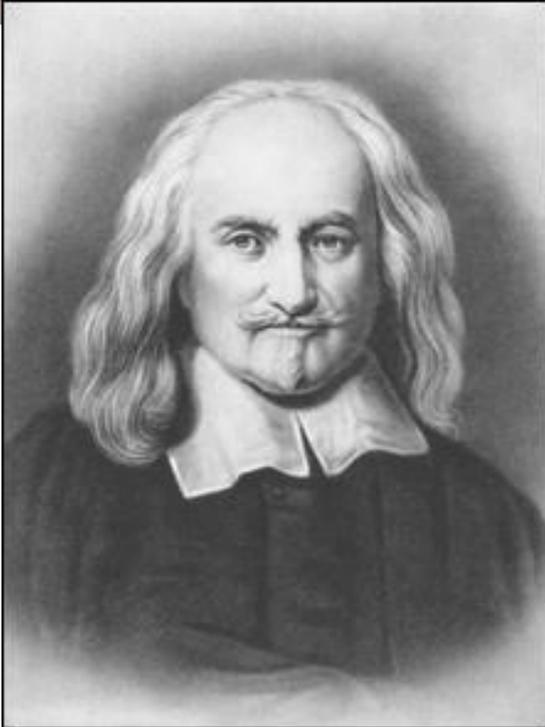


Thomas Hobbes and the *Leviathan*



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Objectives

- Importance of the *Leviathan*
- Book I
 - Need for Definitions
 - Power and human appetite to achieve it
 - Human nature
 - State of nature
 - Laws of nature
- Book II
 - Constructing the Leviathan
 - Sovereigns and their rights
 - Unhealthy Leviathan

Thomas Hobbes and the *Leviathan*

- 1588-1679
- One of the most influential philosophical texts produced during the 17th Century
 - Partly a response to the fear Hobbes experienced during the political turmoil of the English Civil Wars
 - Fled England for France when the Parliament was turning against Charles I
 - Composed *Leviathan* while in France
 - Published in 1651 two years after the beheading of Charles I

Leviathan

- Its political argument controversial at the time
- Philosophical method employed to make his claims scandalized many of his contemporaries
 - Materialist philosophy based upon a mechanistic view of the universe – all phenomena is explainable purely in terms of matter and motion
 - Rejected concepts such as spirits and disembodied souls
 - Hobbes became known as the “Monster of Malmsbury” and the “Bugbear” of the Nation
 - 1666 – his books were burned at Oxford
 - Blamed in Parliament for having started the Great Fire of London

Controversial

- Advocated restoration of monarchy when the English republic was at its strongest
- For Hobbes civil war was the ultimate terror
- *Leviathan* attempted to create controversy in politics and in science, radically challenging both contemporary government and philosophy itself and sought to annihilate controversy for good
- Excluded from the Royal Society for his anti-experimentalist stance
- Hobbes neither transformed the nation nor reformed philosophy

Leviathan

- First sustained attempt to submit human society to rigorous science
- Credited with the inauguration of social science in Western culture
- Argues that civil peace and social unity are best achieved by the establishment of a commonwealth through social contract

Leviathan – Four Books

- Of Man – contains the philosophical framework
- Of Common-wealth – details the process of erecting the Leviathan
- Of a Christian Common-wealth – concerns the compatibility of Christian doctrine with Hobbesian philosophy and the religious system of the Leviathan
- Of the Kingdom of Darkness – engages in debunking false religious beliefs

Philosophical Method

- Modeled after a geometric proof, founded upon first principles and established definitions
- First Principles
 - The fundamental and irreducible facts of nature -established by philosophical definition and upon which philosophical arguments may be built.
 - First principles are not discovered by observation or experiment but are decided by philosophical debate and social consent

Book I – of Man

Need for Definitions

- Experience of natural phenomena and the perception of reality do not constitute an adequate basis upon which to ground philosophically true conclusions to train of thought
- Must be a governing body, unanimously recognized, appointed to settle the definitions of words and first principles
- There need to be a judge who will settle definitions – upon which everyone agrees to agree – appointed by the participants (a sovereign)

Two Types of Motions

- Vital – innate and automatic to all animals, and continue throughout life: flow of blood, breathing, digestions etc
- Voluntary motions are active and directed such as walking, speaking and the moving of the limbs

Endeavors

- Causal factors that precipitate voluntary motions
 - Appetite or desire – when endeavor is towards something
 - Aversion – when the endeavor is away from something
 - Interplay of appetites and aversions constitutes Hobbes's depiction of human nature
 - When a person initiates a train of thoughts in order to judge something “Good” or “Evil” – the person is said to “Deliberate”
 - The decision to act or not to act is the “Will”

Human Appetite to Achieve Power

“I put for a general inclination of all mankind, a perpetual and restless desire for Power after power, that ceaseth only in Death...because he cannot assure the power and means to live well which he hath present, without the acquisition of more.”

Power

- Natural power: faculties of the body or mind – strength, wit, and arts.
- Instrumental power – acquired faculties: riches, friends, and reputation
- Qualities that affect social relations –
 - Worth - measure of power in an individual
 - Worthiness – measure of a person’s faculties relative to a specific function
 - Honor – to believe someone to be of high worth
 - Dignity- publicly recognized worth of an individual

Fear

- Fear of death, and wounds cause people to seek peace
- Fear of each other's power is the only antidote to the power struggles inherent to human appetite.
- People are in constant fear of possible dangers, evil turns of event, or sudden death
- Fear stems from ignorance of causes
 - Religions - an effort to dispel fear
 - Only philosophy can achieve this successfully

Human Nature

- Mechanic appetites and aversions, mediated by power struggles
- When people have an appetite for the same resource the natural result is war
- All people are naturally equal: thus battle is inevitable

State of Nature

“Hereby it is manifest that during the time men live without a common power to keep them all in awe, they are in that condition which is called war; and such a war as is of every man against every man. For war consisteth not in battle only, or the act of fighting, but in a tract of time, wherein the will to contend by battle is sufficiently known: and therefore the notion of time is to be considered in the nature of war, as it is in the nature of weather. For as the nature of foul weather lieth not in a shower or two of rain, but in an inclination thereto of many days together: so the nature of war consisteth not in actual fighting, but in the known disposition thereto during all the time there is no assurance to the contrary. All other time is peace.”

State of Nature

- Natural conditions of mankind before society, government and invention of law
- One of continuous war and violence, of death and fear
- No security is possible and life is full of horror
- Fear makes natural man want to escape the state of nature; reason shows him how to escape

18 Laws of Nature

- General rules that are discovered through reason
- A natural law affirms human self preservation and condemns acts destructive to human life
 1. Every man should seek peace because to seek peace is to fulfill our natural right to defend ourselves
 2. We must mutually divest ourselves of certain rights in order to escape the state of natural war – make contracts
 3. We are required to keep the contracts we make
- “Do not that to another, which thou wouldst not have done to thy self”

Two Types of Persons

- A “natural person” is one whose words are his or her own
- An “artificial person” is one whose words are those of someone else
- All natural men in the state of nature are natural persons; they are authors of the contract
- The contract, symbolizing social unity is an “artificial person”

Book II Of Common-wealth

The Leviathan



The Leviathan

- Artificial person is a metaphor for the state
 - Constructed to combat the fear of the state of nature
 - Must wield fear as its own weapon
 - Security accompanies fear – an assurance of peace and the preservation of life
- Fear in the state of nature has no such assurance

Leviathan – Commonwealth is an Artificial Man

- Concept of sovereignty is the soul
- The sovereign is the head
- Body as a whole is a representative of all the people but its body is made up of a succession of subordinated systems
- Public ministers are the joints of the body
- Punishment and Rewards are the tendons that move the limbs
- Commodities and goods produced within the commonwealth are the nutrition
- Money is the blood
- Reproduces by bearing children: “plantations” or “colonies”

The Sovereign

- There must be some common power, some sovereign authority to force people to uphold the contract
- This sovereign would be established by the people as part of the contract
 - Endowed with the individual powers and wills of all
 - Authorized to punish anyone who breaks the covenant
 - Operates through fear

Rights of a Sovereign

- Outlines 12 rights – examples include
 - Subjects owe him sole loyalty
 - Cannot be unjust or injure any innocent subject
 - Cannot be put to death
 - Has judicial power in all controversies, civil and intellectual
 - May make war and peace
 - Has the powers of reward and punishment

Three kinds of Sovereign

- Monarchy (power resides in one individual)
- Aristocracy (power resides in a group of people)
- Democracy (power resides in all people will to assemble for the sake of government)

Contractual Sovereignty Similar to a Parent

- Familial power in the state of nature is naturally maternal
- Two parents in the state of nature contract with each other to give the father power of the family, also for the sake of security and peace
- Instituted sovereign power is “Paternal”

Liberty Under the Sovereign

- Liberty means the ability to act according to one's will without being physically hindered from performing that act
- Only chains or imprisonment can prevent one from acting, so all subjects have absolute liberty under sovereignty
- In the state of nature, liberty did not exist – actions hindered by fear of death and fear of the power of others
- Fear and power are still present but because the subject has consented to give the sovereign the tools he is free

Unhealthy Leviathan

- If sovereign lacks absolute power
- If subjects maintain faith in supernatural phenomena
- If the sovereign is subject to the laws he creates
- Subjects maintain a sense of individual propriety over personal goods
- If individuals divide up the sovereign power among them selves
- If the Leviathan divides civil and spiritual or religious authority
- Government is a mixed government of varying modes of administration

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