge, and Wordsworth.[10]

Because of his emphasis on psychic determinism, Spinoza has been considered as the father of psychoanalysis.[11] But it cannot be said that he is, in any direct way, the founder of modern psychology.

On February 16, 1673, he was offered the post of Professor of Philosophy, at the University of Heidelberg. This is the letter sent to him in the name of the Elector Palatine:

> *Most renowned Sir*, His Most Serene Highness the Elector Palatine, my most gracious master, commands me to write to you, who are, as yet unknown to me, but most favorably regarded by his Most Serene Highness, and to inquire of you, whether you are willing to accept an ordinary professorship of Philosophy in his illustrious University. An annual salary would be paid to you, equal to that enjoyed at present by the ordinary professors. You will hardly find elsewhere a prince more favorable to distinguished talents, among which he reckons yourself. You will have the most ample freedom in philosophical teaching, which the prince is confident you will not misuse, to disturb the religion publicly established. I cannot refrain from seconding the prince's injuction. I, therefore, most earnestly beg you to reply as soon as possible, and to address your answer either under cover to the Most Serene Elector's resident at the Hague, Mr. Grotius, or to Mr. Gilles Van der Hele, so that it may come in the packet of letters usually sent to the court, or else to avail yourself of some other convenient opportunity for transmitting it. I will only add, that if you come here, you will live pleasantly a life worthy of a philosopher, unless events turn out quite contrary to our expectation and hope. So farewell. I remain, illustrious Sir, Your devoted admirer, I. Lewis Fabritious. Professor of the Academy of Heidelberg, and Councillor of the Elector Palatine.[12]

Heidelberg was one of the most outstanding universities of Europe and the offer, to the son of a Portuguese-Jewish refugee, very flattering. But Spinoza did not miss the meaning of the reference to «the religion publicly established». The implication was clear. This was his answer:

> *Distinguished Sir*, If I had ever desired to take a professorship in any faculty, I could not have wished for any other than which is offered to me, through you, by his Most Serene Highness the Elector Palatine, especially because of that freedom in philosophical teaching, which the most gracious prince is kind enough to grant, not to speak of the desire which I have long entertained, to live under the rule of a prince, whom all men admire for his wisdom.

1. Ibid., Ep. 68, p. 334; Ep. 70, p. 339.
2. R. G. Collingwood, *The Idea of History* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1956), p. 179.
3. Paul Hazard, *The European Mind* (Cleveland: World Publishing Co., 1963), pp. 139, 144-50.
4. Robert A. Duff, *Spinoza's Political and Ethical Philosophy* (Glasgow: James Maclehose and Sons, 1903), p. 8.
5. *The Works of John Locke* (London: Thomas Tegg 1823), IV, p. 477.
6. Duff, op. cit., p. 8.
7. David Hume, *A Treatise of Human Nature*. Edited by L. A. Sebby-Bigge (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1888), p. 241.
8. Hubertus Gezinus Hubbeling, *Spinoza's Methodology* (N.V. Groningen: Van Gorsum and Co., 1964), p. 1.
9. Walter A. Kaufman, *Nietzsche* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1950), p. 116.
10. Lore Metzger, «Coleridge's Vindication of Spinoza», *Journal of the History of Ideas* (April 1960, Vol. XXI), pp. 279-93.
11. Robert Waelder, «Psychic Determinism and the Possibility of Prediction», *Psychoanalytic Quarterly*, Vol. XXXII, No. 1 (1963), p. 15.
12. Spinoza, *Works*, op. cit., pp. 373-4.

But since it has never been my wish to teach in public, I have been unable to induce myself to accept this splendid opportunity, though I have long deliberated about it. I think, in the first place, that I should abandon philosophical research if I consented to find time for teaching young students. I think, in the second place, that I do not know the limits, within which the freedom of my philosophical teaching would be confined, if I am to avoid all appearance of disturbing the publicly established religion. Religious quarrels do not arise so much from ardent zeal for religion, as from men's various dispositions and love of contradiction, which causes them to habitually distort and condemn everything, however rightly it may have been said. I have experienced these results in my private and secluded station, how much more should I have to gear them after my elevation to this post of honor.

Thus, you see, distinguished Sir, that I am not holding back in the hope if getting something better, but through my love of quietness, which I think I can in some measure secure, if I keep away from lecturing in public.[1]

A few years before, in 1667, a friend of Spinoza, Simon de Vries, had died remembering him in his will and leaving him 500 florins a year. The sum was not a large one. But Spinoza stated that he did not need it all and accepted only 300 florins which insisted that covered all his needs. Apparently this was not so and he was soon obliged to move to cheaper quarters. He also saved money by preparing his own meals. He lived in an attic chamber while he continued to work at his trade.

Having made his position clear on politics and theology, Spinoza came back to the *Ethics*, the great work of his life. When he finished it, in 1675, he added this comment:

I have thus completed all I wished to set forth touching the mind's power over the emotions and the mind's freedom. Whence it appears, how potent is the wise man, and how much he surpasses the ignorant man, who is driven only by his lusts. For the ignorant man is not only distracted in various ways by external causes without ever gaining the true acquiescence of his spirit, but moreover lives, asit were unwitting of himself, and of God, and of things, and as soon as he ceases to suffer, ceases also to be.

Whereas, the wise man, in so far as he is regarded as such, is scarcely at all disturbed in spirit, but, being conscious of himself, and of God, and of things, by a certain eternal necessity, never ceases to be, but always possesses true acquiescence of his spirit.

If the way which I have pointed out as leading to this result seems exceedingly hard, it may nevertheless be discovered. Needs must it be hard, since it is so seldom found. How would it be possible, if salvation were ready to our hand, and could without great labour be found, that it should be by almost all men neglected? But all things excellent are as difficult as they are rare.[2]

All of a sudden he made up his mind not to publish the book. These are his reasons as they are mentioned in a letter addressed to his friend Oldenburg:

Distinguished and illustrious Sir, When I received your letter of the 22nd July, I had set out to Amsterdam for the purpose of publishing the book I had mentioned to you. While I was negotiating, a rumour gained currency that I had in the press a book concerning God, wherein I endeavoured to show that there is no God. This report is believed by many. Hence certain theologians, perhaps the authors of the rumour, took occasion to complain of me before the prince and the magistrates; moreover, the stupid Cartesians, being suspected of favouring me, endeavoured to remove the aspersion by abusing everywhere my opinions and writings, a course which they still pursue. When I became aware of this through trustworthy men, who also assured me that the theologians were everywhere lying in wait for me, I determined to put off publishing till I saw how things were going, and proposed to inform you of my intentions. But matters seem to get worse and worse, and I am still uncertain what to do.

Meanwhile I do not like to delay any longer answering your letter. I will first thank you heartily for your friendly warning, which I should be glad to have further explained, so that I may know, which are the doctrines which seem to you to be aimed against the practice of religion and virtue. If principles agree with reason, they are, I take it, also most serviceable to virtue. Further, if it be not troubling you too much I beg you to point out the passages in the *Tractatus Theologico-Politicus* which are objected to by the learned, for I want to illustrate that treatise with notes, and to remove if possible, the prejudices conceived against it. Farewell.[3]

On Saturday, February 21, 1677, Baruch Spinoza died at the age of 44. He had been a man who had thought it right that a philosopher should remain concealed, impassively, behind his philosophy, and, like his great ancestors, Lucretius and Euclid, he had concealed, effectively, himself behind his work. Radical in his economics, politics and associations, he became the founder of the philosophy of liberalism.

IV. THE POLITICAL THEORIES OF HOBBES

Five main ideas characterize Hobbes's political philosophy: (1) the idea of moving away from monarchy as the most natural form of state, to the idea of monarchy as the most perfect artificial state; (2) the idea of moving away from the recognition of natural obligation on the basis of law, morality, and the state, to the deduction of law, morality, and the state from a natural claim; (3) the idea of moving away from the recognition of a superhuman authority —whether of a natural order based on divine reason or a revelation based on divine will; (4) the idea of moving away from the study of past and present states to the free construction of the future state; and (5) the idea of moving away from the principle of honor, to the principle of fear of violent death. Hobbes's philosophy is exactly this homogeneous connection among the final stages of the ideas mentioned. His fundamental opinion was that fear, or more precisely fear of death, was the power which made men clear-sighted, and vanity the force which made men blind.

1. Ibid., Vol. II, pp. 374-5.
2. Ibid., Vol. II, pp. 270-1.
3. Ibid., Vol. II, pp. 296-7.

His political science was applied to at least three sorts of phenomena: (1) law; (2) religion; (3) history.

Law. According to Hobbes, the law of a state is the command of the ruler to the subjects, «CIVIL LAW, Is to every Subject, those Rules, which the Commonwealth hath Commanded him, by Word, writing or other sufficient Sign of the Will, to make use of, for the Distinction of Right, and Wrong; that is to say, of what is contrary, and what is not contrary to the Rule.»[1]

Hobbes sees the ruler as the absolute source of law in the state. Within the state, there are no laws that are not the ruler's laws. Thus, what is not authorized by the sovereign is of no importance. It is, therefore, a logical conclusion that the opinions of lawyers, the decisions of judges, the interpretations of divine or natural law, the orders of subordinate assemblies, are only law if they are approved as such by the ruler.

Hobbes offers an explanation of law which clarifies the legal structure of the state; his political science shows that all law-making and law-enforcing agencies derive their jurisdictions and powers from the sovereign. This, politically, amounts to an attack on the supporters of Parliament and on the common-law position, as at the start of the Civil War everybody accepted the idea that the King in Parliament was sovereign.[2] The office of the King was abolished in 1649 when England became a Republic.[3]

Religion. Hobbes tries to explain the phenomena of religion as he explains the phenomena of law. The ruler, whether Christian or not, regulates religious opinion and public worship. All established religion has its force not *jure divino* but *jure civili.* Men are free to believe what they want in the privacy of their minds, as long as they obey the sovereign's commands. Christianity requires only a simple belief in Christ and obedience to the sovereign; the other faiths are only methods used by ambitious clerics to exploit believers and enhance their power.[4] As religion became more and more the source of social disturbances after 1640, Hobbes spent more and more time against religious fanaticism.[5]

History. Hobbes makes also an effort to explain the phenomena of history. This is a more important test of his political philosophy than his explanations of law and religion. Like the phenomena of nature, the phenomena of history occur in sequence in time. What we would like to have is a causal explanation of the sequences of events. And this is what Hobbes ought to give us, according to his own principles.

Some people believe that all knowledge is empirical. But Hobbes disagrees, «this», he says, «is an error; for these signs are but conjectural; and according as they have often or seldom failed, so their assurance is more or less; but never full and evident; for though a man hath always seen the day and night to follow one another hitherto; yet can he not thence conclude they shall do so, or that they have done so eternally. 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».[6] Knowledge of phenomena can be provided from observation and experience, but causal knowledge can be provided by science alone.[7]

Students of Hobbes's political philosophy have also paid special attention to his obvious anti-aristocratic prejudices. It is a fact that he explicitly denied that one man's blood was better than another's,[8] and refuted the peerage's claims to be regarded as the natural counsellors of the King. «Good counsel comes not by lot, nor by inheritance.»[9] He was also afraid that justice could be perverted by the influence of the powerful and the rich. He condemned the existence of private armies and superfluous retainers,[10] and did not accept the idea that the misdemeanours of the great should be treated more leniently than those of the ordinary people. On the contrary, for, «the violences, oppressions, and injuries they do, are not extenuated, but aggravated by the greatness of their persons».[11]

His hostility to the nobility, however, should not be exaggerated. His attacks were, actually, against the relics of feudalism, which was decaying in mid-seventeenth century. Unlike Spinoza, Hobbes did not urge the abolition of nobility and, often, his attitude to the House of Lords was not unsympathetic. Even more striking were the concessions he made to the old aristocratic code. Not only did he favor titles of honor;[12] he was even prepared to elevate a man's concern for his reputation into a natural right, so that a man could refuge to execute a shameful act if another could do it without incurring ignominy. Indeed, under certain conditions, a man could refuge to fight, personally, for his sovereign:

> Upon this ground, a man that is commanded as a soldier to fight against the enemy, though his sovereign have right

1. Hobbes, *Levathian*, op. cit., p. 203.
2. J.H.M. Salmon, *The French Religious Wars in English Political Thought* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1959), pp. 81-8.
3. S.R.Gardiner, ed.,*ConstitutionalDocuments of the Puritan Revolution, 1628-60.* (Oxford: Clar. Press, 1889),pp.291-7.
4. Hobbes, *Levathian*, op. cit., pp.214-27.
5. Ibid., pp. 286-546.
6. Hobbes, *Elements of Law*, op. cit., (I. iv. 10), p. 16.
7. Ibid., pp. 1-14, *passim.*
8. Ibid., p. 68.
9. Hobbes, *English Works*, op. cit., III, p. 340.
10. Ibid., III, p. 224.
11. Ibid., III, p. 333.
12. Hobbes, *English Works*, op. cit., III, p. 167.

enough to punish his refusal with death, may nevertheless in many cases refuse, without unjustice; as when he substituteth a sufficient soldier in his place... And there is allowance to be made for natural timorousness... When armies fight, there is on one side, or both, a running away; yet when they do it not out of treachery, but fear, they are not esteemed to do it unjustly, but dishonourably. For the same reason, to avoid battle, is not injustice, but cowardice. But he that inrolleth himself a soldier, or taketh imprest money, taketh away the excuse of a timorous nature;... And when the defence of the commonwealth, requireth at once the help of all that are able to bear arms, every one is obliged; because otherwise the institution of the commonwealth, which they have not the purpose, or courage to preserve, was in vain.[1]

It is obvious here that Hobbes considers the *words* of the covenant as allowing some rights in the subject to refuse to conform to his sovereign's orders.

There was one sphere, however, where Hobbes disapproved completely of the aristocratic cult. This was the institution of dueling which had only taken root in England during the later sixteenth century.[2] Hobbes rejected dueling, as «a custom not many years since begun» that «a gallant man, and one that is assured of his own courage, cannot take notice of».[3] He claimed that only men who did not have sufficient faith in themselves reacted to an insult with a duel invitation.[4]

Hobbes is an anti-aristocratic royalist. He believes that the sovereign has the duty to preserve his own power and the necessary rights for the full exercise of sovereignty. It is his duty to see that his subjects recognize those rights.[5] The sovereign must defend his subjects from foreign and domestic dangers and to do so he must maintain proper military forces, and he must have the financial means to pay for these services. He will avoid unnecessary wars[6] but will fight if necessary. He will forestall attempts at rebellion by watching over political factions and doctrines.[7]

The sovereign has also the right to commit his subjects to the religion of his choice:

And forasmuch as eternal is better than temporal good it is evident, that they who are in sovereign authority, are by the law of nature obliged to further the establishing of all such doctrines and rule, and the commanding of all such actions, as in their conscience they believe to be the true way thereunto.[8]

It is also the sovereign's duty to pass laws leading to the increase of wealth—to encourage manufactures, fishing and husbandry and to discourage idleness. This does not mean, however, that Hobbes was in favor of laissez-faire economics. On the contrary he ruled that while the idle and strong should be made to work, the state should provide for the weak and poor.[9]

The sovereign must consider it his duty to apply rewards and punishments. Hobbes considers punishment as part of natural law that in revenges, men should not look at the greatness of the evil past, but at the greatness of the good to follow.[10] The purpose, therefore, must not be revenge, but some social good, including correction either of others by the offender's example or of the offender himself. The most severe punishment should be for crimes dangerous to the public. Crimes which result from fear, need or infirmity, should be treated with more lenience. Finally, the sovereign must select good advisers and public officers and see that the judges are honest men. When the judges are corrupt, this can, «... put wicked men in hope to pass unpunished», and «honest subjects encompassed with murderers, thieves, and knaves, will not have the liberty to converse freely with each other, nor scarce to stir abroad without hazard;...»[11]

A further consideration should be given, perhaps, to the authority of the civil sovereign. A theory in which all legal authority is traced to his commands invites questions such as these: Is the sovereign to legalize his own position?, or Is the supreme authority to authorize itself?, or Is the original exercise of authority, an exercise of power rather than authority? It may be observed that so far as the sovereign's authority is concerned, it is explained by Hobbes as deriving neither from sovereign command nor from civil law, but by the citizens themselves who, directly or indirectly, authorize the sovereign's actions. Thus, and because of the above, Hobbes may be able to say that ultimately all forms of government are democratic. According to him political authority is not absolute. It is for and over some person, and it exists where that person has authorized it or for so much as he has done so. In dealing with this question, Hobbes continues:

Which power and right of commanding, consists in this, that each citizen hath conveyed all his strength and power to that man or council; which to have done, because no man can transfer his power in a natural manner, is nothing else than to have parted with his right of resisting.[12]

Hobbes refuses, therefore, to allow that political power can be concentrated this way, when he is

1. Ibid., III, p. 205.
2. Sir G. Clark, *War and society in the seventeenth century* (Cambridge, 1958), chapter 2.
3. Hobbes, *English Works*, op. cit., III, p. 286.
4. Ibid., III, p. 295.
5. Ibid., III, pp. 323-32.
6. Ibid., IV, p. 220.
7. Ibid., IV, pp. 216-20.
8. Ibid., IV, p. 214.
9. Ibid., III, p. 334.
10. J. Laird, *Hobbes* (London, 1934), pp. 221-3.
11. Hobbes, *De Corpore Politico*, *English Works*, op. cit., IV, pp. 217-8.
12. Hobbes, *De Cive*, *English Works*, op. cit., II, p. 70.

directly considering the point. Even the most autocratic ruler must depend upon the co-operation of at least his police force, and the strength of men can be of value only if their minds and wills are brought to conformity with the commands which are issued to them. Hobbes knows this very well, and considers throughout political power as a problem of submission of the human will.

I assive resistance by the subject should prove ins fficient for the maintainance of sovereign power, th nly solution, according to Hobbes, is an expa on of the citizen's responsibilities and obligatio On this point he is very clear:

> The end for which one man giveth up, and relinquisheth to another, or others, the right of protecting and defending himself by his own power, is the security which he expecteth thereby, of protection and defence from those to whom he doth so relinquish it; and a man may then account himself in the estate of security, when he can foresee no violence to be done unto him, from which the doer may not be deterred by the power of that sovereign, to whom they have every one subjected themselves: and without that security, there is no reason for a man to deprive himself of his own advantages, and make himself a prey to others... How far therefore in the making of a commonwealth, man subjecteth his will to the power of others, must appear from the end, namely, security. For whatsoever is necessary to be by covenant transferred, for the attaining thereof, so much is transferred, or else every man is in his natural liberty to secure himself.[1]

Here Hobbes introduces a different kind of argument. At this point, whatsoever is necessary for securing the objective of the political covenant should be transferred to the sovereign authority. He enlarges this principle, so as to make it the citizen's responsibility to see that the purpose of the covenant is not frustrated. Indeed, he expands the citizen's obligations to provide security and peace for the preservation of human society.

In the final section of *Levathian*, Hobbes adds a further law of nature, «To the Laws of Nature... I would have this added, *that every man is bound by nature, as much as in him lieth, to protect in war the authority, by which he is himself protected in time of peace.*»[2] But, of course, the only thing that can be transferred by the political covenant is the right to resist, and Hobbes's appeal to the objective of the covenant is, in a way, a recognition of its insufficiency.

Sovereign and people cannot be contestants in a controversy, because «the people» is either a multitude of individuals or a political expression which takes for granted the exercise of sovereignty. Furthermore, disagreements between individual subjects and the sovereign, cannot be taken as a special case of disagreements among the subjects themselves. Because in the former case, who is to judge and who will offer a satisfactory interpretation of law so that the problem may find a solution?

Hobbes can only reply, to those who object to this conclusion, that the exercise of sovereignty is a necessary condition of society, and that the existence of an agent outside the framework of civil law is a necessary condition of sovereignty. To those who would consider this unattractive for society, Hobbes explains that the power of sovereignty is not as harmful as civil war,[3] and, besides, we have no choice:

> And whosoever thinking sovereign power too great, will seek to make it less, must subject himself, to the power, that can limit it; that is to say, to a greater.[4]

V. THE POLITICAL THEORIES OF SPINOZA

The medieval ideal of feudalism and European unity under the Roman papacy, had been destroyed, by the rise of national monarchies and the growth of urban industries. The seventeenth century was coming to its end, and the clergy and landed aristocracy were loosing ground as the princes and city burghers were acquiring new political importance. The kings of Spain, France, and England, were establishing royal despotisms, based on Roman law and the Justinian dictum that the king's will had legal force. At the same time, the new class of merchants and manufacturers, who had accumulated wealth and demanded participation in the government of their countries, were serving as a check against absolutism.

The persecution of the Protestants by Catholic Spain, in the Netherlands, and Spanish interference in Dutch domestic policies, together with several other factors, had led to revolts and, finally, to the establishment of an independent republic. This proved particularly conducive to political thought, as the Dutch intellectuals were trying to justify their new independence, by collecting all the arguments necessary to answer the followers of absolute monarchy and those who idealized the temporal authority of the Popes.

It was, at this time, Spinoza who established the doctrines of human equality, of popular sovereignty and of the general or common will of the people. He had tried to secure freedom of thought and expression and, if he had lived longer, he would have probably become as known for his contribution in

1. Hobbes, *De Corpore Politico*, *English Works*, op. cit., IV, pp. 128-9.
2. Hobbes, *Levathian*, *English Works*, op. cit., III, p. 703.
3. Ibid., p. 170
4. Ibid., III, p. 195.

the development of modern political science as he was in metaphysics.

Spinoza and Hobbes often use the same terminology. Several of their expressions, such as state of nature, civil and natural right, give the impression of a similar approach to political phenomena. But this is not true. Hobbes, a materialist long before Karl Marx, afraid of the chaos produced by human fallibility, was ready to surrender individual liberty to a great extent, to achieve mutual security for the human race.

Spinoza was as familiar as Hobbes with the dangers inherent in an undisciplined democracy. He was also afraid of anarchy:

> The fickle disposition of the multitude, almost reduces those who have experience of it to despair, for it is governed solely by emotions, not by reason: it rushes head-long into every enterprise, and is easily corrupted either by avarice or luxury: everyone thinks himself omnisciet and wishes to fashion all things to his liking, judging a thing to be just or unjust, lawful or unlawful, according as he thinks it will bring him profit or loss: vanity leads him to despise his equals, and refuse their guidance: envy of superior fame or fortune (for such gifts are never equally distributed) leads him to desire and rejoice in his neighbour's downfall. I need not go through the whole list, everyone knows how much crime results from disgust at the present—desire for change,headlong anger, and contempt for poverty—and how men's minds are engrossed and kept in turmoil thereby.[1]

Spinoza did not disagree with Hobbes that the chief motivation of man is self-interest. But, unlike Hobbes, he never forgot the great compassion he always felt for the whole human race.

Like many other philosophers, Spinoza loves law and order. He does not like an artificial kind of order, or a universal empire in Dante's style or a Platonic Republic. He likes what makes man mature and grow, and he dislikes what hinders him and destroys his growth and happiness. According to him, the *raison d'être* of the state is to make it possible for men to exist and spend their lives in peace and freedom, without endangering the lives and freedom of others. He strongly believes in a citizen army, with every citizen having the privilege to keep arms in his home. He favors local government responsibility and home rule, not governmental centralism. In all his writings he repeats again and again that he prefers the insecurity of freedom to the security of bondage.

What happens though if men, being weak, refuge to follow logic and reason and turn against the survival and stability of the state? What happens if men create dictatorships to enslave their fellow-citizens? Spinoza, unlike Locke who justified revolution, does not believe in it. This is what he writes:

> He that knows himself to be upright does not fear the death of a criminal, and shrinks from no punishment; his mind is no wrung with remorse for any disgraceful deed: he holds that death in a good cause is no punishment, but an honour, and that death for freedom is glory.[2]

Spinoza believes that the dictator, will, in the end, be responsible for his own downfall, that the inevitable consequence will be revolution, and that, eventually, the dictatorship is bound to crash.

Spinoza's purpose was to convince people to think rationally and realistically about political problems, without being influenced by religious and moral prejudices. He recommends a scientific method for rational men, rather than showing how the ordinary man arrives at political decisions. It is a fact that most men do not have an objective and clear understanding of the laws governing human behavior. Indeed, most men's lives are governed by passive emotion. And it is this passive emotion which leads them into conflict with other men.

The rational man, in order to control his human environment, will study society and will accept the fact that governments seek the extension of their own dominion and power. This being so, he will try to show the ruling authority the stupidity of turning its citizens into enemies by oppressing them, and, at the same time, will try to show the citizens the folly of risking anarchy for the sake of minor extra liberties. Spinoza was not a Machiavellian, although he respected Machiavelli for his government technique, written in a scientific and secular spirit. But Machiavelli had thought of obtaining and preserving state-power *as an end in itself*. This idea was what made Machiavelli so significant an interpreter for twentieth-century political movements. But Spinoza, a scholarly and individualistic man, was very remote from sixteenth-century Italy and the game of politics for politics' sake. For Spinoza, the art and science of government were only *a means to an end*, the end being the comperative freedom and security of the rational man. Machiavelli sees the citizen as government's raw material for manufacturing state-power. He sees only the government's point of view. Spinoza, on the other hand, writes always from the point of view of the individual, for whom government and society are just indispensable means to freedom. It is from this point of view that he examines the various types of political organization—aristocracy, monarchy and democracy; which system is more likely to benefit the important individual liberties? which system is more likely to produce

1. Spinoza, *Works*, op. cit., I, pp. 216-7.

2. Ibid., I, p. 263.

the best combination of organization, order, and freedom? Spinoza is searching for the answers:

> Therefore, on applying my mind to politics, I have resolved to demonstrate by a certain and undoubted course of argument, or to deduce from the very condition of human nature, not what is new and unheard of, but only such things as agree best with practice. And that I might investigate the subject-matter of this science with the same freedom of spirit as we generally use in mathematics, I have laboured carefully, not to mock, lament, or execrate, but to understand human actions;...
>
> And so it comes to pass, that, as all are equally eager to be first, they fall to strife, and do their utmost mutually to oppress one another; and he who comes out conqueror is more proud of the harm he has done to the other, than of the good he has done to himself. And although all are persuaded, that religion, on the contrary, teaches every man to love his neighbor as himself, that is to defend another's right just as much as his own, yet we showed that this persuasion has too little power over the passions...
>
> We showed, too, that reason can, indeed, do much to restrain and moderate the passions, but we saw, at the same time, that the road, which reason herself points out, is very steep, so that such as persuade themselves, that the multitude of men distracted by politics can ever be induced to live according to the bare dictate of reason, must be dreaming of the poetic golden age, or of a stage-play.[1]

Spinoza's general philosophy led him to the point that it is reasonable for the individual citizen to sacrifice some of his lesser interests and liberties, to achieve a satisfactory government and social structure which, in turn, will guarantee security and the intellectual freedom of the citizens. If people obey a government which is not acting in their interest, they are slaves; but an authority or a government which is concerned to guarantee the intellectual freedom and the physical safety of its subjects, is a legitimate authority. It is logical for free men to respect such a government, since it provides the necessary conditions of their happiness and freedom.

Spinoza, unlike Hobbes, would not have allowed any compromise with totalitarianism which would have limited freedom of opinion; he was the natural enemy of any government which would try to impose any doctrinal orthodoxy, secular or religious. After all men can be forced, by rewards or threats, to behave in certain ways, but cannot be made to believe. He outlines a theory which was to grow to full force in J. S. Mill's *On Liberty*. This is Spinoza's position:

> He who seeks to regulate everything by law, is more likely to arouse vices than to reform them. It is best to grant what cannot be abolished, even though it be in itself harmful. How many evils sprang from luxury, envy, avarice, drunkenness, and the like, yet these are tolerated—vices as they are—because they cannot be prevented by legal enactments. How much more then should free thought be granted, seeing that it is in itself a virtue and that it cannot be crushed! Besides, the evil results can easily be checked, as I will show, by the secular authorities, not to mention that such freedom is absolutely necessary for progress in science and the liberal arts...[2]

A society which does not allow free thought, said Spinoza, «cannot be maintained without great peril to the state».[3] More strongly:

> The more the sovereign tries to deprive men of freedom of speech, the more stubbornly is it opposed; not indeed by money-grubbers, sycophants, and the rest of the shallow crew, whose supreme happiness is to gloat over the coins in their coffers and to have their bellies well-stuffed, but by those who, because of their culture, integrity, and ability, have some independence of mind.[4]

We know now that Spinoza, with his theories of the common or general will, of popular sovereignty, and of democracy in the modern sense, has led the way to the French Declaration of Human Rights and the American Revolution. We also know that his utilitarian concept of the state, forms—together with the writings of Bentham, Locke, and Thomas Jefferson—the basis of modern political life.

In his preface to the *Theological-Political Treatise* Spinoza makes it clear that the reason he wrote the book was to defend freedom of opinion. He shows clearly that public order is not only compatible with freedom of opinion, but that it is really incompatible with anything else.

John Locke, the outstanding philosopher of the Glorious Revolution of 1688, was influenced by his ideas. When Locke arrived in Holland, in 1684, a fugitive from King James II, he made friends with Philipp Limborch and J. G. Graevius. Both men knew Spinoza well and were drawn to his liberal views.[5] It was at this time that Locke wrote his *Epistola de Tolerantia*, in 1685.[6] And when, in 1689, wrote the creed for the «society of Pacific Christians», an organization he had formed with some of his friends, the ideals corresponded exactly to Spinoza's principles.[7]

As Leibniz had foreseen, the ideas of Spinoza had contributed to the Revolution which was in the making. His philosophy was a hymn to freedom and the precursors of the French Revolution were deeply influenced by it. His work, however, suffered the

1. Ibid., I, pp. 287-9.

2. Spinoza, *Tractatus Theologico-Politicus*, *Chief Works*, op. cit., pp. 261-3. (Elwes's translation).

3. Ibid., pp. 261-2.

4. *Benedict de Spinoza: The Political Works*, edited and translated by A. G. Wernham (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1958), *Tractatus Theologico-Politicus*, XX, pp. 235-7.

5. *Lettres inédites de John Locke à ses amis Nicolas Thoynard, Philippe Van Limborch et Edward Clarke*, ed. Henry Ollion and T. J. De Boer (La Haye, 1912), p. 217.

6. John Locke, *Letter Concerning Toleration*, *Locke's Works*, (10th ed., London, 1801), VI, p. 52.

7. Ibid., pp. 185-6.

fate of all classics; men quoted him more than they read him, so that Voltaire could say: «As for Spinoza, everybody talks of him and nobody reads him.» And as is the case with most revolutionary thinkers, many men tried to write competent refutations without even touching the great and profound truths which he had spoken for his time.[1] But the fact remains that Spinoza's extraordinary thinking helped to break the chains which the medieval method of thought had imposed on the human mind.

Even today, it is far from accidental that in countries which cherish the ideal of individual liberty, and allow freedom of thought, the material standard of living is much higher than in Franco's Spain or within the orbit of the dictatorial Soviet Union. It is, also, far from accidental that governments which thwarted the creative initiative of their most gifted citizens have collapsed.

A society which isolates and destroys its most creative and imaginative thinkers, which demands orthodoxy and conformity, will be doomed, in the end, to the very mediocrity which it tries to impose on its own members.

VI. HOBBES AND SPINOZA

It is a practical necessity to discuss separately the common points and disagreements between the political theories of the two thinkers.

First of all it must be stated that they both have a completely secular outlook. They both accept naturalistic ethics, radical individualism, egoistic psychology and the firm belief that the new physical sciences are relevant to the study of political questions. Both get from the study of human nature their political outlooks.[2] And they both consider stability in government of primary importance.

Spinoza, however, assumes that Hobbes's subject has given up his natural right as he enters civil society:

> With regard to politics, the difference between Hobbes and me, about which you inquire, consists in this that I ever preserve the natural right intact so that the Supreme Power in a State has no more power over a subject than is proportionate to the power by which it is superior to the subject. This is what always takes place in the state of nature...[3]
>
> The individual's right of nature does not cease in the political order. The fact is that man acts in accordance with the laws of his own nature and pursues his own advantage in both the nature and the political order.[4]

It is an assumption which is in agreement with what Hobbes obviously wishes to say but does not do so clearly.

Hobbes and Spinoza seem to agree on the meaning of freedom. Hobbes stated, «Liberty, that we may define it, is nothing but an absence of the lets and hindrances of motion.»[5] Spinoza wrote that a man is «free, in so far as he can repel all force, take what vengeance he pleases for harm done him, and, to speak generally, live as his own nature and judgement dictate».[6] Both definitions seem to interpret freedom as the absence of external hindrance. Both agree that freedom is limited greatly as all human actions are determined by preceding states of affairs.

Spinoza, as well as Hobbes, deduces the necessities of political life from an understanding of human nature, but they do not seem to quite agree on what human nature is. Hobbes is excited by his wild comparison of the life of man to a race, a struggle with other men for advantage, «with no other goal, nor other garland, but being foremost».[7] This struggle is not just a matter of occupation; indeed, it is life itself, «to forsake the course, is to die».[8] Hobbes believes that egoism takes always the form of competition with others, a view not shared by Spinoza.[9] For Spinoza, man is not competitive but self-realizing, self-preserving, and this is achieved by moderating competition first, and, then, by working toward cooperation between men to everybody's advantage. The difference is fundamental.

Hobbes and Spinoza are both political egalitarians, but Hobbes denies the possibility of important differences among men. He believes that, wisdom is the result of experience only,[10] and that even prudence, «equal time, equally bestows on all men».[11] Hobbes, thus is a great «Leveler».

Hobbes and Spinoza consider the state as an artificial entity to improve the lives of men, and want it strong enough to be able to achieve that end. Both favor absolute sovereignty and Hobbes does not even accept the possibility of constitutional governments:

> If it were possible there could be such a state, it would do whit advantage the liberty of the subject. For as long as they all agree, each single citizen is as much a subject as pos-

1. «Les Systèmes», *Satires*, in *Oeuvres Complètes de Voltaire* (Paris, 1877), X, p. 171.
2. Spinoza, *Political Works*, *Tractatus Politicus*, op. cit. I, par. 7 (Wernham's translation); Hobbes, *De Cive*, *English*, *Works*, op. cit., p. 3.
3. Wolf, *Correspondence*, op. cit., Ep. 50, p. 269.
4. Spinoza, *Tractatus Politicus*, op. cit., III, par. 3 (Wernham's translation).
5. Hobbes, *De Cive*, *English Works*, op. cit., p. 109.
6. Spinoza, *Tractatus Politicus*, op. cit., II, par. 9 (Wernham's translation).
7. Hobbes, *English Works*, op. cit., IV, pp. 52-3.
8. Ibid., p. 53.
9. Spinoza, *Tractatus Theologico-Politicus*, op. cit., III, p. 51; *Tractatus Theologico-Politicus*, op. cit., V, p. 93 (Wernham's translation).
10. Hobbes, *De Cive*, *English Works*, op. cit., p. 2 (The influence of Bacon, and of Bacon's naive empiricism is more than evident here).
11. Hobbes, *Levathian*, op. cit., p. 80.

sibly he can be: but if they disagree, the state returns to a civil war.[1]

Spinoza's difference here from Hobbes is on understanding of political probability, and, of course, in this area, there can be no proof.[2] However, English history, and, especially, the history of English government, soon illustrated by example Hobbes's «impossible state»[3] as it took its meaning out of Aristotle's definition of man as a city-state animal.

Both Spinoza and Hobbes were influenced by Machiavelli but only Spinoza was able to grasp fully his concept of a national character. Also, Spinoza and Machiavelli faced the problem of the appearance of a social structure, with a theory of hero-founders. Spinoza adopts the classical, and Machiavellian,[4] concept of the hero-founder. Later, he developes, further, his history:

> Human nature is such that men cannot live without some common system of law. Now such systems have been established, and public affairs conducted, by men of great acuteness —call them astute or cunning as you please.[5]

Spinoza, however, unlike Rousseau or Machiavelli never considers the hero-founder as a possible reformer; he considers him only as the creator of the national character.[6]

Hobbes had completed all his major books before Spinoza had made a name for himself. This is why his writings contain no reference to him. He did make one remark about him, however, which is significant. He said that «he durst not write so boldly».[7] This was referring to Spinoza's writings on religion and politics and clearly indicates that Hobbes would have expressed similar opinions had he dared. Undoubtedly, Hobbes, the most important English political philosopher of his era, was a great man. But Spinoza (who died at 44 to Hobbes 91) was also a great man, a much more subtle commentator, and, I feel, a man with greater courage.

1. Hobbes, *De Cive*, *English Works*, op. cit., p. 125.
2. Spinoza, *Tractatus Theologico-Politicus*, op. cit., XVII, p. 163; pp. 187-9 (Wernham's translation).
3. Sir Frederick Pollock, «Spinoza's Political Doctrine with Special Regard to His Relation to English Publicists», in *Chronicum Spinozarum*, Vol. I (The Hague: The Spinoza Society, 1921), p. 57.
4. Niccolò Machiavelli, «The Prince», in *The Prince and the Discourses of Machiavelli* (New York: The Modern Library, 1940), VI, p. 21; *The Discourses of Niccolò Machiavelli*. Edited by Leslie J. Walker (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1950), I, 2, p. 211; I,9, pp. 233-6; I, 17, p. 257.
5. Spinoza, *Tractatus Politicus*, op. cit., I, par. 3 (Wernham's translation).
6. Jean-Jacques Rousseau, *The Social Contract* (New York: Everyman Library, 1950), Book II, 7, pp. 37-42.
7. Aubrey, *Brief Lives*, op. cit., I, p. 357.

VII. THE MEANING OF HOBBES'S AND SPINOZA'S THEORIES FOR US

Hobbes and Spinoza taught us that man is, in the end, responsible for his own destiny and makes his own social institutions. Spinoza, especially, analyzed the human personality and made it clear that while we shall deal only with facts, avoiding wishful thinking, we should never lose faith in the future of the human race.

Both philosophers taught us that all our impulses can be useful in our ethical development, and that even «vices» can be directed to right and normal ends. And that the completeness of our personalities is the most compelling urge of life. But this can not be achieved by phantasies and day dreams. It can only be gained by the harmonious expression of all our vital forces and by our will toward self realization.

Naturally, as humans we are apt to make errors in judgment. But there is no instinct which could not be of value in the ethical growth of the race. And conscience can come to the world only if we give dignity to our lives. Without faith, man is like a ship without an anchor, like a straw in the wind. Only with dignity and faith we can see our existence as a phase of eternal life.

Individuals and nations must learn to live together. This, of course, can happen only if everybody becomes aware of the need for interdependence. And it implies the brotherhood of men, whatever their color, their creed, their race, their nationality, their language and their social status. Only this way Isaiah's vision can become a reality:

> *And they shall beat their swords into plowshares*
> *And their spears into pruning hooks,*
> *Nation shall not lift up sword against nation,*
> *Neither shall they learn war any more.*

We, in the West, who consider liberty and equality the corner-stones of a democratic state, know that the road is slippery. The League of Nations failed in the past and the United Nations may fail in the future. But we must have faith in ourselves and we must believe in the eventual victory of rationality:

> In a democracy, irrational commands are still less to be feared: for it is almost impossible that the majority of a people, especially if it be a large one, should agree in an irrational design: and moreover, the basis and aim of a democracy is to avoid the desires as irrational, and to bring men as far as possible under the control of reason, so that they may live in peace and harmony: if this basis be removed the whole fabric falls to ruin.[8]

This, after all cannot be an easy life. We shall have a hard time of it to keep our minds open and to

8. Spinoza, *Chief Works*, op. cit., I, pp. 205-6 (Elwes's translation).

maintain our sense of beauty. Hobbes and Spinoza, especially Spinoza, searched for a way of life which harmonizes the activity and intelligence of individual man with his dignity. There is sadness in being a man, but it is a proud thing too.

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