

9/7&9/11

Thomas Hobbes: *Leviathon*

Born in England 1588

Early schooling; Oxford at 14

Bachelor's 1608

Private tutor--an occupation throughout his life.

3 trips to France, Italy & Continent

1610--studied Greek and Roman culture

1629--fascinated w/ geometry--Euclidean, no doubt.

--began applying the deductive method to the analysis of human nature and society

1634-1637--philosophical interests influenced by conversations with Mersenne, Pierre Gassendi, and Galileo (invited to comment on Descartes' *Meditations*, a new book at the time).

--Hobbes fled England into exile with Charles II, whose faced severe opposition in England. Hobbes was the king's mathematics tutor. During this period, he worked on *Leviathon*, which expressed his pro-monarch political theory.

--Hobbes returns to England with Charles II in 1660 as a renowned philosopher.

Group of bishops troubled by Hobbes' materialism nonetheless proposed, in Parliament, that he be burned as a heretic. Forbidden to publish in England, Hobbes later works were all published in Holland. *Leviathon* was famous, but hard-to-find in his day.

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I. *Leviathon*

Strategy: like Plato, consider analogy between individual & State. However, Hobbes reverses Plato. He looks at the individual to get clues about the nature of the State.

A. As artificial life (a manmade automata) is to natural life (a biomechanical entity), so the state/commonwealth (artificial man) is to the 'rational and most excellent work of nature' (natural man).

Parallels between Natural Man and Artificial Man (State):

Man	State
Soul	Sovereignty
Gives life/motion to body	Gives motion to the parts of the State
Joints	Magistrates, police, judicial officers
Nerves (to make parts move)	Reward and punishment make States
	Parts do their duty
Strength	Wealth and riches of members
Purpose of man (survival)	Purpose of state: "the people's safety" p139
Memory	Counsellors
Reason and Will	Equity and laws
Health	Concord
Sickness	Sedition
Death	Civil War

## Origin of man (god's creative will)    Origin of state (pacts and covenants)

B. Hobbes' account of the nature of artificial man (the commonwealth) is based on the Aristotelian view that there are four kinds of causes for anything that exists: material, efficient, formal and final causes.

Material cause of man's nature: for the answer to the question 'what is the material cause of man's nature', turn to "the similitude of *passions*" of men (not to be confused with the similitude of the *objects* of men's passions, which differ greatly and according to individual, not general traits. Note: Hobbes prefers the study of the former, not the latter, in attempting to discover the material cause of the state because the latter is too easy to hide from view, and hence is an unreliable source of information, and would interfere with the purpose of this enterprise, which is to help "he that is to govern a whole nation". Hobbes, as counsellor to the ruler, is applying a method not unlike Descartes' (his contemporary)...he is looking for what any man can know simply by considering what is fundamental in his own case.

### II. Chapter XIII

A. Men are naturally equal in physical strength and mental abilities, all things considered. Note: this is really the claim that whatever differences exist among men in either physical or mental abilities can always be equalized to the redress the disadvantage of the weaker through the exercise of powers available to all (including conspiracy with others and guile).

B. Men come into conflict for three reasons: a) because their equality of ability leads to equality of hope/desire for ends, yet some ends cannot be equally acquired, hence they must *compete* for ends; b) because of (a), men become diffident (timid and fearful in anticipation of the harm others will naturally do them) which leads to anxiety over whether each will be able to conserve himself against the designs and needs of others; and c) men wish to be regarded as equally worthy as their fellows *by* their fellows (they yearn for glory), yet without someone who overawes them, things go badly because this wish goes unsatisfied and the opposite of pleasure, grief, results (suppressed premise: no man values others *more* than himself, so in general no man will get treated as if as valuable as his fellows in the absence of the suppression of that desire for equal valuation which occurs when men are overawed by some common power ruling over them all).

C. When there is no common power ruling over all men, the result is war. Note: since Hobbes regards the state as artificial man, this means that the natural state of man is war, "a war as is of every man against every man." [p143]

D. The state of war is incompatible with industry, agriculture, navigation, trade, joint building projects, study of the earth, arts, letters, society. It is only compatible with "continual fear, and danger of violent death;" in which the life of man is "solitary, poor, nasty, brutish, and short." [p143]

E. The moral status of man's nature, and even of his actions, is neutral until "laws be made", and "till they have agreed upon the person that shall make it" there are no laws. Note: Hobbes thinks nature is amoral. Thus, a consequence of man's nature is "*that nothing can be unjust*". The notions of right and wrong, justice and injustice, have there no place. Where there is no common power, there is no law; where no law, no injustice." [p144]

F. In fact, Hobbes turns morality on its head: "Force and fraud are in war the two cardinal virtues." [p144] Note: Hobbes has the view that morality arises only in society: "They [justice

and injustice] are qualities that relate to men in society, not in solitude".[p.145]

G. Hobbes hidden lessons: a) if man relies on nature, his life will be 'nasty, brutish, and short.' Man *needs* society to live well. And b) any solution to the problem of the good life must ultimately rest on an account of man's *inclinations*, since these determine his actions. Reason apparently has no say in this, and that helps to explain why Hobbes gives reason a place in determining the good life only once the basic theory of the nature of human beings and of the commonwealth is given in terms of natural inclination and what proceeds, by causal relations, from it. Note: this means that Hobbes has already decided against the option chosen by Plato (to solve the problem posed by the inclinations by recommending a balance between reason and desire that prevents inclinations from producing the kind of results Hobbes thinks results from their natural expression, a balance that *is achievable by an individual in isolation*. Plato thinks an individual can be morally improved in isolation (although, as the Myth of Gyges concedes implicitly, it is only in the context of society that the moral domain arises, and so on this point Plato and Hobbes are in agreement). But then, Plato thinks that there is an absolute moral scale, whereas Hobbes seems to leave it up to the laws that a given society erects (so things immoral in one society would be moral in another).

H. The inclinations from which peace arise are: fear of death and a desire for commodious living.