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Thomas Hobbes's philosophy of man and the state*

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NATURE, MAN, AND THE POLITICAL ORDER - An
Exposition of Thomas Hobbes's Philosophy of Man
and the State.

A thesis presented for the degree of Master of Arts
in the Department of Politics, University of Durham,
by Robert William Dyson, of Collingwood College, in
the academic year 1977-1978.

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Nulla lex satis commoda omnibus est,
id modo quaeritur, si maiori parti et
in summam prodest. - Livy.

Der Mensch mag sich wenden, wohin er will,
er mag unternehmen, was es auch sei, stets
wird er auf jenen Weg wieder zurückkehren,
den ihm Natur einmal vorgezeichnet hat.

- Goethe.

CONTENTS.

<u>Chapter</u>	<u>Page</u>
Abstract.	
Preface.	
A Note Prefixed to Professor Milne's tape-recorded copy.	
Introduction.....	1
I. The Intellectual Context.....	15
II. Hobbes and the Rise of Science.....	35
III. The Theory and Method of Philosophy.....	54
IV. Nature and Man.....	77
V. The State of Nature and Its Laws.....	112
VI. The Political Order.....	139
VII. Sovereignty and Subjection.....	166
Summary and Concluding Remarks.....	195
Bibliography.....	221

NATURE, MAN, AND THE POLITICAL ORDER - An Exposition of
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ABSTRACT.

This thesis is intended as a preparation for more advanced and sophisticated research. Its conception, therefore, is not particularly ambitious, and the furrow which I have ploughed has been ploughed very often before. My aim has been to present a straightforward account of Hobbes's social and political doctrines which is both complete and compact. Writing primarily as an historian of ideas, I have devoted much space to the strangely-neglected task of placing Hobbes in a broader historical and intellectual context. I have also paid particular attention to methodological considerations (an area in which there is apt to be great confusion) and to the systematic, organic character of Hobbes's overall philosophical enterprise. I have taken care to avoid the excessive reliance on the Leviathan which has often characterised previous approaches to Hobbes; and I have tried to make intelligent use of insights arising from the extensive literature which has emerged around Hobbes during the past twenty-odd years. Given the canons dictated by limited scope and length, my purpose has inevitably been chiefly expository; but I have included as much critical material as has seemed necessary to a properly-balanced account.

R.W. Dyson,
Collingwood College,
Durham.

1978.

PREFACE.

I have used Sir William Molesworth's edition of Hobbes's works throughout, and I have followed the now-standard practice of referring to these works by means of the volume and page numbers of the Molesworth edition. All translations appearing in the text are my own, except where the contrary is indicated; and, taking due precautions against mutilating the sense, I have brought the spelling and punctuation of quoted passages into conformity with modern conventions. Where more than one possible quotation would have served a particular purpose equally well, I have, as a rule, chosen the shortest. Where it has been possible to do so without damage to the meaning, I have abridged what would otherwise have been inconveniently long quotations.

I wish particularly to thank (in alphabetical order) Dr Wolfgang von Leyden, Professor A.J.M. Milne and M.F. Murchison, Esq., for their endless help and endurance of nuisance - particularly Professor Milne, who has supervised my work throughout. My thanks go also to the staff of the Durham University Library, and to my wife, Valerie Dyson, to whom this thesis owes more than she probably realises. More generally, I wish to thank Henry Tudor, Esq., whose teaching first stimulated my interest in political philosophy.

A Note Prefixed to Professor Milne's tape-recorded copy.

The thesis as it stands on these tapes is the same in every material respect as the typewritten copies. But I have, as it were, 'translated' certain typographical conventions which cannot conveniently be expressed by reading aloud. Thus, for example, when on the tapes I introduce a quotation with the words 'as Hobbes puts it' or 'and I quote', or something of the kind, these words are usually only a 'translation' of what, in the examiners' copies, simply appears as a colon or a comma. Also, where a word appears in inverted commas to indicate that it is used in some peculiar sense, I 'translate' the inverted commas by some such formula as 'so to speak' or 'as it were'; and these formulae do not necessarily appear in the text itself. Moreover, all standard abbreviations used in the text, such as e.g. or i.e., are given in full on the tapes.

The footnotes are brought together onto a single tape, arranged in chapter order. When I come to the point in the text at which a footnote appears, I simply read the number of the footnote without further digression; and this number can then be married up to the corresponding number on the separate footnotes tape. For the sake of convenience, I have completely avoided such conventions as op.cit or ibid., and have given each separate reference in full.

The endpaper quotations from Livy and Goethe which are read in translation on the tape appear in the typescript in their original languages.

A copy of this note will be bound with each copy of the thesis for the information of the examiners.

INTRODUCTION.

Thomas Hobbes came unexpectedly into the world on Good Friday (5th April), 1588 - unexpectedly, because the shock of hearing of the impending approach of the Spanish Armada apparently caused his mother to go prematurely into labour. This somewhat unpromising beginning later prompted Hobbes's own rueful explanation of the abnormal degree of anxiety which troubled him for the rest of his life:

And such fear then took hold of my mother

That she gave birth to twins - me and Fear, both at once.¹

He lived long enough to be able to wear an unusually varied selection of personae: talented classical scholar, poet and translator; tutor to aristocracy, and even royalty; amateur geometrician, controversialist and crank; natural scientist, political theorist and suspected political subversive; and at last, after the return of Charles II in 1660, pensioner and intimate of the king, renowned for his smart and ready answers to the sallies of the Court wits - the Grand Old Man of the Restoration Court.

To say the least of it, Hobbes was by way of being a psychological paradox. The congenital timidity which he blamed on the Spanish Armada grew on him to an almost absurd degree. He was (or so his detractors alleged) afraid of the dark, afraid of heights, afraid of thieves, afraid of death; and his worries led him into some comical practices. He used to sing lustily in bed before going

off to sleep, take violent exercise (even at an advanced old age) in his employer's gardens, and pay the servants to give him a rub-down afterwards - all because he thought that he might thus prolong his life by two or three years. On a more serious note, he responded to contemporary events with an exaggerated and fearful sense of his own prominence and vulnerability. He was always ready to cast an anxious eye at current affairs and see in them threats directed towards himself. When the Long Parliament met in November 1640, it proceeded at once to the impeachment of Thomas Wentworth, first Earl of Strafford, one of the most dedicated and unscrupulous of all the supporters of Charles I. At this juncture, Hobbes began seriously to suppose that his own life now hung in the balance, because of the absolutist political opinions elaborated in his treatise The Elements of Law, Natural and Politic.² He promptly departed post-haste for Paris, where he was to remain in self-imposed exile for the next eleven years. Later, he was able to congratulate himself on having been 'the first of all that fled'.³ As John Plamenatz has put it, Hobbes 'seems to have prided himself on his timidity as other men do on their courage'.⁴ It is indeed 'very prodigious that...the timorousness of his nature from his infancy...should not have chilled the brisk fervour and vigour of his mind, which did wonderfully continue to him to his last'.⁵ For, notwithstanding all this anxiety, he was able to seize upon the most advanced and controversial speculations of an advanced and controversial age, and to utilise them for his own peculiar purposes with a truly remarkable degree of conceptual penetration and daring. Cautious conservatism and

scholarly ambitions of the most radical colour are strangely yet comprehensibly mingled in Hobbes's commodious mind. Again and again, with no little arrogance, but with a logical implacability which seldom shows signs of faltering, he delivered himself of philosophical and political opinions - materialism, Erastianism,⁶ political absolutism, psychological egoism and ethical relativism - which brought upon him extremes of opprobrium and persecution. He even achieved the rare distinction of being suspected of having brought down the wrath of God upon his fellow countrymen. After the Great Plague of 1665 and the Great Fire of the following year, a Bill against atheism and profanity was introduced into the House of Commons. A Committee of the House was instructed (on the 17th October, 1666) to

receive information touching such books as tend to atheism, blasphemy and profaneness, or against the essence and attributes of God, and in particular... the book of Mr Hobbes called the 'Leviathan,' and to report the matter with their opinion to the House.⁷

As it happens, nothing came of this - probably because of Hobbes's intimacy with King Charles and prominent members of the aristocracy. But at about this time he was expressly forbidden by the king himself to publish anything of a controversial nature in English. Even his collected works in Latin - which were hardly likely to foment disaffection amongst the common people - were not allowed to be printed at home: they had to be published (in 1668) in that most accommodating city, Amsterdam. Indeed, both during his life and after his death, Hobbes was most bitterly vilified as an atheist, a heretic, a

libertine, a political liability and a potential corrupter of the country's youth. One Daniel Scargill was stripped of his degree and removed from his Fellowship of Corpus Christi College, Cambridge, for alleged professions of 'Hobbism'; and not even the personal intervention of the Archbishop of Canterbury sufficed to rescue him.⁸ No other philosopher, perhaps, has ever been so extensively inveighed against as Hobbes was without actually being called upon to suffer martyrdom - although Hobbes seems to have come fairly close even to this at one point. According to Aubrey, on one occasion shortly after the Restoration - possibly the occasion to which I have already referred - Hobbes thought it prudent to burn some of his writings because 'some of the Bishops made a motion to have the good old gentleman burnt for a heretic';⁹ and White Kennet tells us that he became conspicuously more regular in his attendance at church after the Parliamentary Committee had got onto his track.¹⁰ Over one hundred books and pamphlets either denouncing him explicitly or referring to him with the utmost hostility appeared in print between 1650 and 1700 - and this is not counting the copious literature generated by Hobbes's acrimonious controversies with Bramhall and Wallis over technical matters. Some of these essays in denunciation are quite extraordinary, as much for their ineptitude as for their vituperation. Unfortunately for him, if not for us, Hobbes's development of seemingly atheistical and subversive doctrines was 'so lucid that on many issues it was obviously wrong and so readable that even minor clergymen occupied themselves with trying to refute it.'¹¹

The whole subject of the reception given to Hobbes's ideas

and the possible motives actuating those who gave it has been fully documented by Samuel I. Mintz in the work already cited. I content myself with a single irresistible quotation - from one Charles Robotham, an Anglican divine of Norfolk, who refers to the

Malmesburian Hydra, the enormous Leviathan, the gigantic dragon, the hideous monstrosity and British beast, the Propagator of execrable doctrines, the Promulgator of mad wisdom, the Herald and Pugilist of impious death, the Insipid Venerator of a Material God, the renowned fabricator of a monocondyte Symbol, the Depraved Renewer of old heresies to the faith, the Nonsensical roguish vendor of falsifications, a strenuous hoer of weeds and producer of deceits...

and so on and so on - all for timid old Mr Hobbes.¹² This excerpt from one of the more sumptuous and absurd examples of the anti-Hobbes literature is perhaps enough to convey something of the flavour of contemporary responses to the good old gentleman. I quote it here simply because no testimonial to his originality and imaginative power could possibly be so vivid as the near-hysterical fulminations which his ideas were capable of provoking amongst his compatriots.

Needless to say, posterity has been a good deal kinder to Hobbes than was contemporaneity. To be sure, his work in the fields of optics, dynamics and geometry is now of interest only insofar as it sheds light upon his theories of man and the State; while his long and tendentious historical essay, Behemoth,¹³

has been evaluated by Professor Trevor-Roper in two precisely-selected words - 'incorrigibly erroneous.'¹⁴ Moreover, by consent which I take to be common, his general philosophy, for all its insights into, say, the uses and abuses of language, is regarded as inadequate to 'raise Hobbes to the level of the classical triumvirate of British philosophy - Locke, Berkeley, and Hume.'¹⁵ Nevertheless, all these caveats apart, it is now hardly open to question that he is the weightiest English contributor to the extensive corpus of political ideas generated by a politically dynamic century, with the possible single exception of John Locke. His Leviathan is one of the great masterpieces of philosophical synthesis and ratiocination, and his own greatest achievement. To quote A.G.N. Flew again, 'the rest of his writings serve only as introductions, footnotes and appendices to Leviathan.'¹⁶ although, as I have already indicated, these introductions footnotes and appendices probably deserve closer attention than they are often given by students of their author.

In chronological order, the chief sources of what Hobbes called his 'civil philosophy' are The Elements of Law, Natural and Politic, the De Cive¹⁷ and the Leviathan.¹⁸ It might seem dangerously speculative at a distance of three centuries to try to penetrate too deeply into the purely subjective questions of motivation and purpose. In Hobbes's case, however, it is not in fact necessary to do more than resort to the obvious truism that philosophies are always to some extent the progenies of their time and circumstances. More specifically, Hobbes's own remarks reveal, without our having to hazard conjectures, that

this 'civil philosophy' is in some sense the product of a confrontation between his own insecure and retiring personality and the events through which he lived. All political discourse occurs at the interface between thought and fact, between the subjective and the objective; and nowhere is this more clearly exemplified than in the case of Hobbes. When he was born, the reign of Queen Elizabeth I still had fifteen more years to run. He died only nine years before the Whig Revolution of 1688 established a pair of constitutional monarchs upon the throne of England. It was thus his fortune (or misfortune) to have coincided with some of the most seminal events of modern English history. He saw the attempts of the House of Stuart to form English government into an absolute monarchy grounded upon the ideology of Jure Divino. He experienced the moral earnestness and passionate bourgeois individualism of the Puritan revolution; the Civil War; the innovations in ecclesiastical and political organisation engineered by the Long Parliament and the Protectorate; and, by way of culmination, the execution of King Charles I on the 30th January, 1649. Hobbes was in Europe for much of this time. But he watched and trembled from afar; and in 1646 he became tutor to the exiled Prince of Wales. By temperament and circumstance, he was for the most part disposed to be a supporter of the Royalist cause;¹⁹ and exposure to the implications of such a period of gathering aspirations to greater political and religious liberty must have been a truly appalling experience for a man who, for all his intellectual boldness, was a physical coward. It was precisely because he so acutely felt 'the disorders of the present time' in which so many of his Royalist friends and associates were implicated that he determined 'to set

before men's eyes the mutual relation between protection and obedience.²⁰ He chose to do so by formulating a purely naturalistic moral philosophy and an absolutist theory of the State grounded (as he supposed) so securely upon strict scientific and logical principles that reasonable men could no more doubt its validity than they could doubt that of the laws of physics.

Nevertheless, although we must take these contemporary influences seriously, it is at the same time obviously impossible to make an adequate study of Hobbes's political theory in isolation from his other spheres of interest. This is so simply because these spheres of interest all empty into one another with such ingenious complexity. Hobbes was pre-eminently an eclectic, a synthesiser - a polymath on a scale and in a way fundamentally alien to modern modes of thinking. Working at the very time when the modern classification of knowledge began to get under way, he was still himself ambitious enough - and confident enough - to suppose that he could accommodate the whole gamut of scientific knowledge within a coherent and comprehensive system. The modern distinction between philosophical and scientific investigations - the notion of dividing our knowledge of the external world off from our internal or subjective concern with the nature of knowledge itself - does not appear in his work: Hobbes invariably uses the two terms 'science' and 'philosophy' as synonyms (a point, incidentally, to be borne in mind throughout the following chapters). His anxiety-ridden concern with events in the political world repeatedly distracted him from the excursions into the worlds of physics and geometry which were his

greatest love. Thus, his system of philosophy appeared before the public out of its logical order. Nevertheless, his own declared intention - formulated, perhaps, as early as 1637²¹ - was to extrapolate natural-scientific explanations to the field of what we should now call the 'social sciences'. He wished to produce a systematically-developed account of physics, physiology, psychology, ethics, sociology and politics. All these branches of knowledge were to be brought together and related according to what Hobbes took to be the proper method of scientific enquiry; and, apparently, the whole enterprise originally had no particular political tendency. As Hobbes himself puts it,

I was studying philosophy for my mind sake, and I had gathered together its first elements in all kinds; and having digested them by degrees, I thought to have written them, so as in the first I would have treated of body and its general properties; in the second of man and his special faculties and affections; in the third, of civil governments and the duties of subjects....Whilst I contrive, order, pensively and slowly compose these matters...it so happened in the interim that my country, some few years before the civil wars did rage, was boiling hot with questions concerning the rights of dominion and the obedience due from subjects, the true forerunners of an approaching war; and was the cause which, all those other matters deferred, ripened and plucked from me this third part.²²

Hobbes is now chiefly (and deservedly) remembered as a polit-

ical theorist - as an exponent of 'possessive individualism'²³ and a meticulously-developed doctrine of undivided sovereignty. It is his political recommendations which have stimulated the overwhelming preponderance of the literature which has gathered around him in recent times. Nevertheless, it would obviously be an error - especially in view of his own declarations - to attempt to do justice to his contribution in this field without considering it as part of an integrated system spanning nature, man and the political order. And it is also essential to bear in mind that this system exists not only against a well-defined background of political turmoil and conflicting ideologies, but also in the context of a major scientific revolution. We cannot truly understand Hobbes's philosophy other than as an organic whole. We cannot understand his social and political philosophy unless we first understand his materialistic and deterministic psychology. We cannot understand his psychology unless we understand his natural philosophy. And we cannot understand his natural philosophy without examining his ideas in the light of contemporary scientific developments, and without grasping at least something of his view of epistemology and the nature and method of philosophy itself. These considerations have largely determined the pattern of this thesis.

NOTES.

(In preparing the notes, I have deliberately avoided using the conventional shorthand devices - op.cit., ibid., and so on.

This has made for a visually rather cumbersome system of referencing; but I could not see how else to avoid multiplying the already acute difficulties involved in recording the footnotes onto tape.)

1. Thomae Hobbes Malmesburiensis Vita Carmine Expressa, Latin Works (hereinafter L.W.), Vol.I,p.lxxxvi.
2. Circulated in manuscript form in 1640, and published in 1650 in two separate parts, Human Nature, or the Fundamental Elements of Policy, and De Corpore Politico. Molesworth prints these two works in a single volume (English Works - hereinafter E.W. - Vol.4), coupled with Hobbes's treatise Of Liberty and Necessity, under the title Hobbes's Tripos. This grouping and title are artificial. The third treatise was not written until 1646, as part of Hobbes's celebrated controversy on free-will with Bishop John Bramhall of Derry. Its association with the other two seems to date from an edition of the so-called 'Tripos' published in 1684. The work was not printed in the form and with the title which Hobbes had intended for it until the appearance of Ferdinand Tönnies's edition in 1889.
3. Considerations on the Reputation, Loyalty, Manners and Religion of Thomas Hobbes of Malmesbury, E.W. Vol.4,p.414.
4. Man and Society, Vol.I,p.117.
5. John Aubrey, Brief Lives, p.316.

6. That is, the doctrine that the church ought to be completely subordinated to the secular powers. The doctrine is named after the Swiss physician and theologian Thomas Erastus (1524-1583), although Erastus himself did not hold it in anything like the extreme form in which it is commonly understood. Indeed, G.H. Sabine speaks of Marsilius of Padua (ca.1280-1342) as 'the first Erastian' (A History of Political Theory, third edition, p.291.)
7. Journal of the Commons, quoted by George Croom Robertson, Hobbes, p.194.
8. Vide Samuel I. Mintz, The Hunting of Leviathan, pp.50-52.
9. Brief Lives, p.316.
10. Memoirs of the Family of Cavendish (1708), p.15. Cited by Croom Robertson, Hobbes, p.195,n.2.
11. Richard Peters, Hobbes, p.45.
12. Charles Robotham, Ode prefaced to John Templer's Idea Theologiae Leviathanis (London, 1673). Quoted in translation by Mintz, The Hunting of Leviathan, p.56. For further documentation of contemporary reactions to Hobbes, see John Laird, Hobbes, pp.247-317; Sterling Lamprecht, 'Hobbes and Hobbism', American Political Science Review, xxxiv, (1940), pp.31-53; and John Bowle, Hobbes and his Critics, a Study in Seventeenth-Century Constitutionalism.
13. E.W. Vol.6.
14. H.R. Trevor-Roper, Historical Essays, p.238.
15. A.G.N. Flew, 'Hobbes and the Use of Language', The Listener, November 15th, 1951, p.847.

16. A.G.N. Flew, 'Hobbes and the Use of Language', The Listener, November 15th, 1951, p.845.
17. 1642, L.W. Vol.II,pp.157-432. Translated by Hobbes as Philosophical Rudiments concerning Government and Society, E.W. Vol.2.
18. 1651, E.W. Vol.3.
19. To be more exact, although he preferred monarchical government, he was disposed to support any regime which could guarantee peace and security. Thus, when the publication of Leviathan in 1651 made him unpopular with the Royalist exiles and the Catholic Church in France, he fled back to England and made his peace with the Council of State; only to make a fresh peace with Charles II at the Restoration, when it turned out that his unpopularity had not been as great as he had feared. His contemporaries tended to regard his return to England in 1651 as a piece of heartless tergiversation. In fact, Hobbes was acting quite consistently within his own declared principles.
20. Leviathan, E.W. Vol.3,p.713.
21. As 1637 was Hobbes's forty-ninth year, the word 'early' might seem out of place here; but the pace of Hobbes's philosophical development was nothing if not leisurely. He does not seem to have become seriously interested in philosophical or scientific matters until at least 1628, when he was forty; and he was in his sixty-third year when the Leviathan first appeared.
22. Philosophical Rudiments concerning Government and Society,

E.W. Vol.2,pp.xix-xx.

23. Vide C.B. MacPherson, The Political Theory of Possessive Individualism, esp.pp.9-106. Incidentally, an interesting dimension which space forbids me to discuss here is Hobbes's relation to the religious thought of his time, as to which see Mintz, The Hunting of Leviathan; F.C.Hood, The Divine Politics of Thomas Hobbes; and Ralph Ross, Herbert W. Schneider and Theodore Waldman, Thomas Hobbes in His Time. A separate discussion of this important field would, I think, have been clearly beside the point of this thesis. But, since the earliest and most bitter controversies about Hobbes centred upon essentially religious issues, I do not wish my omission to be construed as a belittling of this aspect of Hobbes studies.

CHAPTER ONE - THE INTELLECTUAL CONTEXT.

This chapter is by way of being a general and discursive introduction to Hobbes in his intellectual milieu, to serve as a viaticum for more technical matters. At the same time, pure biography is an important key to understanding, and has - at least in much recent scholarship - rather tended to be lost in the penumbra of exclusively philosophical matters. Since one of the presuppositions of this thesis is that, in the study of Hobbes, there are very few exclusively philosophical matters capable of being understood in abstraction from their broader context, I regard this chapter as being rather more than mere ground-clearing.

One has heard it said, with some appositeness, that Thomas Hobbes was the Bertrand Russell of the seventeenth century. Not only did he live almost twice as long as the typical Englishman of the period might reasonably expect; his life was also distinguished by the most remarkable versatility, energy and good health. Indeed, though he was rather a puny specimen as a young man, he seems actually to have become healthier as he grew older:

From forty or better, he grew healthier, and then he had a fresh, ruddy complexion. He was sanguineo-melancholicus, which the physiologists say is the most ingenious complexion....In his old age he was very bald...yet within door he used to study and sit bare-

headed, and he said he never took cold in his head, but that the greatest trouble was to keep off the flies from pitching on the baldness.¹

He was still playing tennis two or three times a year when he was seventy-five. Although he suffered from the age of about sixty from 'the shaking palsy in his hands'² which eventually increased into a paralysis so severe that he could hardly write his own name, his vigour of mind remained undiminished to the end of his life. In 1672, when he was eighty-four years old, he wrote an autobiography in Latin verse,³ and in 1673 he brought out a verse translation of Books IX-XII of the Odyssey. This was so well received that in the following year he published a translation of the whole of the Odyssey and the Iliad, prefacing the completed work with an introductory essay 'Concerning the Virtues of an Heroic Poem.'⁴ Of this effort, with the same old mixture of fearfulness and arrogance, he said:

Why...did I write it? Because 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.⁵

It has to be admitted that the translations are not very scintillating ones - there is no room for examples, although there are some amusing possibilities. The more successful translator of Homer, Alexander Pope, declines to say more about Hobbes's effort than that it is 'too mean for criticism'. But the whole undertaking is not at all bad for a man in his later eighties.

Indeed, in August, 1679, no more than four months before his death, he was 'writing somewhat' for his publisher, William Crooke, 'to print in English'.⁶ Unfortunately, we do not know what this 'somewhat' was.

Even apart from the Spanish Armada which hurried him into the world, Hobbes's earliest years were rather unpromising, and augured little of the remarkable developments to come. His father, also called Thomas, was the vicar of Westport, near Malmesbury in Wiltshire; but the family evidently did not enjoy a very lavish standard of living. Aubrey tells us that the parish was worth less than seven pounds a year.⁷ Hobbes the elder 'was one of the clergy of Queen Elizabeth's time - a little learning went a great way with him and many other ignorant Sir Johns in those days; could only read the prayers of the Church and the homilies, and disesteemed learning... as not knowing the sweetness of it.'⁸ One Sunday morning, having dropped off to sleep in church after a Saturday-night Bridge-session, he woke up to tell the congregation that clubs were trumps. But he let the side down most spectacularly, and for the last recorded time, when he got into a fight with a neighbouring parson at the church-door. Even the ignorant Sir Johns of those days could only go so far and no farther; and Parson Hobbes left the district under a cloud and died in reduced circumstances 'beyond London.'⁹ The care of Thomas junior - who was not yet four years old - and his brother and sister passed to their father's elder brother, Francis, a well-to-do glover and local dignitary, who thus unknowingly assumed a mom-

entous responsibility.

After an elementary education under clergymen at Westport and Malmesbury, Hobbes was very fortunate to come under the care of an excellent schoolmaster, one Robert Latimer, 'a young man of about nineteen or twenty, newly come from the university, who then kept a private school in Westport.'¹⁰ This Robert Latimer was apparently a more than competent Greek scholar; and he took to Hobbes at once. He was quick to spot promise in his new pupil, and would instruct him and other gifted boys of the school until nine o' clock in the evening. Whether or not they were grateful for this extra devotion is not recorded; but Hobbes rewarded his master's dedication by presenting him with a translation of Euripides's Medea into Latin iambics before he was fourteen years old. By this time, he had evidently absorbed all that Mr Latimer had to offer; because, at the age of fourteen, he went up to Magdalen Hall, Oxford (absorbed into Hertford College in 1874).

When Hobbes became an undergraduate, the University of Oxford was still, to all intents and purposes, a medieval institution. The course of study for the Bachelor of Arts degree did now include courses in classical literature - Renaissance humanism had at least penetrated to that extent. But the method and spirit of the place nevertheless remained essentially scholastic, and a series of disputations and exercises in the schools still lay between the undergraduate and his degree. The intellectual vigour which, in the fourteenth century, had enabled Oxford to occupy a place of eminence in the world of scholarship second only

to that of the University of Paris seems, however, largely to have dried up. Degree regulations were often only very cursorily enforced -- when, that is, they were enforced at all. Discipline was bad. Canon law and scholastic theology had come to be neglected to the point of atrophy. Philosophy was now dished up raw from the works of Aristotle -- chiefly the Rhetoric, the Dialectics and the Nicomachean Ethics -- and the great medieval commentaries of Duns Scotus and Peter Lombard were more or less ignored. The declamations and disputations given in the Faculty of Arts in the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries were predominantly abstract and sophistical. They were often plagiarised directly from Aristotle's own works, frequently trivial and flippanant, and more often than not displaying little or no awareness of current events. Candidates for degrees debated such burning questions as whether mothers love their children more than fathers do, or whether kindness or severity is the best method of keeping a wife in order. The dominant impression is that logical adroitness and verbal skill are more highly prized than either quality or quantity of knowledge. Hobbes's own comments, frequently and trenchantly delivered, leave us in no doubt that discipline and standards of behaviour -- amongst academic staff as well as students -- could run at a pretty low ebb even in a college such as Magdalen Hall, where the Puritan ethos was very strongly established.

Placed in the lowest class of logic, and obviously rather out of his depth, the fourteen-year-old Hobbes did not take at all well to this academic curriculum. He seems to have enjoyed rhetoric, and thought himself a good rhetorician; but Aristot-

elian logic and metaphysics left him both cold and uninformed.¹¹

It is clear enough from his writings that he never did quite manage to understand the temper of scholasticism; and Oxford left him with a mistrust of and distaste for it which never left him. Here is a sample of his short way with the giants of medieval philosophy:

The first Rector of the University of Paris, as I have read somewhere, was Peter Lombard, who first brought in them the learning called school-divinity; and was seconded by John Scot of Duns, who lived in or near the same time; whom any ingenious reader...would judge to have been two of the most egregious blockheads in the world, so obscure and senseless are their writings.¹²

To be sure, it is probable that Hobbes, like Descartes, liked to pretend to be more idle than he was. His boast was that, if he had read as much as other men, he would have known no more than they¹³ - the boast being both an avowal of rationalism and an expression of distaste for the musty past. Even so, it is plain that the university curriculum of the early sixteen-hundreds was not such as to stimulate heroic feats of industry. According to Aubrey, Hobbes spent much of his undergraduate career trapping jackdaws in the early summer mornings and browsing through maps in the Oxford bookshops. As Richard Peters has put it, 'at this time it was the new and strange worlds charted by Drake and Magellan that fired his imagination rather than the intellectual voyages of Kepler and Galileo out of the snug, earth-centred security of the Aristotelian cosmology.'¹⁴ Hobbes was to discover Kepler and Galileo later, and the whole of his subsequent

career was to become a revolt against the traditional syllabus which he had experienced as a young man. Throughout his life, he was convinced that the universities, as well as being useless for any worthy practical purpose, were hotbeds of political sedition, introducing the dangerous notions of Greek democracy into the pliable minds of the young. He held that, in origin, they were cunning front-organisations for the intrigues of the Roman Catholic Church, which they disguised by the cultivation of incomprehensible and bewildering subtleties. Those who succeeded the 'egregious blockheads' mentioned earlier learnt from them

the trick of imposing what they list upon their readers, and declining the force of true reason by verbal forks; I mean distinctions that signify nothing, but serve only to astonish the multitude of ignorant men.¹⁵

Jackdaw-trapping notwithstanding, Hobbes took his Bachelor of Arts degree in 1608, when he was twenty years old. He seems to have acquired nothing at the university in the way of preparation for his subsequent life's work - beyond, perhaps, a great dislike of the past and the seeds of a desire to become an innovator. At the time of his graduation, by a piece of great good fortune, William Cavendish, Baron Hardwick (who was to be created first Earl of Devonshire in 1618) was looking for a tutor for his eldest son, also called William. The Principal of Magdalen Hall, James Hussey ('a great encourager of towardly youths'¹⁶) recommended Hobbes for the job. The family was

looking for a young man of more or less the same age as the future second Earl - then seventeen, and married to a twelve-year-old Scottish heiress who, as Mintz demurely puts it, 'was allowed to mature some years more before assuming her wifely duties'.¹⁷ Hobbes was accepted; and so began an association with the Cavendish family which was to continue, in spite of interruptions, for more than seventy years. Hobbes, who never married, lived for much of his life as part of the household; and, indeed, his death - on the 4th December, 1679, at the age of ninety-one - occurred at Hardwick, one of the two Derbyshire seats of the family.¹⁸

Hobbes seems actually to have been more of a Jeeves than a tutor to his new charge, who was, by all accounts, a young man of colourful habits. They went out hawking and hunting together, and Hobbes often caught cold through standing about in the rain trying to borrow money for his pupil. While he was living in this way, he worried so much about forgetting his Latin that he bought a pocket edition of selections from the classics to carry about and read in his odd moments. But in spite of the drawbacks, Hobbes tells us that the years between 1608 and 1628, when the second Earl died (having succeeded to the title only two years previously) were the happiest of his life.¹⁹

The Cavendishes departed from the usual practice of treating the family tutor as one of the less important of the domestic servants. They allowed him to mix socially with them, and they seem genuinely to have accepted him as a friend. Indeed, in view of the length of his service with the family, he no doubt even-

tually became something of a household institution. His association with the family is especially important from our point of view. It conferred upon him advantages which a person of his station, the parvenu nephew of a glove-maker, could hardly otherwise have hoped to enjoy, and without which the breadth and ambition of his career would never have been able even to have been conceived. He now had constant and ready access to first-class libraries and to the conversation of eminent and influential men. He enjoyed the society of Edward Herbert, Baron Cherbury, the philosopher, historian and exponent of 'natural religion' - against whom Locke's critique of innate ideas was later to be directed. He also knew Lucius Carey, second Viscount Falkland, the Royalist historian whose home at Great Tew near Burford was a meeting place for some of England's most cultivated intellects; William Cavendish and his brother Charles, nephews of the first Earl of Devonshire,²⁰ who had established, at Welbeck Abbey in Nottinghamshire, a thriving nucleus of optical, geometrical, chemical and mathematical study; and Ben Jonson, the poet and Court favourite, whose advice he took on points of literary style. Of his employer, through whose offices he was introduced to all these luminaries, he was moved to say that

there was not any who more really and less for glory's sake favoured those that studied the liberal arts liberally than my Lord...did; nor in whose house a man should less need the university than in his.²¹

Evidently, art and nature were more accessible to the curious mind within the aristocratic circle of the day than they were at the University of Oxford where Hobbes had spent his five tedious

undergraduate years.

For some time during this happiest period of his life, Hobbes acted as part-time amanuensis to the most eminent Royalist of all, Francis Bacon, Baron Verulam and Viscount St Albans. This association presumably began after 1621, when Bacon was removed from the Lord Chancellorship, banished into the country (after four uncomfortable days in the Tower) and barred from office for taking bribes. It may have lasted until Bacon's death in 1626. It is, in fact, impossible to establish an accurate chronology from the evidence available; but Hobbes is apparently the source of the famous story retailed by Aubrey,²² that Bacon caught cold and died after experimenting with refrigeration by stuffing a chicken full of snow. In any case, we know that Hobbes assisted the ex-Lord Chancellor in translating several of his essays into Latin; and they would stroll together in Bacon's 'delicious walks at Gorhambury',²³ Hobbes with pen and paper waiting to jot down the philosophical pearls as they dropped from the great man's lips. According to Aubrey, Bacon thought very highly of Hobbes's services, Hobbes being the only one of his secretaries who could understand what he said. The question of Bacon's possible 'influence' on Hobbes has been widely discussed, in spite of the complete lack of pertinent evidence. As we shall see presently, not a great deal of the Baconian scientific spirit seems to have rubbed off on Hobbes; but at least we might reasonably suggest that Bacon's vehement hostility towards Aristotle reinforced notions which had already come into Hobbes's mind at Oxford. And we might also conjecture that Bacon's conviction that

the resources of the natural world might be understood and mastered by science must have been impressive and inspiring to a younger man with a fixed direction of his own still to find.²⁴

Unquestionably the greatest single advantage which Hobbes derived from his employment in the Cavendish household was the opportunity to travel abroad and to become accustomed to the intellectual ambience of seventeenth-century Europe. His first chance came when he and his pupil set out to make the inevitable European grand tour in 1610. They visited France, Germany and Italy. The young Lord spent a great deal of money, and Hobbes picked up the rudiments of French and Italian, at the same time greatly improving his rusty Latin. He returned to England bursting with ambition to become a classical scholar. Thereafter, for about fifteen years, while employed as private secretary to his former pupil, he devoted his ample free time to the study of classical literature, concentrating particularly upon poetry and history. Significantly enough, the Blackbourne biography tells us that he embarked upon these studies in order to try to find an intellectual system which satisfied him: He wished to escape from the sophistical and contentious logic of the schoolmen, their ethics, grounded less upon truth than upon prejudice, and the ingenious but pedantic and unreal physics of Aristotle.²⁵ It was at this time that he began to work upon his translation of Thucydides's History of the Peloponnesian War, the first of his works to see the light of day. Although it 'lay long by him',²⁶ this was eventually published in 1629, with an introductory essay and a delightful dedication to the first Earl, 'by

whose indulgence I had both the time and ammunition to perform it.²⁷ Towards the end of his life, Hobbes was to explain that this work had a didactic as well as a purely literary purpose -- namely, to warn his countrymen that one man is wiser than a number by referring them to the example of Athenian democracy.²⁸ It is often suggested that this is merely an ex post facto explanation, and that there is no reason to suppose that Hobbes's political ideas were so firmly set by this time. But then again, there is equally no reason to suppose that they were not. In default of decisive evidence to the contrary, we might as well take Hobbes at his word and conclude that, by the time he was contemplating publishing the translation, his faith in absolute, and preferably monarchical, government was crystallising. Associating as he did with the kind of company habitually to be encountered in the Cavendish household, why should it not do so at the age of forty?

Altogether, Hobbes made four expeditions into Europe: the first grand tour already mentioned; a second grand tour, made between 1629 and 1631, this time with the son of Sir Gervase Clifton, a gentleman of Nottinghamshire;²⁹ a third grand tour with the third Earl of Devonshire from 1634 to 1637; and the long voluntary exile in Paris, from 1640 to 1651. Of these journeys, the third is certainly the most significant from the point of view of Hobbes's intellectual development.

These European excursions amounted, in sum, to a period of slightly less than twenty years. In the course of them, Hobbes was drawn into the most eclectic and sophisticated circles of

his age. As a result, his career as a philosopher got under way. At some time during the second grand tour he made a discovery which marked one of the great turning points of his life:

Being in a gentleman's library, Euclid's Elements lay open, and 'twas the 47 El. libri I. He read the proposition. 'By G —,' said he, (he would now and then swear an emphatical oath by way of emphasis), 'This is impossible!' So he reads the demonstration of it, which referred him back to such a proposition; which proposition he read. That referred him back to another, which he also read. Et sic deinceps, that at last he was demonstratively convinced of that truth.³⁰

Thereafter, as Aubrey puts it, he was 'in love with geometry', although the truth of the matter is that he never became more than a second-rate geometer himself, in spite of an exuberant faith in his own competence. Before very long, he managed to convince himself that he had found out how to solve the immemorial constructional problems of squaring the circle, duplicating the cube and cubing the sphere.³¹ Eventually, he was unwise enough to embark upon a long, bitter and quite futile pamphlet war on these and other subjects with John Wallis, Savilean Professor of Geometry at Oxford. Not unreasonably irritated by Hobbes's unpleasant animadversions on English University life, Wallis and Seth Ward, the Savilean Professor of Astronomy, had determined to teach the old boy a lesson; and Wallis unmercifully made Hobbes look very stupid. In no time at all, the controversy had become no more than an exchange of insulting remarks;³² but Hobbes had gone overboard for geometry, and was not by any means to be diver-

ted. It was to form one of the fundamental parts of his philosophical method, for the technique of proceeding by clear steps from rigorously-stated first premisses to indubitable deductive conclusions seemed to him to offer exciting possibilities to the scientific investigator. Thus far, he resembles Spinoza and Descartes; but there are dangers here, to which we shall presently return.

In Paris on his third grand tour, Hobbes was introduced (possibly by Sir Kenelm Digby) to the Franciscan Friar, Marin Mersenne, the friend and schoolfellow of Descartes, who was, as Croom Robertson puts it, 'in the republic of intellect like the heart in the body.'³³ An indefatigable encourager of scientific enquiry, with interests of his own ranging from mathematics to accoustics and musicology, Mersenne cultivated a wide and advanced intellectual circle. His cell operated as a kind of miniature university where, by correspondence and personal meetings, some of the foremost exponents of scientific investigation exchanged ideas. Mersenne and Hobbes became firm friends. It was to Mersenne that Hobbes communicated his own earliest enquiries into the fields of sensation and optics, which Mersenne published in summary form in the Preface to his Ballistica. It was also through the agency of Mersenne that Hobbes wrote the set of sixteen criticisms of Descartes's Meditations which now appear as the 'third objections'.³⁴ At the same time, Hobbes prepared a critique of Descartes's Dioptrique, in which he compared and contrasted his own optical theories and some of those propounded by Descartes. This was published by Mersenne in his Optique in 1644. Possibly for no reason more obscure than jealousy,

Descartes did not take at all kindly to Hobbes's critical remarks - which were, to be fair, expressed in a perfectly amicable tone.³⁵

Descartes accused Hobbes of plagiarism; Hobbes replied that he had been saying the same things for years and could prove it; and when the two eventually met in Paris in 1648 they fell out almost at once. They seem never to have entertained more than a somewhat frigid respect for one another - as witness the backhanded compliment recorded by Aubrey:

He [Hobbes] would say that had he [Descartes] kept himself to geometry he had been the best geometer in the world, but that his head did not lie for philosophy.³⁶

Also through the mediation of Mersenne, Hobbes formed the warmest of friendships with the neo-Epicurean philosopher Pierre Gassendi, who came to Paris in 1645 as Professor of Mathematics in the Collège Royal. This friendship lasted until Gassendi's death in 1655. In view of the direction of his own philosophical development, Hobbes must have found the atomism and materialism of Gassendi's philosophy congenial. Most important of all, however, Hobbes now came to be acquainted with the seminal scientific work of Galileo and Kepler; and in 1635 or 1636 he journeyed to Florence where he met the aged Galileo. According to the inexhaustible Aubrey, the two became friends; although the friendship cannot have lasted long, since Galileo died in 1642. Nevertheless, throughout his life, Hobbes maintained the most profound respect for Galileo, who 'was the first that opened to us the gate of natural philosophy universal.'³⁷

A glance at Hobbes's early development furnishes a clear

picture of a precocious young man, longing for novelty, bored with the conventional orthodoxies, and searching for an intellectual grounding more secure than that yielded by the academic curriculum then available in England. Extensive foreign travel was obviously the best possible antidote for such ennui. Having chafed so much against the traditional Aristotelian pabulum dished up by the beardless young tutors of Magdalen Hall, Hobbes found himself completely in harmony with the intellectual aspirations of seventeenth-century Europe. Here, after all, the imminent collapse of the scholastic edifice was accepted as inevitable. The most impressive and forward-looking intellects were daring to be heedless of the sanctity of Aristotle. The past was almost daily being undermined by epochal new steps in the natural sciences. Men were venturing for the first time to seek perfect mastery over the physical world and its resources. Here was the beginning of the modern scientific experience - the age of the vindication of Copernicus's heliocentric planetary theory and the final displacement of man from the centre of creation. It was the age of Galileo's work in astronomy and dynamics and Kepler's formulation of the laws of planetary motion; and Hobbes found himself perfectly at home in it. It is small wonder that, after his return from his first European journey, he was already the only one of Bacon's amanuenses who could understand the master's scientific musings. He had had his baptism, and he was to become more and more deeply involved with European science.

NOTES.

1. John Aubrey, Brief Lives, p.313.
2. Brief Lives, p.315.
3. Thomas Hobbes's Malmesburiensis Vita Carmine Expressa, L.W. Vol.I, pp.lxxxix-xcix.
4. E.W. Vol.10.
5. E.W. Vol.10, p.x.
6. E.W. Vol.4, p.412.
7. Brief Lives, p.306.
8. Brief Lives, p.306.
9. Brief Lives, p.306.
10. Brief Lives, p.307.
11. Vita Carmine Expressa, L.W. Vol.I, p.lxxxvi.
12. A Dialogue Between a Philosopher and a Student of the Common Laws of England, E.W. Vol.6, p.214.
13. Brief Lives, p.314.
14. Richard Peters, Hobbes, p.14.
15. A Dialogue Between a Philosopher and a Student of the Common Laws of England, E.W. Vol.6, p.214.
16. Brief Lives, p.308.
17. The Hunting of Leviathan, p.5.
18. Anything more in the way of a chronicle of Hobbes's life would, I think, carry us too far away from purely intellectual biography, to which I shall now turn. Nevertheless,

his general biography is itself quite fascinating, and would be well worth an independent study. The chief sources which I am here using, apart from the delightful gossip of Aubrey's 'Brief Life', are the three lives prefixed to the first volume of Molesworth's edition of the Latin Works: T. Hobbes Malmesburiensis Vita, either written by Hobbes himself or - as Croom Robertson suggests (Hobbes, p.2,n.1) - taken down at his dictation by T. Rymer (Molesworth includes the ambiguous words authore seipso in the title); Vitae Hobbianae Anctarium, worked up into Latin from material in English supplied by Aubrey by Richard Blackbourne, M.D.; and the verse autobiography already several times referred to, Thomae Hobbes Malmesburiensis Vita Carmine Expressa. Although now rather old and inaccessible, George Croom Robertson's Hobbes is a splendid fund of biographical material, and gives a particularly good account of Hobbes's controversies with Bramhall, Wallis and Ward.

19. Vita Carmine Expressa, L.W. Vol.I, p.lxxxviii.
20. William Cavendish, who commanded the Royalist troops in the north-east of England during the Civil War, and lost three-quarters of a million pounds in the process, was to be created first Duke of Newcastle-upon-Tyne by Charles II in 1664. He is not connected with Thomas Pelham Holles, the famous political fixer of the eighteenth century, who was created first Duke of Newcastle-under-Lyme in 1756. William Cavendish's contribution to science was the discovery that the sun 'is nothing else but a very solid body

- of salt and sulphur, inflamed by its own motion upon its own axis', Margaret Cavendish, Philosophical and Physical Opinions, London, 1663, quoted by Mintz, The Hunting of Leviathan, p.4.
21. History of the Grecian War by Thucydides, E.W. Vol.8, pp.iii-iv.
 22. Brief Lives, p.179.
 23. Brief Lives, p.309.
 24. Kuno Fischer (Francis Bacon of Verulam, E.T. by J. Oxenford, p.416) goes so far as to suggest that, in attempting to explain the moral and political world by naturalistic means, Hobbes was conscious of taking on a task which Bacon had wished, but been unable, to perform. Quite apart from the purely conjectural nature of this suggestion, Hobbes's almost complete lack of intellectual indebtedness to Bacon makes it extremely unlikely to be true.
 25. Vitae Hobbianae Auctarium, L.W. Vol.I, p.xxiv.
 26. History of the Grecian War by Thucydides, E.W. Vol.8, p.ix.
 27. History of the Grecian War by Thucydides, E.W. Vol.8, p.iii.
 28. Vita Garmine Expressa, L.W. Vol.I, p.lxxxviii.
 29. The second Earl had had a brief life but a merry one, and drastic economies were necessary after his death in 1628. Accordingly, the family temporarily dispensed with Hobbes's services. He resumed his duties in 1631, as tutor to his late pupil's eldest son.
 30. Brief Lives, p.309. The proposition in question is the one more usually known as 'Pythagoras's theorem' - that the sum

of the squares on the sides adjoining the right-angle of a right-angled triangle is equal to the square on the remaining side. It seems a little curious that Hobbes should never have come across this before.

31. To be fair to Hobbes, circle-squaring was not abandoned as hopeless until the nineteenth century - vide Florian Cajori, A History of Mathematics, p.2. Much better - and much worse - geometers than he had embarked upon these fruitless quests.
32. For example, one of Hobbes's contributions (in 1657) was entitled Marks of the Absurd Geometry, Rural Language, Scottish Church Politics and Barbarisms of John Wallis. To the best of my knowledge, Hobbes has only one rival (Tertullian) in the art of being nasty in Latin.
33. Hobbes, p.37. The remarkable Sir Kenelm (or Kenelme) Digby, incidentally, was famous for having called the Pope a liar when employed as Envoy by Henrietta-Maria. The Pope said he was mad.
34. They also appear amongst Hobbes's own works, complete with replies, as Objectiones ad Cartesii Meditationes de Prima Philosophia, L.W. Vol.V, pp.249-274.
35. On Hobbes's relations with Descartes see F. Brandt, Thomas Hobbes's Mechanical Conception of Nature, Ch.IV; and, more briefly, Richard Peters, Hobbes, pp.28-29.
36. Brief Lives, p.318.
37. Concerning Body, E.W. Vol.I, p.viii.

CHAPTER TWO - HOBBS AND THE RISE OF SCIENCE.

Given the intellectual and social milieu in which we find him moving, it is not difficult to see why the structure of Hobbes's mature thought is as it is. Indeed, his eventual return from the scientific haven of France in 1651 coincided with (and, as we have seen, was occasioned by) the appearance of the English version of his masterpiece, the Leviathan. In order to understand the growth of his ideas, therefore, it is obviously important to consider the nature and significance of the chief ideas which Hobbes encountered during his long formative period as a philosopher. Unfortunately, it would take us too far afield to embark on even the shortest history of seventeenth-century science here; and, as it happens, pure description would not serve our purposes very well in any case. It is more appropriate to point out that scientific thought at this time had begun to centre chiefly upon three concepts - concepts which were also to become fundamentals of Hobbes's own thought. These concepts are matter, motion, and law. To illustrate their importance, we need only glance at the vivid contrast between seventeenth-century dynamics and the traditional Greek mode of conceiving the phenomenon of motion.

From the earliest times - with the odd exception such as Anaxagoras of Clazomenae or Democritus of Abdera, both of whom were accounted impious - Greek scientists had held either that the planets are gods or that they are moved by gods. A more

sophisticated version of exactly the same kind of belief had passed down through the Middle Ages from Aristotle. To Aristotle's mind, one of the functions of the soul is to impart movement to the body whose soul it is:

The soul is the cause and first principle of the living body....It is the cause in the sense of being that from which motion is derived.¹

Indeed, on Aristotle's account, every object in motion requires an actual moving cause. It follows from this that not only do individual bodies require a cause to move them, but the entire universe must have a First, that is to say a Supreme, Mover. The term 'first' in this context is not to be understood as first in time. Aristotle regards time as eternal since, if we were to speak of the creation of time, we should, in effect, be speaking of the time when time was created, or of the time during which time was not, which plainly would not do. Also, change and motion are connected with time insofar as they are temporal phenomena - to borrow Collingwood's expression, every change and every motion requires a certain 'minimum time' in which to occur.² Therefore, change and motion must be eternal as well. Furthermore, since motion and change are necessarily eternal, the cause of motion, the First Mover, must itself be incapable of being changed. If this were not so, we should have to admit the possibility of the First Mover being changed in such a way as to cause it to cease from causing motion; in which case motion and change would not, after all, be necessarily eternal. The First Mover must therefore be non-material, since being material involves the possibility of being acted upon and changed. The First Mover is pure energeia - energy or force.³

To the extent that Aristotle was the genius loci of medieval science, the underlying presuppositions of his explanation of motion are of great importance. They may briefly be stated as follows. First, the natural state of material bodies is rest. Second, our experience confirms our rational certainty of the eternality of motion, since we see that, although their natural state is motionlessness, there are some bodies in motion (e.g. the planets) which do not just run down and stop. Third, there must therefore be an external force operating continuously upon such bodies. Moreover, as we have seen, this motive force must issue from a source which is itself non-material and thus unmoved and unmovable.

Seventeenth-century dynamics, as enunciated in Galileo's law of inertia, and as shortly to be brought to perfection in Newton's laws of motion, completely exploded this traditional view of the world. It suggested, and demonstrated the plausibility of the suggestion, that a body in motion will continue to move in the same direction for ever, unless some extrinsic cause arrest its movement or cause it to alter its direction. And such extrinsic causes as will produce these effects were held to be explicable in purely mechanical terms. The planets continue to describe their orbits simply under their own momentum, and in accordance with ascertainable laws of the kind formulated by Galileo and Kepler; and if one were suddenly to stop or alter course, this would be due not to the fact that a 'mover' had stopped moving it, but to the application of another force of discoverable intensity. In short, it had now become possible to formulate an entirely self-sufficient explanation of the universe as a system of matter

in motion according to discoverable laws of mechanics. Appeals to an unseen, metaphysical authority or mover or sustainer were no longer necessary to scientific explanation. To be sure, it was still necessary, or at least prudent, to leave a place for God in the explanation: God was the creator, the Deus ex machina, who had built the mechanical universe and set it going. Even Newton held this view, although Aristotle himself was well aware that there is no need to suppose that the universe had a beginning in time. The important point, however, is that it was no longer necessary to assume that God took any further interest in the machine which he had created. Unless impeded, it would run on forever, according to laws which the intelligent observer might formulate and understand - or, to be more exact, in regular ways capable of being formulated into scientific generalisations.

Of greater significance still was the excision of teleological or purposive assumptions from the study of natural phenomena. For as long as observant men believed that some outside intelligence, some motive force 'out there', continuously imparts to objects the motions which they are seen to make, it was both natural and deeply inhibiting also to believe that the intelligence in question does so for some reason. In other words, it was easy to assume that there must be some cosmic purpose underlying the fact that the universe is as it is, and so to seek for explanations of why rather than how natural phenomena are the way they are. This view is, of course, not quite dead to this day; and as its alternative has such anti-theological implications, there will, I suppose, always be those whose interest is to keep it alive. But, given the possibility of a purely mechanistic explanation

of the universe, teleology ceased to seem necessary to scientific understanding. Whatever the original motive behind the creation may have been (assuming it to have had any motive at all) natural phenomena as we observe them just are.⁴ Man could thus seek, not merely to understand them, but also to control them to his own ends. Never before had the secrets of nature been so plastic; never before had man been able, by scientific discovery and understanding, to seek to inject his own purposes into the natural world. Indeed, men of the past had tried to ward off nature to some degree, making shift with ill-equipped expeditions into medicine, astronomy, astrology, and so forth. But now the scientific investigator began to conceive the possibility of comprehending the universe and, potentially, all it contains, by operating with the three methodological concepts of matter, motion and law. He began, in other words, to formulate a comprehensive, nomological, mechanistic and useable explanation of nature, independent of authority or revelation. Natural science had achieved a wholly new intellectual independence. Just as, in the emergent 'possessive individualism' of seventeenth-century England, the individual was at last completing his emancipation from the hierocratic medieval community, so too, on the intellectual frontiers of Europe, physics was finally liberating itself from theology. And this emergence of the imago of natural science from the chrysalis of theology may be regarded as the first step towards the modern compartmentalisation of knowledge.

This whole scientific enterprise was not to reach its seventeenth-century culmination until 1687 - the year of the publication of

Sir Isaac Newton's Principia. By this time, Hobbes had been dead for eight years. But from the moment of his acceptance, in the 1630s, into the European intellectual world, the fascinated Hobbes was drawn ineluctably into a new world of dazzling explicative possibilities - into a conceptual voyage which was indeed no less daring in its way than the terrestrial conquests of Drake and Magellan which had so absorbed the bored undergraduate 'gaping on maps' in the bookshops.⁵

Hobbes himself gives a suggestive account of how he first came fully to see the possibilities latent in an explanation of the universe as a system of matter in motion.⁶ At some time after he had completed his studies in classical literature, he happened to be present at a gathering of learned men. Someone brought up the subject of the cause of sensation. This moved one of the company to ask, as though to dismiss the subject as insignificant, 'What is sense?' To Hobbes's amazement, no-one present at the gathering could come up with an answer; and he himself fell to thinking deeply on the matter. Eventually, he stumbled upon a solution which was to provide him with the keystone of his system. If, he reasoned, bodies and the internal parts of bodies were always at rest, or if they all always moved in the same way, we should have no means of distinguishing between any one thing and any other. We should not, in other words, be able to experience the changing conjunctions of phenomena which we call sensation. Thus, the cause of everything, including sensation, must reside in the diversity of motion. Not only must Galileo's suggestion that the whole of the physical world consists in the diversity of motions of homogeneous particles be true. It must

also be true that our awareness of this physical world itself arises out of motions within ourselves, answering to motions in the external world.

Hobbes, like Bentham, was something of a man of fads. Just as he fell head over heels in love with geometry, so he now seems immediately to have become obsessed with the possibilities of this new theory. The third Earl of Devonshire must have found him a tedious travelling companion; for Hobbes tells us that, throughout his third European journey, whether sailing, driving or riding a horse, he was constantly preoccupied by the idea of motion.⁷ He also tells us that, when in Paris on the same journey, he was busy enquiring into the kinds of motion which might effect sensation, intellect, apparition and other animal properties.⁸ Here was the obsessive student, who was 'wont to draw lines on his thigh and on the sheets, abed, and also multiply and divide',⁹ off on a new tack. He had hit upon the idea of applying the general theory of motion, by means of which Galileo sought to explain the physical world, to an explanation of sensation and therefore of human behaviour. At some time between 1630 and 1637 - it is impossible to say precisely when - his first tentative exploration of this possibility of a new philosophy of man appeared in A Short Tract on First Principles.¹⁰ This work, more commonly known as the Little Treatise, is similar in its structure to the De Corpore, only, of course, much smaller: It is a first draft of ideas later to be developed more fully. The belief that the sensations, and therefore the behaviour, of men are capable of explanation in the same mechanistic and essent-

ially non-teleological terms as the movements of natural bodies lies at the very centre of Hobbes's philosophy of man. More particularly, it lies at the centre of his moral and political recommendations. For, having arrived at this belief, he now set out to discover a final solution to all political disputes, in the form of a clear and indubitable scientific account of the form and functions of the commonwealth, capable of being expressed in the same nomological terms as the propositions of natural science. This undertaking, odd and misguided as it may now seem to us, was to provide the main directional thrust of his life's work.

Hobbes's step from natural to political and social philosophy is certainly an enterprising one. Whether or not it is also an original one is a question which remains open. In one sense, of course, it is obviously not original. Plato's Republic is just such an attempt as Hobbes's to construct a universal intellectual scheme culminating in a theory of the State. But Plato's system is, of course, of a very different order from that of Hobbes, and certainly does not rest upon extrapolation from crude mechanical explanation. Hobbes certainly thought, and claimed,¹¹ that he was the first to transplant a method of natural-scientific enquiry into the realms of social and political investigation. It may be, however, that he is indebted to Bacon or to classical atomism, to which he certainly had ample access through his friend Gassendi. Also, Tönnies has conjectured (although only upon the basis of very slender evidence) that the idea of reasoning about morals by means of the method of geometry was first

suggested to Hobbes by Galileo.¹² There may be some element of truth in all these guesses; but there is no way in which we can really substantiate any one of them.

As we have already suggested, the abolition of teleology from natural science, although never completed, encouraged the seventeenth-century men of science to take a very definitely instrumental view of knowledge and its pursuit. This view, recurrent in the history of science, is in essence the same as that of the Sophists of the fifth century B.C., or of the Enlightenment, and it implies the same kind of faith in human rationality. Galileo's work on projectiles, for instance, was of more than purely academic interest: Once we know the correct method of calculating the trajectories of projectiles, we are in a position accurately to work out the range of guns. The seventeenth century was, in its intellectual vanguard, unambiguously an age of applied science: The proper relation between theory and practice was conceived as being very close. Its guiding principle may be expressed thus: Given the right intellectual equipment, the appropriate method, men of imagination can, by the power of their own intelligence, make public the secrets of nature and impart purpose to them, forming them in such a way as to create conditions of life to order. Whatever practical obstacles there might be, theoretically there were no limits to what practical wisdom might accomplish, given only the proper method. And men like Bacon and Descartes believed themselves to have discovered this method. They published their findings in treatises which were written precisely to serve as handbooks for

intelligent men who wished to achieve practical wisdom. Such phronesis or know-how was to be achieved, not by monkish researches into the past and appeals to the authority of Aristotelian metaphysics, but by bold and rational forward enquiry. And because such enquiry amounted to prying into the very secrets of God's creation, it is hardly surprising that it met with repeated suspicion, condemnation and scepticism. H.A.L. Fisher has a story which neatly illustrates the kind of uphill battle which the new natural scientists found themselves fighting:

When at the beginning of the seventeenth century Kircher invited a brother Jesuit to look through his telescope at the newly-discovered spots on the sun, the professor replied, 'My son, it is useless. I have read Aristotle through twice, and have not found anything about spots on the sun. There are no spots on the sun.'¹³

The problem of reconciling reason with revelation was as intractable then as it is now for enquirers who are also believers.

But a still more intractable problem at this time was that presented by the absence of consensus over the question of what the proper method of scientific investigation might be. One might be forgiven for supposing that such pragmatically-minded men were all uncompromising empiricists; but this was far from being the case. To put it simply, there was, on the one hand, the purely deductive method of continental rationalism, as expounded in Descartes's Discourse on Method. This rationalism stressed the power of a priori reason to grasp substantial truths about the world, and so tended to regard the pursuit of science

as an essentially non-empirical exercise.¹⁴ Its essential feature is the faith which it places in reason as over against sensory experience. Descartes did not, strictly speaking, believe in the sufficiency of human reason to solve all philosophical problems, because he was at least prepared to admit God and innate ideas as logically prior to any process of reasoning. But the continental rationalist sought to found a whole comprehensive system of knowledge upon logical inferences drawn from luminously-clear first principles or innate ideas rather than from experience of or encounters with 'the world'. But, on the other hand, there was the experimental method advocated by Bacon in the Novum Organum and practised with such zeal by the Royal Society, which was incorporated in 1662. Here, the emphasis was upon the building of knowledge brick by brick, by observation and generalisation, and by the careful arrangement of observational data. But however much they might disagree over methodological issues, no-one at the heart of contemporary scientific circles doubted the cardinal importance to true knowledge of relying upon an effective method. System and method were to be preferred to appeals to conventional wisdom sanctified only by its antiquity. Moreover, no-one doubted the importance of accurate knowledge as giving its possessor mastery over nature. Bacon's famous dictum, nam et ipsa scientia potestas est - knowledge itself is power - was the watchword of the best seventeenth-century scientific minds.

Hobbes entered fully into the conviction of his quondam employer that knowledge is power - even to the extent of quoting him without acknowledgement. To his mind, philosophy, properly

conceived, has purely practical goals:

The end or scope of philosophy is that we may make use to our benefit of effects formerly seen; or that, by application of bodies to one another, we may produce the like effects of those we conceive in our mind, as far forth as matter, strength and industry will permit, for the commodity of human life. For the inward glory and triumph of mind that a man may have for the mastering of some difficult and doubtful matter, or for the discovery of some hidden truth, is not worth so much pains as the study of philosophy requires; nor need any man care much to teach another what he knows himself if he think that will be the only benefit of his labour. The end of knowledge is power; and the use of theorems... is for the construction of problems; and lastly, the scope of all speculation is the performance of some action or thing to be done.¹⁵

That a man who expended so much energy during his lifetime trying to square the circle and duplicate the cube should have written the second sentence of this passage may seem curious; but there it is.

The usefulness of natural philosophy and geometry is, of course, clearly to be seen by considering what they enable men to do - measurement of matter and motion; moving heavy objects; designing and constructing buildings; navigation; making instruments for every use; astronomy and the calculation of time; the making of maps; and so on. The fact that these

things can be done by almost everyone in Europe, most people in Asia, some people in Africa and nobody in America or the polar regions is due not to any intrinsic differences between men who live on different parts of the earth's surface. It is due simply to the fact that the American and Polar peoples do not understand philosophy.¹⁶ But Hobbes, as we have seen, believes that the usefulness of philosophy extends beyond the world of nature into the world of man, where it is capable of conferring insights into human behaviour of the same kind as those which it gives into that of inanimate objects. When so extended, natural science becomes moral and civil science. And moral and civil science are also capable of bestowing great benefits, even though these are measured rather differently from those arising out of natural science:

But the utility of moral and civil philosophy is to be estimated not so much by the commodities we have by knowing these sciences as by the calamities we receive from not knowing them. Now, all such calamities as may be avoided by human industry arise from war, but chiefly from civil war; for from these things proceed slaughter, solitude and the want of all things. But the cause of war is not that men are willing to have it; for the will hath nothing for object but good, at least that which seemeth good. Nor is it from this, that men know not that the effects of war are evil; for who is there that thinks not poverty and loss of life to be great evils? The cause, therefore, of civil war is that men know not the causes neither of war nor peace, there being but few

in the world that have learned those duties which unite and keep men in peace, that is to say, that have learned the rules of civil life sufficiently.

Now, the knowledge of these rules is moral philosophy.¹⁷

In other words, from certain assumptions about human psychology, which he invariably makes, and which he takes to be obviously true in the light of our experience, Hobbes draws the inference that it is in the interests of all men to master 'moral philosophy' or 'the rules of civil life'. More correctly, Hobbes holds that it is in the interests of all that some men, or even only one man, master these rules, since he recognises that not all will wish to take the trouble necessary to become a philosopher. In this respect, Hobbes's view of the relation between practical politics and philosophy is reminiscent of Plato's; although, as we shall see presently, Hobbes's view of the ends of civil association and of the meaning of the terms 'good' and 'evil' are decidedly un-Platonic.

Since it is so clearly in the interests of men to acquaint themselves with moral or civil philosophy, why is it equally so clear from our experience that they have not done so? Why are there still civil wars when, first, it is obvious that men would rather not suffer the 'poverty and loss of life' which they entail and, second, it is in principle so easy to avoid them? The answer is simply this:

Now that which is chiefly wanting in them [the philosophical works of the past] is a true and certain rule of our actions, by which we might know whether that we undertake be just or unjust. For it is to no purpose to be

bidden in every thing to do right before there be a certain rule and measure of right established, which no man hitherto hath established.¹⁸

When Hobbes says that there is no point in bidding men to do right before 'a certain rule and measure of right' is established, he obviously does not mean that it is pointless to exhort men to do right before there is positive law. It is plainly not true that 'no man hitherto hath established' codes of positive law; but it is true that such codes have not, on the whole, been very successful prophylactics against civil wars. What Hobbes means by 'a certain rule and measure of right' is not law in itself, but knowledge of what laws to make, of how to see that they are obeyed, and of how to avoid laws which are bad in the sense that they conduce to, or do not prevent, breaches of the peace. In other words, we are back to method again. Hobbes, like Aristotle, longs for an unchanging and secure State - he fears change, and seeks a degree of certainty which will be sufficient to eliminate it. Such certainty, he holds, can be provided only by an effective method of moral and civil science answering in kind to the methodology of the natural sciences. His task, as he sees it, is to become the Galileo of the political world - to apply to the world of morals and politics a universal and comprehensive method furnishing principles of organisation and behaviour as necessary and universal in their validity as scientific laws. But however much of Bacon's enthusiasm for practical science and hostility to Aristotle Hobbes may have imbibed in the 'delicious walks at Gorhambury', he had no time for the Baconian method of empirical, experimental

science. Characteristically, he minced no words when it came to saying so. Of those who share Bacon's delight in experiment, he has this to say:

Every man that hath spare money can get furnaces and buy coals. Every man that hath spare money can be at the charge of making great moulds and hiring workmen to grind their glasses, and so may have the best and greatest telescopes. They can get engines made, and apply them to the stars; recipients made, and try conclusions; but they are never the more philosophers for all this.¹⁹

It is worth noting that when, in the Epistle Dedicatory to the English translation of the De Corpore, Hobbes celebrates the founders of modern science, he mentions Copernicus, Galileo, Harvey, Kepler, Gassendi, and Mersenne; but of Bacon there is not a word.²⁰ So far as I know, Hobbes mentions the writings of Bacon only twice in his entire works - and both allusions are no more than passing references in out-of-the way works.²¹

Hobbes and Bacon shared a common mistrust of tradition and a mutual conviction that knowledge is power; and if anyone wishes to conclude that this is evidence of Bacon's 'influence' on Hobbes, then I suppose he might as well do so. But that they differed when it came to the method by which such power-giving knowledge is to be acquired is not open to doubt.

Hobbes's criticisms of experimentation in science amount, in a nutshell, to a mistrust of observation without reason. Whether criticisms based upon this mistrust are altogether fair to Baconian scientists or not is a moot point - they would hard-

ly hold water against Boyle or Newton, for instance. But such, for better or worse, is Hobbes's position.²² Anyone with more money than sense can watch liquids bubbling in 'recipients' or peer into the heavens through an expensive telescope; but this, in itself, is not enough to constitute philosophy. It is to an attempt to render intelligible Hobbes's answer to the question of what does constitute philosophy that I now come.

NOTES.

1. On the Soul, II,iv.
2. R.G. Collingwood, The Idea of Nature, pp.17ff.
3. Vide Metaphysics, XII,ivff.
4. Incidentally, some possible moral implications of this view are interestingly caught by the novelist John Steinbeck in The Log from the Sea of Cortez.
5. John Aubrey, Brief Lives, p.308.
6. T. Hobbes Malmesburiensis Vita, L.W. Vol.I,pp.xx-xxi.
7. Vita Carmine Expressa, L.W. Vol.I,p.lxxxix.
8. T. Hobbes Malmesburiensis Vita, L.W. Vol.I,p.xiv.
9. Brief Lives, p.309.
10. Published as an appendix to F. Tönnies's edition of The Elements of Law.
11. Vide, e.g., Concerning Body, E.W. Vol.1,p.9.
12. F. Tönnies, 'Hobbes Analekten', Archiv für Geschichte der Philosophie, III, 232.
13. A History of Europe, p.692.
14. This note may be unnecessary, but in view of my earlier passing mention of the Enlightenment I should perhaps make it clear that I invariably use the word 'rationalism' in the sense here indicated. In other words, it is not to be confused with the so-called 'rationalism' characteristic of the French thought of the Enlightenment (D'Alembert,

Voltaire, Condorcet), which was typically anti-religious, anti-clerical and thoroughly utilitarian in spirit.

15. Concerning Body, E.W. Vol.1,p.7.
16. Hobbes of course means the American indians.
17. Concerning Body, E.W. Vol.1,p.8.
18. Concerning Body, E.W. Vol.1,p.9, emphasis mine.
19. Considerations upon the Reputation...of Thomas Hobbes of Malmesbury, E.W. Vol.4,p.436.
20. Concerning Body, E.W. Vol.1,pp.viii-ix.
21. Problemata Physica, L.W. Vol.IV,p.317.
Decameron Physiologicum, E.W. Vol.7,p.112. This latter work, incidentally, was the last thing that Hobbes ever completed. It was written when he was ninety.
22. To his great mortification, the Royal Society steadfastly refused to admit Hobbes to a Fellowship. This refusal is hardly to be wondered at, considering the strongly Puritan membership of the Society and in view of the fact that John Wallis and Seth Ward were among its founder-members. But one wonders how much of Hobbes's scorn for experimental science was really due to hurt feelings. As we shall see in the following chapter, he was much more of an empiricist than is often realised - and much more of an Aristotelian, too.

CHAPTER THREE -- THE THEORY AND METHOD OF PHILOSOPHY.

No attempted exposition of Hobbes's philosophy of man and the State can be complete without some clarification of a substratum in respect of which much confusion has tended to prevail. I refer to his methodology - a topic which I shall understand as encompassing two related and inseparable issues: On the one hand, his theory of philosophy, or his account of what it is to undertake a philosophical or scientific enquiry; and, on the other, his view of how such an enquiry ought to be conducted. The nature of the problems with which I shall try to deal in this chapter may be illustrated by reference to two recurrent commonplaces of Hobbes criticism. In typical form, these may be formulated as follows. On the one hand, we hear the complaint that Hobbes set out to construct a purely deductive or rationalistic system, and then failed to be consistent within its terms of reference by introducing empirical material into it. On the other, Hobbes is criticised for having failed to grasp the importance of fact-collection and the careful arrangement of empirical data which characterise the inductive procedure of scientific investigation. Certainly, it is largely Hobbes's own fault that the study of his methodology turns out to be such a recondite affair. To begin with, his various allusions to methodological considerations in different contexts often appear empty to justify the kinds of criticism which I have just mentioned. On the one hand, as we saw a little while ago, there are places where he has nothing but scorn for the

Baconian method of inductive science. On the other, there is his infatuation with the deductive science of geometry, in which he professed such boundless faith and demonstrated such sublime incompetence. Hobbes used up a great deal of ink during the unfortunate episode with Wallis, and sometimes he does indeed speak as though he believed that the method of geometrical reasoning is the key to all mysteries.¹ Moreover, even Hobbes's warmest admirer cannot overlook those areas in his work which convey the clear impression that the philosopher himself is not entirely sure of what it is that he is trying to do - I am thinking particularly of the famous and disastrous twentieth chapter of the De Corpore.² Nevertheless, the difficulties and ambiguities which confront the student of Hobbes's methodology are, in my view, more apparent than real. This is what I hope to show in the present chapter; and, in any case, Hobbes's account of the proper method and subject-matter of philosophy will certainly be none the worse for a brief attempt to expound it in as intelligible and coherent a manner as may be possible.

I.

It comes as no surprise to find that the initial assumption underlying Hobbes's conception of scientific or philosophical method is the time-honoured one that man is by nature a rational creature. Hobbes accepts this as a truism - he does not question that 'rationality' is part of the meaning of the term 'man'. This philosophical commonplace does not need to be verified by experience - its only criterion is the law of contradiction. And, for Hobbes, it is an initial premiss which has generously democratic implications. From it, he proceeds to infer that,

in principle, every man is capable of becoming a philosopher:

Every man brought philosophy, that is, natural reason into the world with him; for all men can reason to some degree and concerning some things; but where there is need of a long series of reasons, there most men wander out of the way and fall into error for want of method, as it were for want of sowing and planting, that is, of improving their reason.³

Philosophy, therefore, is an activity which is natural to man. Since it is itself a process of rational explanation, it is ipso facto available to the capacity for rational explanation which every man has 'brought...into the world with him'. Nevertheless, a foolproof method of philosophising is necessary if a man is to do more than perform the most elementary operations of reason. Without such a method, he will soon become lost in the maze of his own arguments, and unwittingly stumble into mistakes. The development of such a method is, of course, a tedious business, requiring much patient application. Not everyone will wish to take the trouble necessary to become a philosopher; but, for those who do, Hobbes offers a couple of essential definitions. The first is that

Philosophy is such knowledge of effects or appearances as we acquire by true ratiocination from the knowledge we have first of their causes or generation; and, again, of such causes or generations as may be from knowing first their effects.⁴

'Ratiocination' or reasoning, he tells us, is nothing more than computation - that is, addition and subtraction (and mult-

iplication and division also, since multiplication is only a form of addition and division only a form of subtraction). In other words, in reasoning, we are in fact engaging in a process which formally mirrors the processes of mathematics. Obviously, however, this need not be a process confined simply to the manipulation of abstract numbers, because

magnitude, body, motion, time, degrees of quality, action, conception, proportion, speech and names (in which all the kinds of philosophy consist) are capable of addition and subtraction.⁵

Even in our day-to-day sensory experience of the world, when we would not ordinarily be inclined to suppose that we were reasoning at all, we add and 'subtract'; for whenever we see an object approaching or receding we are either taking account of more and more of it (i.e. adding) or less and less of it (i.e. subtracting). It is by this process that we become able to formulate definitions, either positive or negative, of what we perceive.

So far, all this may seem to have something of a ring of quaintness to it. But Hobbes later reformulates his definition of reason, giving it a different slant and saying the same thing in a rather more suggestive way:

[Ratiocination] consists...in composition and division or resolution. There is therefore no method by which we find out the causes of things but is either compositive or resolute, or partly compositive and partly resolute. And the resolute is commonly called analytical method, as the compositive is called synthetical.⁶

This way of putting it brings us at once to the heart of Hobbes's methodology. We begin to perceive that he is grounding his method of philosophical investigation upon a procedure which is, in fact, of great antiquity. It makes an appearance in the following form at the beginning of Aristotle's Physics:

In all enquiries which have to do with principles or causes or elements, knowledge or understanding consists in familiarity with these. It is when we have become familiar with its ultimate causes and first principles and when we have arrived at its elementary parts that we claim to have knowledge of something. And, by the same token, in the study of nature itself, our first objective must be to establish principles.

The direction of our enquiry must be from that which is more immediately cognizable and clear to us, to that which is clearer and more intimately cognizable in itself. For it is not the same thing to be immediately available to cognition and to be intrinsically intelligible. Thus, in proceeding to that which is intrinsically more luminous and available in itself to deeper knowledge, we must begin from that which is more immediately within our cognition, though in itself less readily available to understanding.⁷

By way of the very influential commentaries on Aristotle written during the twelfth century by the Arab philosopher Mohammed Ibn Roshd (more usually known as Averroes), this method had, by the fourteenth century, found its way into the universities of Italy.

It took especially deep root at the University of Padua, where it was developed with particular skill and success - and where, of course, it was to be brought to perfection by Galileo. Its essentials are captured by the fourteenth-century writer Pietro d'Abano (friend and colleague of the more notorious Averroist, Marsilius of Padua), who speaks, in connection with medicine, of 'the way of resolution' and 'the way of composition':

The way of composition...is the contrary of the first way [i.e. of the way of resolution]. In it, you begin with the thing at which you have arrived by the way of resolution, and then return to the very things resolved, and put them together again in their proper order.⁸

In order to elucidate this method, let us try to make Aristotle's passage a little clearer. The point, briefly, is this: An object as present to us in the world of our sensory experience is taken to be a whole comprised of parts. To put the same thing another way, any such object is taken to be an effect of causes which are anterior to itself. Therefore, if we wish fully to understand any object of our experience, it is not sufficient simply to take it as given. We must first resolve it into its constituent parts or causes and examine the properties of these constituents in isolation from the context of the whole. We must then reassemble them in order to see how they interact with one another in order to give the phenomenon or combination of phenomena which we originally observed. To return to Hobbesian language, philosophical method, or 'ratiocination', amounts to a process of analysis (subtraction) and synthesis (addition).

In analysis, on the one hand, reasoning proceeds from the particular, public and experientially known to universal or first principles. These first principles are 'intrinsically intelligible' - that is to say, they are atomic and therefore not susceptible of further analysis. This is the initial procedural step, since it is necessary to know such first principles before we can go on to reason about causes and effects.

As Hobbes puts it,

The cause of the whole is compounded of the causes of the parts; but it is necessary that we know the things that are to be compounded before we can know the whole compound....Moreover, seeing universal things are contained in the nature of singular things, the knowledge of them is to be acquired by reason, that is, by resolution.⁹

When, on the other hand, we come to composition, the procedure operates in the other direction. Here, beginning with first principles or universal causes, the object of the exercise is to construct their possible effects. In short, establishing the kind of causal explanations which Hobbes takes to be the subject-matter of philosophy is a process involving two separate but related stages: an empirical, inductive stage, answering to the resolute process, and a logical, deductive stage of composition.

This method has become known to historians of science as the 'resolutive-compositive' (or 'resoluto-compositive') method. Obviously, it is not necessarily a process which involves crude

physical dissection. Indeed, the number of cases in which actual dismantling of the object of study would be appropriate - or even possible - must be relatively small. More usually, it is a technique of armchair analysis, beginning from what is empirically given. As Hobbes puts it,

Now, by parts I do not means parts of the thing itself, but parts of its nature; as, by the parts of a man, I do not understand his head, his shoulders, his arms, etc., but his figure, quantity, motion, sense, reason and the like; which accidents being compounded or put together constitute the whole nature of man, but not the man himself.¹⁰

By way of illustration, let us suppose that we wish to engage in an investigation of the kind so successfully undertaken by Galileo, into the properties of objects falling towards the earth. The enterprise would begin with the investigator devising an experiment of a kind easily set up in a laboratory and easily repeatable - the standard example is that of a sphere rolling down an inclined plane. While performing the experiment, we should be careful to take no notice of those accidents of the sphere and the plane which obviously have no bearing on the behaviour of the sphere while in motion. We should, for example, ignore colour, smell, taste and what have you, and concentrate our attention only upon those observable characteristics which are both incapable of further analysis and able to be stated in mathematical form - extension, figure and motion. In short, we should (figuratively speaking) break down the whole cluster of phenomena that we see into such basic and quantifiable data as the weight of the sphere, the angle of the inclined plane, and

the time taken by the sphere to roll from the top to the bottom. If we think about these variables for long enough, and repeat the experiment often enough, it will eventually strike us that they are invariably related in a particular way - that the velocity of the sphere is a function of the time during which it has been travelling from rest, the distance being proportional to the square of the time taken. However often we repeat this act of analysis or resolution, we shall arrive at the same conclusions. The same configuration of mathematical relations will always be the result of our resolution.¹¹ And from this result we shall therefore be able to formulate a law, in the sense of a formula expressing the necessity of some action or event, from which we can 'compose' or deduce implications appropriate to this or any comparable situation.

The 'resolutive-compositive' method is therefore both explicative and predictive. It is here that its enormous significance in the history of science is located. It enables its user to arrive at laws which, if properly formulated, not only explain what has happened, but also make it possible for him to predict what will happen (subject, of course, to the completely unforeseen - for example, the laws of motion being falsified through the operation of some divine fiat). This is why, so far as the physical world is concerned, 'knowledge itself is power'. But Hobbes's view is that the method which Galileo applied to the physical world can also be applied to social situations and made to yield an entirely naturalistic theory of ethics and politics. And this, of course, introduces a third possibility in addition to those of explanation and prediction - namely, that

the findings of the moral and civil philosopher can be made the basis of accurate prescription of what should happen. It may sound curious to speak as I do of 'accurate prescriptions'; but this is only another way of expressing Hobbes's own conviction that 'a certain rule and measure of right' both can and should be established, and much of this curiousness will disappear when we have elucidated Hobbes's view of what kind of undertaking this 'prescription' is.

Because, as we have seen, Hobbes understands philosophy as knowledge of a rather specialised kind, he is compelled explicitly to exclude from his account of its province much that is ordinarily called knowledge:

Although sense and memory of things, which are common to man and all living creatures, be knowledge, yet because they are given us immediately by nature and not gotten by ratiocination, they are not philosophy.

Secondly, seeing experience is nothing but memory, and prudence, or prospect into the future time, nothing but expectation of such things as we have already had experience of, prudence also is not to be esteemed philosophy.¹²

In other words, knowledge, as we normally use the term, has a very wide reference. It includes both our non-propositional apprehension, such as perception, memory or introspection, and also the propositions or judgments by which we express such apprehension. But the kind of knowledge which arises out of the application of philosophical method has to be isolated

from this very wide field. Hobbes's attempt to do so may be expressed in the following terms.

Let us suppose that I look westwards on a number of consecutive evenings and see a series of sunsets. It would be true to say that I now have a kind of knowledge of sunsets - the kind which is 'given...immediately by nature', that is, by simple perception. For instance, I know how varying weather conditions have altered the colours of the sunsets which I have seen. I might, if I had the skill, be able to translate this knowledge onto canvas. Thus, the knowledge which I have might in certain circumstances be called artistic knowledge.¹³ But I could not be said to have philosophical or scientific knowledge of sunsets, on Hobbes's understanding of what it is to know philosophically or scientifically. Simply in virtue of having perceived the effect, I have not arrived at any conclusion about the cause. The act of perceiving effects is not the same thing as the process of formulating laws of motion which describe (not really govern) the regularities involved in the setting of the sun. By the same token, if my 'prudence, or prospect into the future time' led me to expect that the sun will set again tomorrow, this expectation, insofar as it is based simply upon remembered past experiences and not upon a general causal explanation, would not be scientific knowledge. My belief that the sun will set tomorrow evening (or rise tomorrow morning) may indeed turn out to have been justified when the time comes. But that knowledge which consists in experience without reason - without resolution and composition, or analysis and synthesis - is not philosophical.

In remarking that 'prudence...[is]...nothing but expectation of such things as we have already had experience of' and that therefore 'prudence also is not to be esteemed philosophy', Hobbes is, in effect, expressing misgivings as to the validity of inductive inferences similar to those later to be formulated by David Hume.¹⁴ To the extent that the kind of inductive inferences which we make in our everyday experience assume that there is a necessary causal connection between a collection of remembered past conjunctions of event A and event B and expected future conjunctions of events of the same kind, we are confronted by possibilities which have grave epistemological implications. These possibilities are, first, that our memories have deceived us and, second, that the past conjunctions which form the basis of our expectations as to the future amount, in sum, to nothing more than prolonged coincidence, and are not causal relationships at all. The tendency to identify mere repetition with causality may be no more than a psychological quirk that we happen to have. And given that these possibilities exist, simple inductive generalisations can have only an unscientific, rule-of-thumb status. We may make the operational assumption that they will hold. But in the absence of the kind of rational account of cause and effect for which Hobbes is arguing, there is no reason to accept the conclusions of any inductive argument as true or certain. Hobbes would wish to say that when we see an event and remember having seen it, we have knowledge only of fact, not of cause and effect. The mere repetition of similar events as such adds no new idea - i.e. that of causation - to what we already know. As he puts it,

There are of knowledge two kinds, whereof one is
knowledge of fact, the other knowledge of the consequences

of one affirmation to another. The former is nothing else but sense and memory, and is absolute knowledge, as when we see a fact doing or remember it done; and this is the knowledge required in a witness. The latter is called science, and is conditional; as when we know that, if the figure shown be a circle, then any straight line through the centre shall divide it into two equal parts. And this is the knowledge required in a philosopher, that is to say, of him that pretends to reasoning.¹⁵

To return, then, to Hobbes's original definition: Philosophy is knowledge of effects acquired by true ratiocination or computation from causes, or knowledge of causes acquired by true ratiocination from effects. Such ratiocination, when it proceeds from causes to effects, is compositive or deductive. When it proceeds from effects to causes, it is resolute, and has its beginnings in the empirically known.

An immediate difficulty now supervenes, of which, as the passage just quoted shows, Hobbes was perfectly well aware. It is very often the case that, before we can resolve a given whole into its component parts or an effect into its causes, we must make an educated guess in advance as to what these elements or causes might be. This is so because we cannot know before the resolute stage has taken place that a given effect can have been produced by one particular cause or set of causes. Similarly, we cannot know that a perceived whole must be made up of elements of any particular kind. Yet very often we must have some idea of what it is that we are looking for before resolution can

commence at all. Thus, if the resolute stage is ever to get under way, we must break this vicious circle by a step into the dark, since we can have no a priori certainty as to what it is that we are looking for - we can only make an intelligent guess. We are thus confronted by the possibility that we shall guess wrongly - that we shall step towards the wrong set of causes or elements. The consequence of this will be that we shall be landed with a set of obviously untenable deductive steps when we come to the compositive stage. And this possibility, of course, becomes stronger in direct proportion to the complexity of the object of our enquiry. The resolute-compositive method, therefore, is not, strictly speaking, a method of scientific discovery. The logic of resolution will not allow it to incorporate its own presuppositions, so that there can be no initial guarantee that the entire process is not on the wrong track. It is really nothing more than a method which will enable its user to set up testable hypotheses. And it is in the testing of such hypotheses rather than in their formulation that the process of discovery, properly so-called, takes place. Moreover, such hypotheses are only testable experimentally, not deductively:

Knowledge of consequence, which I have said before is called science...is not absolute, but conditional. No man can know by discourse that this or that is, has been or will be; but only that if this be, that is; if this has been, that has been; if this shall be, that shall be; which is to know conditionally.¹⁶

To the enquirer who, weary of the old philosophers, wishes to qualify himself as a scientist, Hobbes gives, inter alia, the

following advice:

You are to consider also the several properties and kinds of motion, viz., when a body being moved by one or more movents at once, in what way it is carried, straight, circular or otherwise crooked; and what degree of swiftness; as also the action of the movent, whether trusion, vection, percussion, reflection or refraction; and farther you must furnish yourself with as many experiments...as you can. And supposing some motion for the cause of your phenomenon, try if by evident consequence, without contradiction to any other manifest truth or experiment, you can derive the cause you seek for from your supposition. If you can, it is all that is expected, as to that one question, from philosophy. For there is no effect in nature which the Author of nature cannot bring to pass by more ways than one.¹⁷

In short, I think that Hobbes has here firmly grasped the idea of framing explanatory hypotheses from experience, deducing their consequences, and testing the results of such deduction by further reference to the natural - or the social - world. He knows that general scientific explanations are fundamentally conditional - that propositions expressing them must take an 'if...then' form. And this leads him to a correspondence theory of truth - to the view that a proposition purporting to be about the world is true only in virtue of there being a one-one correspondence between the terms of the proposition and the elements of some fact; which correspondence can, of course, be established only by reference to the natural (or social) world about which the proposition purports to be.

II.

What I have so far had to say by way of exposition has all been straightforward and familiar enough. But it has served to clear a path back to the types of criticism which I mentioned at the beginning. It will be recalled that I there drew attention to criticisms of two kinds: First, that Hobbes deliberately set out to create a purely rationalistic system which he then allowed to become polluted, so to speak, by empirical matter; second, that he failed adequately to grasp the significance of empirical scientific method as practised by Bacon and the Royal Society. As I have already indicated, I do not wish to suggest that these criticisms are wholly inappropriate; but I think that it has already begun quite clearly to emerge that neither of them is entirely to the point. I shall devote the remainder of this chapter to elaborating this conclusion.

The method of deduction by means of which we proceed from universal first principles to causal explanation is, of course, precisely the method of geometry with which Hobbes fell so heavily in love at the age of forty or so. Indeed, the terms 'analysis' and 'synthesis' which he tends to use in preference to 'resolution' and 'composition' are themselves borrowed directly from Euclid and Archimedes. In a word, Hobbes shared the desire of Descartes to formulate a compendious system of philosophical knowledge from a process of deductive reasoning answering to the method of classical geometry: a process by means of which we can proceed to draw out the implications of what we know as far as they will reach. But it is only with qualifications that we can

say that he shared this desire. When his various methodological remarks are collected together, it becomes clear enough that Hobbes did not wish to construct a purely rationalistic system. That is, he did not wish to construct a system like those of Descartes, Leibniz or Spinoza, in which the criteria of truth are intellectual and deductive rather than sensory. We plainly cannot deny his affinity with Descartes - that much is obviously beyond the reach of argument. But neither can we ignore his own assertion that the 'resolutive-compositive' method is partly rationalistic and partly empirical, or partly deductive and partly inductive. We certainly cannot ignore remarks like the following, which is taken from the beginning of his account of physics in Part IV of the De Corpore:

The principles...upon which the following [discussion of physics] depends, are not such as we ourselves make and pronounce in general terms, as definitions: but such, as being placed in the things themselves by the Author of nature, are by us observed in them. ¹⁸

Had he wished to embrace a purely deductive system like that of Descartes and the continental rationalists, Hobbes would have had to believe in the possibility of knowing first principles or definitions a priori or intuitively. He would have had to pin his faith to innate ideas independent of experience, from which necessarily true conclusions might be deduced. And it is very clear that he could do nothing of the kind, for reasons associated with the fact that he is a thoroughgoing philosophical nominalist, holding that abstract or general terms, or 'universals',

do not represent anything objectively real, but are mere utterances or names.

The importance of this nominalism for our present purpose is this. Hobbes indeed had great faith in the power of deduction from general or universal definitions to more particular knowledge. But, at the same time, his nominalism inclines him to point out that we can have no guarantee independent of our own experience that such definitions as we may formulate in fact correspond to the actual world of particular entities:

Now primary propositions are nothing but definitions, or parts of definitions, and these only are the principles of demonstration, being truths constituted arbitrarily by the inventors of speech, and therefore not to be demonstrated.¹⁹

For definition is not the essence of any thing, but a speech signifying what we conceive of the essence thereof; and so also not whiteness itself, but the word whiteness, is a genus or an universal name.²⁰

And, in a famous aphorism, Hobbes tells us that

Words are but wise men's counters, they do but reckon with them; but they are the money of fools.²¹

In short, definitions are, in themselves, no more than combinations of words to which a purely arbitrary meaning has been assigned.

They are made up of names which are themselves only words

taken at pleasure to serve for a mark, which may raise in our mind a thought like to some thought we had before,

and which, being pronounced to others, may be a sign of what thought the speaker had or had not before in his mind.²²

When operating with a system of deductive reasoning, therefore, we are, as it were, placed at one remove from the real world. To put it another way, when we do geometry, say, we are drawing conclusions, not about things, but about names which we have (quite arbitrarily) chosen. We are working within a conventionalist theory of truth - the truth of our propositions is simply a matter of linguistic or postulational convention, and thus is not in any sense absolute. But, as we have already noticed, this is not adequate as a framework for scientific enquiry, precisely because such an enquiry is concerned with elucidating more than conventions. This is certainly what Hobbes suggests in his objections to Descartes's Meditations:

What shall we say, though, if reasoning is perhaps nothing more than the joining and stringing-together of names by means of the word 'is'? If this be so, then reason gives conclusions, not about the nature of things, but only about their names....If this be so, as it may be, then reasoning will depend upon names, names upon imagination, and imagination (at least, in my opinion) on the motions of the bodily organs.²³

Thus, although 'experience concludeth nothing universally' and deductive science does enable us to draw universal conclusions,²⁴ the process of deduction cannot have relevance to scientific enquiry in the absence of empirically-derived information about

events in the external world. As he puts it,

The first beginnings...of knowledge are the phantasms
of sense and imagination.²⁵

This is so for one eminently good reason. There is no point in meticulously reasoning about words and definitions which are only names unless we have first discovered some means of establishing what the things actually are that the names name. Philosophy, as distinguished from other forms of knowledge, is grounded in 'ratiocination'. But ratiocination itself is made possible - at least in the world of practice - only by the fact of our having had experiences which we can ratiocinate about, and by the further fact of our anticipating further experiences against which to check our 'ratiocinations'. In other words, all knowledge which is not purely formal and axiomatic (i.e. based upon merely stipulative definitions) has its roots in our sensory awareness of the world of nature. This is so even though such knowledge cannot properly be called philosophical until it is expanded by reason into a connected system of causal explanation. The procedure which Hobbes recommends is neither wholly deductive nor wholly empirical, but an integrated system containing elements of both. Methodologically, Hobbes is both a rationalist and an empiricist.

Hobbes's substantive philosophy is noted for the incisiveness and clarity of its presentation; but as an exponent of a theory of philosophy he is often confused and confusing. At the same time, some grasp of theoretical matters is a necessary prerequisite of a proper understanding of his account of man and the State.

This is why I have thought this brief exposition worth including -- even though, for reasons of space, I have omitted much that might have been included on his theory of knowledge and truth, and particularly his views on language and its use. Considering the size of the task which he set himself, it is not surprising that a post mortem reveals a certain amount of ill-digested matter. But careful analysis establishes him, for all his lapses and inconsistencies, as a scientist in the mould of Galileo and not as a rationalist in that of Descartes. Hobbes does not believe, with Descartes, that the truth of scientific statements is established by the fact that they are deduced from self-evident axioms. He realises full well that, because a mathematical or deductive system depends for its necessary truth entirely upon self-consistency within a framework of defined terms, only experience can show whether the definition of such terms actually describes the real world. But, at the same time, he has no faith in mere dabbling experimentation without 'ratiocination' to give wholeness and coherence to the results of experience. Thus, he shares with Galileo both a faith in the power of deduction and an insistence that deduced consequences be supported and confirmed by observation and experiment -- a fact which may be obscured by his tremendous over-reaction to the discovery of geometry. Hobbes made an egregious fool of himself over geometry in the famous controversy with Wallis; but he was more aware of its limitations than he was of his own.

NOTES.

1. Vide, e.g., Philosophical Rudiments concerning Government and Society, E.W. Vol.2,p.iv.; Concerning Body, E.W. Vol.1, p.73.
2. This is the chapter containing Hobbes's attempts at circle-squaring. It was an earlier draft of this, containing Hobbes's most disastrous bumbles, that John Wallis came across by accident, and was able so effectively to use to Hobbes's discomfiture. The full story is told in Croom Robertson's Hobbes.
3. Concerning Body, E.W. Vol.1,pp.1-2.
4. Concerning Body, E.W. Vol.1,p.3.
5. Concerning Body, E.W. Vol.1,p.5.
6. Concerning Body, E.W. Vol.1,p.66 - emphasis mine. Why I emphasise this passage will become clearer as we go on.
7. Physics, I,i.
8. Quoted by J.H. Randall, Jr., The School of Padua, and J.W.N. Watkins, Hobbes's System of Ideas, p.32.
9. Concerning Body, E.W. Vol.1,pp.67-69.
10. Concerning Body, E.W. Vol.1,p.67.
11. Indeed, I suppose that actual repetition of such an experiment might not be necessary - that a sufficiently penetrating mind might grasp after one demonstration that the result would always be the same no matter how often the demonstration were repeated.

12. Concerning Body, E.W. Vol.1,p.3.
13. This example of a kind of non-philosophical knowledge is my own, not Hobbes's.
14. Vide A Treatise of Human Nature, especially Book I, Part 3, Section 6.
15. Leviathan, E.W. Vol.3,p.71, emphasis mine - again, the reason for my emphasis will become clear shortly.
16. Leviathan, E.W. Vol.3,p.52.
17. Decameron Physiologicum, E.W. Vol.7,p.88, emphasis mine.
18. Concerning Body, E.W. Vol.1,p.388, emphasis mine.
19. Concerning Body, E.W. Vol.1,p.37.
20. Concerning Body, E.W. Vol.1,p.60.
21. Leviathan, E.W. Vol.3,p.25.
22. Concerning Body, E.W. Vol.1,p.16.
23. Objectiones ad Cartesii Meditationes de Prima Philosophia, L.W. Vol.V,pp.257-258.
24. Human Nature, E.W. Vol.4,p.18.
25. Concerning Body, E.W. Vol.1,p.66.

CHAPTER FOUR - NATURE AND MAN.

We have now briefly considered Hobbes's account of the theory and method of philosophy. It is true that what he says a philosopher ought to do does not always coincide with what he himself actually does - during his long life, Hobbes delivered himself of many methodological (and other) opinions which, taken together, do not consort at all comfortably. But, for all that Hobbes is a self-conscious system builder, this is hardly to be wondered at. The same could probably be said of any comparably long-lived, prolific and quarrelsome philosopher - particularly of one who spent as much of his time coping with the exigencies of contemporary political circumstances. For my part, I have tried to make his methodological presuppositions intelligible to the extent necessary for our present purposes; and, in doing so, I have skimmed over many difficulties which are not germane to these purposes. It is enough for us to have established that, from a point of departure set by those things given to us through 'the phantasms of sense and imagination', Hobbes's system rests upon a process of resolution and composition, or analysis and synthesis. The end towards which this procedure is directed is that of causal explanation. Hobbes wishes to account for the generative processes by which things come to be as they are in the world of our experience. And amongst the occupants of the world of our experience, of course, are included bodies politic as well as animal bodies and inanimate and natural objects and phenomena. Hobbes takes it for granted that we can analyse the body politic in a scientific fashion -

more readily, in fact, than we can analyse, say, a ball rolling down a sloping surface or any other purely natural occurrence. He takes this for granted because he holds that the commonwealth or body politic is an artificial body created by man himself.¹ Hobbes differs from, say, Aristotle or St Thomas Aquinas in holding that political activity and the rules which govern it are man-created. The commonwealth is an artefact which is equally capable of being, so to speak, 'uncreated' or resolved into elements. Hobbes stands in the tradition which conceives the State as being analogous to a biological organism:

For by art is created that great Leviathan called a commonwealth or State, in Latin Civitas, which is but an artificial man; though of greater stature and strength than the natural, for whose protection and defence it was intended; and in which the sovereignty is an artificial soul, as giving life and motion to the whole body; the magistrates and other officers of judicature and execution, artificial joints; reward and punishment, by which fastened to the seat of sovereignty every joint and member is moved to perform his duty, are the nerves, that do the same in the body natural; the wealth and riches of all the particular members are the strength; salus populi, the people's safety, its business; counsellors, by whom all things needful for it to know are suggested unto it, are the memory; equity and laws, an artificial reason and will; concord, health; sedition, sickness; and civil war, death. Lastly, the pacts and covenants by which the parts of this body politic were made, set

together and united, resemble that fiat or 'let us make man' pronounced by God in the creation.²

To be sure, the analogy is in places rather strained. Quite apart from the rather questionable character of Hobbes's assumption that every member of the commonwealth is 'moved to perform his duty' either by the threat of punishment or the hope of reward, it is a little curious to suggest that the nerves 'do the same' - function as rewards and punishments - in the 'body natural'. But this is a quibble - Hobbes does not intend his manner of speaking to be anything more than illustrative or analogical. The real point is that the body politic is conceived as an organic unity. Like Aristotle, Hobbes would wish to hold that it is fulfilling its proper purpose, namely the 'protection and defence' of those who have made it, only when it is complete. Like Hegel, he would wish to hold that its rational purpose, its integrity, is capable of being realised only in wholeness. Hence, civil war is to the body politic what death is to the animal body. We cannot too greatly stress, however, that Hobbes regards political activity not as natural, but as the artificial result of rational necessity. The commonwealth stands in the same relationship to man as man himself stands in relation to God. Man has, for purposes of his own, assembled the body politic by means of pacts and covenants answering to the divine fiat. But man's purposes differ from God's in that they can be grasped by human reason. It is up to man himself to understand the body which he has created by analysing it and synthesising it in accordance with what Hobbes takes to be the proper method of scientific enquiry. The purpose of this chapter is to show something of

the way in which Hobbes passes, smoothly and systematically, from natural-scientific to psychological explanation, in order that we may then bring out what he took to be the implications of such explanation for political and social organisation.

* * * * *

Hobbes's natural philosophy is dominated and stimulated by a feature which we have already noticed. This feature is his preoccupation with the problem of the nature and causes of sensation. As we have seen, the belief at which he eventually arrived was that the cause of everything is to be found in the varieties of motion, and that this must apply to sensation as much as to anything else; and no subsequent finding ever caused him to doubt the truth of this presupposition. Matter and motion are the lowest common denominators of all our percepts, and bodies and their movements are the only subject matter of philosophy, since philosophy is concerned only with causes and effects.³ It is through motion that a conscious subject is modified by the presence of an object; and coupled with this is the characteristically empiricist belief that all knowledge is ultimately derived from sensations. This doctrine is known as Sensationalism, and finds its most typical exponent in Condillac.⁴ So far as I know, however, its earliest modern exposition is to be found in Hobbes's De Corpore of 1655; although Hobbes himself had already developed the doctrine in a tentative form in the Little Treatise and his early writings on optics.

As Hobbes developed this idea to its maturity, he came also to believe that geometry, physics, physiology and animal psychology could all be incorporated within a general theory of motion. Indeed, he tells us that he turned to geometry 'in order to learn the varieties and kinds of motion';⁵ and the empiricist strain which we discussed in the last chapter creeps into his understanding even of this most formal science, for he held that we cannot understand the definitions of geometry without first conducting experiments with motion like those involved in drawing a circle with a compass. His conviction that the cause of everything is motion led him to the belief that sensation could be located in a position somewhere between the large-scale motions of the external world and the small motions of the bodily organs. And by taking this intuitive step, Hobbes created for himself precisely the kind of opportunity which he desired. In short, he made it possible to attempt an explanation of sensation, and therefore of behaviour, in terms just as objective and intractable as those used in natural-scientific explanations. Hobbes had constructed a bridge between natural and social science which, in some form at least, continues to stand. Perhaps his feat was a regrettable one from some points of view; but its historical significance can hardly be too greatly stressed.

Hobbes's development of this kind of explanation is very lengthy and complex. It occurs in several versions in a number of different places, and Hobbes delights in the multiplication of examples. But we need consider no more of it than is immediately pertinent to his theories of man and the State.

Very simply, we may express what he has to say as follows. Sensation and apparition - which, taken together, are what we should now call perception - are, as it were, located at the point of juncture between external and internal motions. Our organs of sense are acted upon or jarred by movements in the external world (by which I mean no more than that part of the world which lies outside the individual's body), and themselves move in response to such movements. Hobbes never doubted that this argument is obviously valid. If it were not, he held, then there would be no faculty of discrimination and therefore no sensation. To perceive a world which was always at rest, or all parts of which always moved in exactly the same way, would, to all intents and purposes, be to perceive nothing. And if we always perceived nothing, then it would be difficult to see how the word 'perceiving' and its relatives should ever have come to mean anything at all, since we should never have become aware of the activity to which such words refer.

Now, odd as this argument may sound, there is, in fact, obviously something to be said for it. If, for example, I stand still and look at something static - say, the Last Supper - and say, 'What a beautiful painting!' then my total experience (and my jejuneness as an art-critic) can only be explained in terms of my having had other experiences. The acts of stopping, looking, uttering, using words like 'beautiful' or 'painting', or operating with concepts such as 'supper' or 'last' are rendered intelligible only by the fact that my present experience stands, as it were, in a dynamic relationship with past experiences. If, from the moment

of my birth to the moment of my death, I experienced nothing but the Last Supper, then really it would be odd to say that I had experienced anything at all. Hobbes's doctrine, therefore, is perhaps not quite so peculiar as it sounds.

Hobbes holds that if we are to identify the entire cause of sensation, we must make an analysis of all movements in external bodies - 'whether trusion, vection, percussion, reflection or refraction'. And one of the ways in which geometry makes itself useful is in helping us to analyse the possible kinds of motion: Geometry enables us to see something of the nature of circular motion, for example, by causing us to notice that a circle is described by a moving point rotating about a fixed point; to go on to deduce that a circle rotating about a fixed axis would describe a sphere; and so forth. These motions in external bodies are transmitted to the organs of sense either directly or through a medium. The usual medium of this transmission is air, which Hobbes, as a consistent materialist, regards as materia subtilis - as a very thin, intangible, material stuff.⁶ But sensation is not only the end-product of external motions. It also functions as an efficient cause of the actions of sentient beings. Actions, to Hobbes's mind, are really reactions to stimuli passed on from the external world by means of the organs of sense. Sensation, in short, operates as a mechanical linkage between movements in the external world and the observable behaviour of animals and men.

In order more effectively to carry off the transition from

mechanics to physiology and psychology, Hobbes now introduces into his system the concept of conatus or endeavour. This notion, which is also, of course, important in the philosophy of Spinoza, occurs as a key principle of explanation throughout Hobbes's English and Latin works. The concept is defined as

motion made in less space and time than can be given; that is, less than can be determined or assigned by exposition or number; that is, motion made through the length of a point and in an instant of time.⁷

In other words, the term 'endeavour' is here used simply to postulate infinitely small motions, which Hobbes, like Spinoza, takes to be directed towards the self-preservation of the thing whose motions they are. By means of this concept, Hobbes thought it possible to close the gap between physics and psychology. He held that external objects, operating on the sense organs, produce minute motions in the sense organs that proceed to the heart and there make some alteration to the vital motions involved in the circulation of the blood. When these vital motions are assisted by the addition of such minute motions, we experience pleasure - or, rather, to have one's vital motions assisted in this way is what it is to feel pleasure. By the same token, when the vital motions are impeded by such additional minute motions, we experience pain. The body will seek to preserve and increase those motions which are beneficial (pleasurable) and rid itself of those which are the reverse. To Hobbes, this is quite obvious and needs (indeed, can have) no demonstration, since, as Spinoza puts it, there can be no

conatus towards self-destruction⁸ - this is just a statement about the way the world happens to be. And this process of conserving and enhancing beneficial motions and damping-down or getting rid of inimical ones is what produces animal motion - and, consequently, human and social behaviour.⁹ According to Hobbes - who is always ready to give hostages to fortune by pushing his explanations as far as they will go - even habitual kinds of behaviour are no more than motions made easier by repeated endeavours. They are, he tells us, rather like the bending of a crossbow.

It is, I think, obvious that this explanation of animal motion and behaviour derives much of its plausibility from an appealing simplicity. Unfortunately, however, this simplicity is achieved only by a disproportionate concentration upon rather tenuous similarities and a failure (or refusal) to notice much more substantial differences. There is, of course, a sense in which the life of man vis-a-vis other men is a matter of bodies moving towards or away from one another in the interests of self-preservation, just as there is a sense in which doing work is a matter of moving stuff about. But these definitions, if they are definitions, are clearly not exhaustive. Social life is not just a matter of bodies moving relative to one another, any more than working is just a matter of moving stuff about. Again, habits may well be formed in part by constantly repeated motions; but to suggest that, when we use the word 'habit', we mean no more than 'constantly repeated motions' is simply implausible. Nevertheless, however many weaknesses we may discover in it, the fact

remains that Hobbes professed himself satisfied with his psychology. He believed himself to have found principles of social and psychological explanation which were in conformity with the Galilean principles of natural science. He was able to declare that

We have discovered the nature of sense, namely, that it is some internal motion in the sentient....Sense is a phantasm, made by the reaction and endeavour outwards in the organ of sense, caused by an endeavour inwards from the object, remaining for some time more or less.¹⁰

The external body, either directly or through a medium, presses on the sense organ,

which pressure, by the mediation of the nerves and other strings and membranes of the body, continued inwards to the brain and heart, causeth there a resistance or counter-pressure, or endeavour of the heart to deliver itself, which endeavour, because outward, seemeth to be some matter without.¹¹

All my sensations, therefore, are nothing but motions within me. If I see a tree in the quad, I form the impression of its being in the quad rather than in my heart because of the 'outward endeavour' of my heart. This explanation of perception is, I suppose, no stranger than many another; but Hobbes does not take us very far into the standard questions concerning the ontological status of the tree in the quad. In spite of some ambiguity of language, his view is certainly that objects have an existence of their own independent of the fact that they are perceived. If this were not so, of course, it would

be difficult to hold that such objects cause our perceptions according to the mechanical theory just outlined; and, in any case, Hobbes is an out-and-out materialist - he would certainly have regarded Berkeley's views as nonsensical.¹²

Having provided a mechanical point of departure for his psychology, Hobbes now attempts to describe known psychological phenomena in terms appropriate to a mechanical theory. His celebrated account of imagination, for example, is a direct deduction from the law of inertia. As he puts it,

When a body is once in motion, it moveth, unless something else hinder it, eternally; and whatsoever hindreth it cannot in an instant, but in time, quite extinguish it, as we see in the water, though the wind cease, the waves give not over rolling for a long time after, so also it happeneth in that motion, which is made in the internal parts of a man, then, when he sees, dreams, etc. For after the object is removed, or the eye shut, we still retain an image of the thing seen, though more obscure than when we see it.¹³

Imagination, therefore, is 'nothing but decaying sense',¹⁴ or 'nothing else but sense decaying or weakened by the absence of the object'.¹⁵ This decay is not a decay of motion - that would, of course, be contrary to the known natural regularities described by the law of inertia. Rather, it comes about because the sense organs are moved or jarred by other objects, and subsequent motions obscure previous ones, 'in such manner as the light of the sun obscureth the light of the stars'.¹⁶ And

memory, according to Hobbes, differs from imagination only in that the fading image is accompanied by a feeling of familiarity.

Once again, in all this, we cannot but notice a lack of correspondence between Hobbes's remarks and our commonsense experience. First, if imagination were really no more than decaying sense - if, in other words, it were no more than the relics of past perceptions - then it is difficult to see how we could imagine future states. Yet we plainly can imagine such states, and they need not be states similar to those which we have experienced previously, or about which we have heard from other people. Second, if 'imagination' is no more than the leftovers of past sensations, then it is difficult to see how we could imagine things which cannot be sensed at all or which have no reference to time - God, for example. Third, if we accept Hobbes's general mechanistic account of sensation, we know no more than the way in which naked and 'unprocessed' sensations come to be felt. We have no notion of how they are interpreted or related to one another by the mind - mind, of course, being something that does not enter into Hobbes's scheme of things, but for which he provides no adequate substitute. No doubt explanations could be devised which would enable us to get round these objections; but Hobbes furnishes no such explanation. Rather, he forges ahead with his empirical psychology, traversing the whole gamut of psychological phenomena. He explains attention, concentration, thought, dreams, and so on, as well as sense and imagination. Consciousness in its sensitive and cognitive dimensions amounts to a jarring of the nervous system by external bodies in motion. In its affectional and volitional aspects, it is a

reaction to this jarring - although we shall have some more to say about volition presently. From our point of view, however, the most interesting aspect of Hobbes's psychology is his theory of the passions. It is this which, in his system, affords the immediate prelude to social and political theory; and it is to this that I now turn.

As we have seen, by means of the concept of conatus or endeavour, Hobbes tried to show how the observable behaviour of creatures could be explained in terms of immeasurably small motions within the body. Through this concept, in other words, he contrived to translate the mechanistic and materialistic kind of explanation characteristic of Galilean natural science into a technique for the explanation of animal and human behaviour; and central to such explanation is an account of desire and aversion. According to Hobbes, when such endeavour is directed towards whatever it is that has caused it, it is called appetite or desire. When it is directed away from its cause, it is called aversion. The same instance of an endeavour can, of course, be both an appetite and an aversion at one and the same time. When a man acts in such a way as to avoid pain, he may be said to be both averting from pain and desiring painlessness. By the same token, we can speak of a particular endeavour as either an appetite or an aversion, depending on how we care to express ourselves. The most elementary forms of endeavour, then, are appetite or desire on the one hand, and aversion on the other. Both forms are motions within the body - small motions which are the beginnings of such large-scale motions as those involved in flight or fight. They originate in sensation, which is itself explicable in terms of motions in the body responding to motions in the external world. And it

ought to be possible to deduce the consequences of any particular kind of motion in terms of desire or aversion, just as we can deduce the consequences of motions in the natural world in terms of action and reaction.

Aversion and desire, Hobbes tells us, are more or less the same as hatred and love respectively.¹⁷ The only qualification which he cares to make is a small one. It is simply that, in common usage, desire signifies the absence of the desideratum while love signifies its presence. Aversion, too, signifies the absence of the object of aversion, while hatred signifies its presence. Thus, while I feel a powerful aversion from the prospect of being eaten alive by a tiger, hate would be the emotion which I should actually entertain for a tiger if one were eating me. It would, I think, be possible to quibble with this; but the point is hardly an important one. Hobbes goes on to tell us that some desires and aversions are born with men; but, by this, I take it that he does not mean that they are in some sense innate. Since, on his definition, they are movements which are causally related in a mechanistic way to our experience of the outside world, this could hardly be the case. What he means is no more than that men begin to experience desires and aversions of a certain order from the very earliest moments of their lives. Examples are the desire for food and the aversion from hunger (which really, of course, amount to the same thing). Other desires and aversions take longer to develop. They have something of the character of habits. They do not arise immediately and fully-fledged out of our sensory processes. Rather, they develop from our cumulative experience of the good or bad effects which

things have on us. But Hobbes's account of these notions of 'good' and 'bad' is very striking. He holds that, however many forms of desire and aversion there may be, one thing is clear:

Whatsoever is the object of any man's appetite or desire, that is it which he for his part calleth good; and the object of his hate and aversion evil; and of his contempt, vile and inconsiderable.¹⁸ For these words of good, evil and contemptible are ever used with relation to the person that useth them, there being nothing simply and absolutely so, nor any common rule of good and evil, to be taken from the nature of the objects themselves, but from the person of the man, where there is no commonwealth, or, in a commonwealth, from the person that representeth it; or from an arbitrator or judge whom men, disagreeing, shall by consent set up and make his sentence the rule thereof.¹⁹

Good and evil, therefore, are terms which are characterised by relativity and subjectivity. So far as value-judgments are concerned, each man is the measure of all things. Clearly, there will be a wide area of agreement - all men, for example, will agree that poverty and death are evils to be avoided. But there is neither absolute good nor absolute evil. There is therefore no objective norm to which individuals can appeal in order to distinguish the good from the bad. An artificial or conventional norm can be created, in the form of the specifications of the sovereign or a judge when the commonwealth has been set up. But it does not exist ab initio in virtue of any inherent property of things. What I desire I call good. What you hate you call

evil. Therefore, if I desire what you hate, the same object is called both good and evil. This looks like an obvious infraction of the law of contradiction; but once we escape the tyranny of words, we shall see that there is no meaningful sense in which any object of desire or aversion can be said actually to be good or evil. Hobbes is here asserting a version of what has subsequently come to be known as the 'emotive theory of ethics'. Compare his views with the following passage from A.J. Ayer's Language, Truth and Logic:

The presence of an ethical symbol in a proposition adds nothing to its factual content. Thus if I say to someone, "You acted wrongly in stealing that money," I am not stating anything more than if I had simply said, "You stole that money." In adding that this action is wrong, I am not making any further statement about it. I am simply evincing my moral disapproval of it.... Another man may disagree with me about the wrongness of stealing, in the sense that he may not have the same feelings about stealing as I have, and he may quarrel with me on account of my moral sentiments. But he cannot, strictly speaking, contradict me. For in saying that a certain type of action is right or wrong, I am not making any factual statement, not even a statement about my own state of mind. I am merely expressing certain moral sentiments. And the man who is ostensibly contradicting me is merely expressing his moral sentiments. So that there is plainly no sense in asking which of us is in the right. For neither of us is asserting a genuine proposition.²⁰

So too, for Hobbes - although the argument is rather different - no-one who makes an ostensibly moral assertion is saying anything meaningful about absolute value. He is simply stipulating his own likes and dislikes. Now, we might be tempted to suggest that, in asserting the subjectivity and relativity of moral judgments, Hobbes has inadvertently got himself into a tangle; because is it not true that precisely what he wishes to show is that absolute government is objectively good? This, however, would be a mistake. Not having heard of the 'ought-is' fallacy which it fell to David Hume to expose, Hobbes uses the language of prescription somewhat indiscriminately. He feels it quite natural to pass from scientific enquiry to political prescription; and he is blithely oblivious of the fact that questions which may broadly be called ethical cannot be answered by theoretical arguments such as might be used in a scientific discussion. What he really wishes to show, however, is not that absolute government is an objective ethical good, but that it is a rational necessity shown to be such on scientific grounds. But this is to anticipate.

When all these basic premisses have been elaborated, it turns out that all the different passions to which men are subject are nothing more than different manifestations of endeavour towards or away from an object. All passions are, in a word, different forms of either appetite or aversion. The only exceptions to this are the obvious limiting cases of pure pleasure and pure pain. These are exceptions because they are the end-states in which aversion and desire are no longer felt: they are 'a certain

fruition of good or evil.'²¹ It follows from all this that, as appetite and aversion are motions, so the different passions also are motions. Objects in the external world act upon the organs of sense and so give rise to 'that motion and agitation of the brain which we call conception.'²² This motion of the brain is then continued to the heart, 'there to be called passion.'²³ Thus, Hobbes's psychology is simply an extension of his materialistic physics. It is purely empirical, in that it relies upon no a priori metaphysical or theological commitments; and in this respect Hobbes foreshadows Kant. It is also a behaviouristic psychology. Thinking and motion are presented as implicit behaviour (ratiocination and conatus ~~or~~ endeavour); and Hobbes has no need to operate with anything but the most attenuated concept of consciousness at all. All of what are ordinarily called mental processes are simply by-products. They are side-effects or epiphenomena of events or motions of matter. These motions occur in the world outside the individual and give rise to corresponding motions within him which incidentally cause him to behave as he does. To explain such an apparently intangible notion as passion in purely materialistic and mechanical terms is certainly an impressive feat; and, to my knowledge, nothing of the kind was to be attempted again until the appearance, in 1914, of J.B. Watson's book Behavior: An Introduction to Comparative Psychology.

Within his general psychological scheme, Hobbes identifies a number of simple passions - appetite, desire, love, aversion, hate, joy, and grief. He draws a distinction between, on the one

hand, pleasures and displeasures of sense and, on the other, pleasures and displeasures of the mind. Pleasures and displeasures of the mind arise from expectation of an end or consequence. Pleasures of the mind are called joy, while displeasures of the mind are called grief, as distinct from displeasures of sense, which are called pain. These different passions assume different forms, or at least are called by different names, according to different considerations. Thus, if we consider the opinion which men have of actually getting what they desire, we can distinguish between hope and despair. Hope is appetite or desire coupled with belief that the desired object will be attained. Despair is the same appetite not accompanied by the belief that the desired object will be attained, or accompanied by the belief that it will not. Again, we can distinguish an object which is loved from one which is hated. Further, we can distinguish the passion of covetousness, which is the desire for wealth, from the passion of ambition, which is the desire for office or importance. But both covetousness and ambition are only different names, conferred according to different circumstances, for desire. Then again, consideration of a number of conjoined passions may lead us to use a special name for this compound of passion. Thus, for example,

love of one singularly, with desire to be singularly beloved [is called] the passion of love. The same, with fear that the love is not mutual, jealousy.²⁴

Finally, we can give a name to a passion from a consideration of the kind of motion which causes it. For instance, we can speak of

sudden dejection...the passion that causeth weeping,
 [which] is caused by such actions as suddenly take
 away some vehement hope or some prop of their power.²⁵

Thus, in short, the simple passions become complex according to the different circumstances in which they are combined or to the considerations which induce us to name them. Moreover, since Hobbes regards names simply as having been chosen by arbitrary convention, it is his view that much of this complexity can be unravelled simply by clear thinking and speaking. In any case, however many passions there may be, however many permutations of them are possible, and however wide the range of names chosen for them, they all ultimately boil down to motion. Thus, for example, delight or pleasure is 'nothing really but motion about the heart, as conception is nothing but motion in the head.'²⁶ To speak of dejection as being literally no more than a sudden downward movement inside my heart may sound fantastic to the modern hearer; but in the context of the seventeenth-century fascination with motion, it becomes more readily understandable, and Hobbes was by no means alone in embracing this kind of explanation as a means of accounting for human behaviour. Descartes, for example, held that the human soul resides in the pineal gland and causes bodily motions by altering the direction of the flow of the 'vital spirits'; a curious doctrine, but one which no-one seems to have thought particularly odd at the time.

Thus, Hobbes has given what he would regard as a philosophical account of human behaviour - an account framed in terms of cause and effect. And to the extent that his psychology is epiphen-

omenalistic, it is also purely deterministic. There is no room in Hobbes's account of behaviour for anything which we should normally feel inclined to call volition. The nature of Hobbes's determinism is fully set out in his controversy with Bishop Bramhall;²⁷ and, for our own purposes, it is now necessary to examine his account of what causality actually is.

By 'cause', Hobbes understands

the sum or aggregate of all such accidents, both in the agent and in the patient, as concur to the producing of the effect propounded; all which existing together, it cannot be understood but that the effect existeth with them; or that it can possibly exist if any one of them be absent.²⁸

In other words, if the whole set of accidents is present, we cannot conceive of the non-occurrence of the effect. By the same token, if any one of the accidents is not present, we cannot conceive of the production of the effect. The cause of anything is thus the sum total of all the conditions or accidents in both agent and patient required for the existence of that thing. As Hobbes himself puts it,

A cause simply, or an entire cause, is the aggregate of all the accidents both of the agents, how many soever they be, and of the patient, put together; which when they are all supposed to be present, it cannot be understood but that the effect is produced at the same instant; and if any one of them be wanting, it cannot be understood but that the effect is not produced.²⁹

Within the 'entire cause' as so defined, Hobbes goes on to elaborate a further distinction between 'efficient cause' and 'material cause'. The efficient cause is the sum total of accidents in the agent or agents which is required for the production of an effect which is actually produced. The material cause is the sum total of accidents in the patient required to produce such an effect. A little later,³⁰ he makes the further point that 'cause' and 'power' are the same thing. We can speak of the active power of the agent or the passive power of the patient; but these are objectively the same as the efficient and material cause. We use different terms only because we can consider the same things from different standpoints. What he means by this is quite simple. When we consider the sum total of accidents in the agent in relation to an effect already produced or caused, we call it the efficient cause. When, on the other hand, we consider the sum total of accidents in relation to the future time, we call this sum total the active power of the agent. In the same way, when we consider the sum total of accidents in the patient in relation to the past, we call it the material cause. When we consider it in relation to the future, or to effects as yet uncaused, we call it the passive power of the patient. As for what the scholastics called 'formal cause' or essence, and 'final cause' or end, these amount, in fact, to no more than efficient causes:

For when it is said the essence of a thing is the cause thereof, as to be rational is the cause of man, it is not intelligible; for it is all one as if it were said, to be a man is the cause of man; which is not well said.

And yet the knowledge of the essence of anything is the cause of the knowledge of the thing itself; for if I first know that a thing is rational, I know from thence that the same is man; but this is no other than an efficient cause. A final cause has no place but in such things as have sense and will; and this also I shall prove hereafter to be an efficient cause.³¹

In other words, to express 'essence' as if it were a 'formal cause' rather than a straightforward efficient cause of our knowledge is simply to express a tautology. And when he comes to the promised proof, it turns out that, for Hobbes, final cause or purpose is no more than the operation of efficient causes in man with deliberation. In other words, as we saw in chapter two, it makes no sense to speak of things having purposes beyond those given to them by men.

There is no need further to elaborate Hobbes's assault on the scholastic structure of 'verbal forks'. Suffice it to say that he has made characteristically quick work of the scholastic account of causation, rendering it down to a bald account of efficient causality. For our purposes, one aspect of this account of causality is particularly important. As we have seen, if the entire efficient cause is present, the effect is produced. This is a statement which is true by definition, since, if the effect were not produced, then the cause would simply not be an entire efficient cause. As Hobbes puts it,

It follows...from hence, that in whatsoever instant the cause is entire, in the same instant the effect is produced. For if it be not produced, something is still wanting which is requisite for the production of it; and therefore the cause was not entire, as was supposed.

And seeing a necessary cause is defined to be that, which being supposed, the effect cannot but follow, this also may be collected, that whatsoever effect is produced at any time, the same is produced by a necessary cause. For whatsoever is produced, in as much as it is produced, had an entire cause, that is, had all those things, which being supposed, it cannot be understood but that the effect follows; that is, it had a necessary cause. And in the same manner it may be shown, that whatsoever effects are hereafter to be produced, shall have a necessary cause; so that all the effects that have been, or shall be, produced, have their necessity in things antecedent.³²

In other words, on the assumption that every effect is preceded by an entire efficient cause, the very fact that something has happened indicates to us that it could not not have happened. When the cause is present in its entirety, the effect always and instantaneously follows. Hence, the cause itself is a necessary cause, and 'all the effects that have been or shall be produced have their necessity in things antecedent.' And whatever may be wrong with this argument, it is true that, to Hobbes's satisfaction, it at once excludes from the discussion

any possibility of freedom in man. To put it more precisely, it precludes us from using the term 'freedom' to signify absence of necessitation, because, if an entire cause is present, there is no absence of necessitation. To be sure, we often use the term 'free' to signify no more than that a man is not impeded by some external obstacle such as the opposition of other men; and this use of the term makes perfectly good sense. But

if a man should talk to me of...any free but free from being hindered by opposition, I should not say that he were in an error, but that his words were without meaning, that is to say, absurd.³³

We cannot talk of a 'free' subject or a 'free' will in any sense other than that just noticed, because, given a cause present in its entirety, the effect cannot not-happen or be prevented from happening. The effect follows of necessity, and it is not possible to be free from this necessity. If the effect does not occur, this does not mean that the individual has stopped it by the exercise of his own free will. It means no more than that, all appearances to the contrary notwithstanding, the entire cause was not present.

Now, in all this, Hobbes has not overlooked the obvious fact that men frequently seem to perform actions after, and as a result of, deliberation. At first sight, this seems to create a large difficulty in the context of an unambiguous theory of necessary causality. A capacity for deliberation seems to imply precisely that freedom of the will which is clearly inconsistent

with a deterministic psychology, and which Hobbes has already denied. This, however, turns out not to be a problem as far as Hobbes is concerned. First of all, although he accepts the fact of deliberate activity, his account of what it is to act deliberately is very narrowly drawn. He defines deliberation purely and simply in terms of the passions. Suppose that, in the mind of an individual, the desire to achieve, say, the ascent of Everest is present together with an aversion from the dangers involved in doing so. We have here two opposing and competing passions. In such a case, 'the whole sum of desires, aversions, hopes and fears continued till the thing be either done or thought impossible is that we call deliberation.'³⁴ This theory of deliberation against a background of necessary causality does not account for such things as trying and failing or deliberating about how to do something which involves no danger; but these are difficulties which Hobbes does not notice. They are, in fact, acute difficulties; because not only do I deliberate on the question of whether to do something or not - I also deliberate as to how to do it, and it is here, surely, that the process which we ordinarily call deliberation is chiefly located. If I try to do something and fail, then my 'deliberation' must have been in some sense mistaken; yet it is difficult to see how the necessarily-determined outcome of a conflict between two competing passions can be said to have been 'mistaken'. Similarly, there is no danger or aversion (at least in Hobbes's sense) in the process of, say, trying to understand Hegel's logic; but people plainly do deliberate as to the best way of achieving such understanding. Nevertheless, leaving these difficulties on one

side, it is Hobbes's view that the strength of the passions rather than freedom of the will in any ordinary sense determines the outcome of deliberation. And this is taken to be true by definition, since a see-sawing contest between opposing and more or less finely-balanced passions is precisely what we mean when we talk of deliberation. Presumably, the more finely balanced the respective strengths of the opposing passions, the more prolonged and agonising the process of deliberation, or the state of 'indecision', will be.

Second, Hobbes explicitly denies that there is any element in the human psychological make-up answering to the traditional notion of a 'will' which is capable of being 'free'. 'Will', he says, 'therefore is the last appetite in deliberating.' That is to say, the last appetite of aversion in the process of deliberating is what we mean by the act of willing - and for the purposes of making further progress we shall have simply to ignore the fact that this suggestion is, for the reasons already given, obviously not true. According to Hobbes, whether the action is performed or not depends upon the nature of this final 'will'; but this is a matter which is determined quite simply by the relative strengths of passions. It is therefore not within the control of any individual. And so it follows that,

from the use of the word 'free-will', no liberty can be inferred of the will, desire or inclination, but the liberty of the man; which consisteth in this, that he finds no stop in doing what he has the will

desire or inclination to do.³⁵

Liberty is defined as

the absence of all the impediments to action that are not contained in the nature and intrinsic quality of the agent.³⁶

And, therefore,

such a liberty as is free from necessity is not to be found in the will either of men or beasts. But if by liberty we understand the faculty or power, not of willing, but of doing what they will, then certainly that liberty is to be allowed to both, and both may equally have it, whensoever it is to be had.³⁷

The fact that men deliberate is therefore not, to Hobbes's mind, inconsistent with a thoroughgoing determinism as an explanatory principle of psychology. He simply defines the problem away.

In a nutshell, the case can be put as follows. If I am in danger, I shall inevitably act in such a way as will preserve my own life. At least, I shall inevitably act in such a way as I think will preserve my own life - and the fact that this proposition is manifestly false need not detain us.³⁸ The point is that Hobbes takes it to be a brute fact of psychology. It is explained in terms of a chain of motion which, when complete, is a chain of necessary causality. I cannot be said to be free to will the preservation of my own life. Neither can I be said to be free not to do so - any more than I can be said to will myself not to fall if I step out of my bedroom window. My will is simply not something which lies within my own control. What

we commonly call the will - that is, the apparent mental feat which immediately precedes action - is no more than the final desire in the process of deliberation. This process of deliberation, whereby I seem to 'choose' whether to do x, y or z, is determined purely by the strength of my (involuntary) passions in respect of each possible alternative. I can only be called 'free' in one sense. This is the sense which becomes meaningful if no-one actually prevents me from doing what my deliberation has led me to do. This may seem to be a very attenuated sense of the word 'free'. But Hobbes would wish to argue that there is no point in using the word to refer to actions which are free from necessitation, because there are no actions which are free from necessitation.

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☉ Such is Hobbes's account of human behaviour in terms of motion, cause and effect - in terms, in other words, of the presuppositions of seventeenth-century mechanics. It might seem that we have now wandered rather far away from the direction set in the previous chapter by our discussion of Hobbes's methodology. But in drawing out Hobbes's empirical psychology from his account of motion and necessary causality, we have, in fact, embarked upon the process of applying the 'resolutive-compositive' method to the chief object of our (and Hobbes's) enquiry - the commonwealth or political order. If we analyse or resolve the commonwealth into its smallest parts - if we remove laws, institutions, customs and all means of formal coercion and manipulation - we are left with a plurality of atomic, individual human beings. Each of

these beings is by way of being a highly-complex machine, driven by passions which are themselves epiphenomena of the material world, just as one machine can be driven by another through gears, transmission, and such. These passions are quite involuntary. A man cannot choose or decide not to feel them, because feeling them is a process determined by necessary causality, just as, when the application of a force causes a body to move, it cannot 'refrain' from moving. In turn, these passions determine for each individual what is good and what is evil. They necessitate all his actions and they furnish their ends. The pivot of Hobbes's political speculation is this: If we consider what the lot of such atomic individuals in an imaginary 'state of nature' would be, we shall be able to 'compose' the commonwealth by deduction, and so stipulate (for the benefit of those unwilling or unable to perform the deductions for themselves) the necessary conditions of political regulation. We are to consider what would be the predicament of individuals in a situation from which any kind of organised or reliable constraint were absent. We shall then be in a position to perform two important operations. First, we shall be able to deduce how such men must live, given the kind of creatures that they are: what principles of action they must devise for themselves, and how they will eventually come together to create civil associations. Second, we shall be able to show, with all the force and rational conviction of a scientific argument, precisely what the conditions within the organised polity must be if breaches of the peace are to be avoided. It is to this 'compositive' or deductive stage that we must now begin to turn.

NOTES.

1. The fact that the State is an artificial rather than a natural body means that we can know the formula of its construction with more certainty than is available in respect of the natural world. As he puts it,

Geometry...is demonstrable, for the lines and figures from which we reason are drawn and described by ourselves; and civil philosophy is demonstrable because we make the commonwealth ourselves. But because of natural bodies we know not the construction, but seek it from effects, there lies no demonstration of what the causes be we seek for, but only of what they may be. (E.W. Vol.7,p.184)

Hobbes does not, I think, wish to say that the principles of 'civil philosophy' are self-evident in the way that those of geometry are. His point is that geometrical and political 'facts' are man-made, whereas the natural world is not, so that the former are more readily comprehensible than the latter.

2. Leviathan, E.W. Vol.3,pp.ix-x.
3. Hobbes's materialism is, in a sense, methodological; but it is more than merely methodological. It is not that, in his view, philosophy should not concern itself with the non-material. Rather, he holds that there are no non-material things -- that the phrase 'non-material things' is self-contradictory. Vide, e.g., Leviathan, E.W. Vol.3,pp.17, 27, 34-35, and f.n. 12 infra.

4. Traite des Sensations, 1754.
5. T. Hobbes Malmesburiensis Vita, L.W. Vol.I,p.xxi.
6. Hobbes and Descartes had both arrived at this idea of materia subtilis independently of one another and at more or less the same time. Their inability to agree on who had had the idea first, and the jealousy of each of his reputation as an innovator, was apparently one of the chief sources of tension between them. Vide F. Brandt, Thomas Hobbes' Mechanical Conception of Nature, Ch.IV.
7. Concerning Body, E.W. Vol.1,p.206.
8. Ethica, III,4.
9. The distinction which Hobbes draws between vital and animal motions is simply that which, in modern terminology, is drawn between involuntary motions (the beating of the heart; breathing) and voluntary motions (running; fending off a blow).
10. Concerning Body, E.W. Vol.1,pp.390-391.
11. Leviathan, E.W. Vol.3,p.2.
12. To Hobbes, even God is 'a most pure, simple, invisible spirit corporeal' (E.W. Vol.4,p.313); and he does not see any contradiction in the term 'spirit corporeal'. Indeed, to Hobbes's mind, the scholastic term 'incorporeal substance' is self-contradictory - these 'are words which, when they are joined together, destroy one another, as if a man should say, an 'incorporeal body.' Clearly, then, Berkeley's contention that matter is non-existent would

have made no more sense to Hobbes than the traditional claim that spiritual substances are incorporeal. To Hobbes, 'substance' equals 'matter' or 'body'; and in support of his contention that God is material he cites Genesis, I,ii - 'the Spirit of God moved upon the face of the waters.' The Bible itself attributes motion and location to God, which attributes are only intelligible when applied to bodies. (Vide Leviathan, E.W. Vol.3,pp.381ff.)

13. Leviathan, E.W. Vol.3,p.4.
14. Leviathan, E.W. Vol.3,p.5.
15. Concerning Body, E.W. Vol.1,p.396.
16. Leviathan, E.W. Vol.3,p.5.
17. Leviathan, E.W. Vol.3,p.40.
18. An object of contempt cannot, I take it, be one which produces no kind of endeavour either towards or away from itself. If this were so, we could not, on Hobbes's own account, know that the contemptible object was there at all. Rather, an object of contempt is presumably one in respect of which feelings of aversion and desire exactly equal one another and so cancel one another out. Endeavour exists, but in a state of balance amounting to neither aversion nor desire.
19. Leviathan, E.W. Vol.3,p.41.
20. Language, Truth and Logic, pp.107-108. Vide also G.L. Stevenson, Ethics and Language. One might point out, in passing, that Professor Ayer's example is singularly ill-chosen, since it makes no more sense to ask, 'Is stealing wrong?' than it would make to ask, 'What colour is an orange?' or 'How many angles has a triangle?' But, as Hobbes the nominalist would have been quick to point out, this objection is not fatal to the argument.

21. Concerning Body, E.W. Vol.1, pp.409-410.
22. Human Nature, E.W. Vol.4,p.34.
23. Human Nature, E.W. Vol.4,p.34.
24. Leviathan, E.W. Vol.3,p.44. What Hobbes really means is that 'desire of one singularly, with desire to be singularly desired is called the passion of love. The same, with fear that the desire is not mutual, jealousy.' This desire would presumably be more than simple sexual desire, although it is difficult to see what else it might involve; and perhaps this difficulty explains Hobbes's evasively circular way of putting it.
25. Leviathan, E.W. Vol.3,p.46.
26. Human Nature, E.W. Vol.4,p.31.
27. An excellent summary and discussion is to be found in Richard Peters, Hobbes, Ch.7.
28. Concerning Body, E.W. Vol.1,p.77.
29. Concerning Body, E.W. Vol.1,pp.121-122.
30. Concerning Body, E.W. Vol.1,pp.127-128.
31. Concerning Body, E.W. Vol.1,pp.131-132.
32. Concerning Body, E.W. Vol.1,p.123.
33. Leviathan, E.W. Vol.3,p.33.
34. Leviathan, E.W. Vol.3,p.48.
35. Leviathan, E.W. Vol.3,p.197.
36. Of Liberty and Necessity, E.W. Vol.4,p.273.

37. Concerning Body, E.W. Vol.1,p.409.

38. In fact, Hobbes does occasionally concede that a man might in some circumstances prefer death to dishonour - might desire the glory of a valorous death more than he dreads the prospect of death itself; but these cases are, in the nature of things, very rare. In any case, this concession does not weaken the allegedly empirical point that men generally fear death more than anything else (i.e. that men almost invariably act in the interests of their own self-preservation). Neither, of course, does it violate the psychological principle that men always act under the goad of their own desires and aversions.

CHAPTER FIVE - THE STATE OF NATURE AND ITS LAWS.

Hobbes's account of human behaviour as we have just outlined it clearly has some very far-reaching ethical consequences. To the extent that the conative side of human existence is held to be quite outside the control of the individual man, Hobbes's understanding of what it is to act morally inevitably takes a somewhat unusual form; and the most important exposition of the moral consequences of his theory of motivation is to be found chiefly in the thirteenth, fourteenth and fifteenth chapters of the Leviathan.

Every individual, Hobbes tells us, has one predominant aim - namely, to maximise his power over every other individual with whom he comes into contact. Every other desire - wealth, knowledge, honour, and so on - comes down eventually to the desire for power; since to be rich, knowledgeable, honoured, and so forth is in each case to wield a different kind of power.¹ This desire for power, however, is not simply the naked urge to dominate. In claiming that men desire power, Hobbes means that every man wishes to be constantly in a position such that he can be confident of always securing the future gratification of his appetites or desires; so that the drive to power is explained in terms consistent with Hobbes's general psychology. And the reason why this passion for power inevitably persists throughout life is not so much that man is never satisfied with what he has, as that he is always unsure as to whether he will always be able to secure the same degree of satisfaction in the future. As

Hobbes puts it,

In the first place, I put for a general inclination of all mankind a perpetual and restless desire of power after power, that ceaseth only in death. And the cause of this is not always that a man hopes for a more intensive delight than he has already attained to; or that he cannot be content with a moderate power; but because he cannot assure the power and means to live well, which he hath present, without the acquisition of more.²

Hobbes's position more than superficially resembles that of Machiavelli as enunciated in The Prince. To Machiavelli, the prince is a free man to the extent that his safety and well-being are not contingent upon luck or any other man's will. If they are entirely in his own hands, he is free; so that to become a free man is to ensure that no-one else has the power to impose his will on you. You must either submit to domination or strive to dominate in your own right - liberty is expressed in the striving for power over other men; and becoming free is a zero-sum game. The prince must be prepared to act as the situation demands, and he must suppose that whatever conduces to his own power and advancement is good;³ so that, for the sake of power, and therefore of liberty, he must be able to act both ruthlessly and with the utmost restraint, as circumstances require. He must be able, as Machiavelli puts it, to make use of both the beast and the man in him. In short, both Hobbes and Machiavelli conclude that it is in the interests of a man to maximise his power; although the advice which Machiavelli gives is framed

in terms which presuppose freedom of the prince's will, whereas Hobbes will not allow that the notion of 'free-will' is a coherent one at all.

Added to this craving for power is the natural scarcity of resources and the tendency which men have (according to Hobbes) always to desire the respect and admiration of their fellows.⁴ And the chief problem which Hobbes takes to be associated with the fact that men are creatures of desire living in a world of scarce resources is that presented by the further fact of equality. Any one man, he suggests, is more or less the equal of any other. To the extent that mental faculties depend upon prudence rather than upon scientific knowledge, all men are more or less equally prudent. This is held to be so since, as we saw in chapter three, prudence depends upon experience; and all men have roughly the same experiences to make them prudent. Scientific knowledge is here left out of the account, of course, because so few people have it - indeed, in the state of nature it is presumably the case that no-one has it. Intellectual attainments in the state of nature are reduced, really, to the cultivation of simple cunning in the light of experience; and all men are roughly equal in the degree of cunning which they possess, since all are roughly equal in terms of their experiences. When it comes to physical capabilities, Hobbes suggests that inequalities of strength do not much matter. Men are, indeed, different in terms of bodily strength. But the fact is that the weakest man can kill even the strongest, either by ganging up on him with others, or by what Hobbes calls 'secret machinations' - by which he presumably means poisons, ambushes, booby-traps and

the like. As a consequence of this equality, there would never be any final solution to competitive struggles between men if it were not for the unnatural order imposed upon human affairs by political organisation. In the absence of such organisation, the human predicament would be one of constant and universal competition, with no power strong enough to resolve this predicament by imposing general control upon human transactions. There would prevail a state of 'war' of every man against every man.⁵ This state of war, to use modern terminology, might be either hot or cold. There would, in other words, be either actual fighting, or else the constant readiness or disposition to fight. Life would be a matter of constant brinkmanship; and Hobbes seems to regard the constant possibility of war as being just as bad as an actual state of war. In either case, everyone is the enemy of everyone else; and no-one can count upon any safety beyond that provided by his own strength or ingenuity - which, given the natural equality of men, is not a very satisfactory state of affairs. Moreover, in this state of war, where everyone is competing for the scarce resources of 'felicity', there is no moral law to set limits to human conduct. Recognition of a moral law, according to Hobbes, can only take place amongst men living in civil society and respecting their mutual rights and duties. As he puts it,

To this war of every man against every man, this also is consequent; 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. Force and fraud are in war the two cardinal virtues. Justice and injustice are none of the

faculties neither of the body nor mind. If they were, they might be in a man that were alone in the world, as well as his senses and passions. They are qualities that relate to men in society, not in solitude. It is consequent also to the same condition that there be no propriety [i.e. property], no dominion, no mine and thine distinct; but only that to be every man's, that he can get, and for so long as he can keep it.⁶

Here, though elsewhere he is ambiguous on this point, Hobbes denies that there are any transcendent, extra-political moral standards such as those postulated by the traditional exponents of natural law theory. Morality, like the State itself, is an artefact. Before it is made - that is, in the state of nature - universal anarchy obtains, because there is a complete absence of any rule regulative of human conduct. And for as long as this anarchy lasts, says Hobbes (in what must be one of the most quoted remarks in all political theory),

there is no place for industry; because the fruit thereof is uncertain: and consequently no culture of the earth; no navigation nor use of the commodities that may be imported by sea; no commodious building; no instruments of moving and removing such things as require much force; no knowledge of the face of the earth; no account of time; no arts, no letters, no society; and, which is worst of all, continual fear and danger of violent death, and the life of man solitary, poor, nasty, brutish and short.⁷

Hobbes does not wish to suggest that such a state of nature has ever actually obtained - this is an important point, to be returned to later. Nevertheless, he reinforces his argument by appeal to three cases which he considers adequate to support his point. First, he remarks that

the savage people in many places of America, except the government of small families, the concord whereof dependeth on natural lust, have no government at all, and live at this day in that brutish manner.⁸

This, of course, is an argument resting entirely upon ignorance of pre-technological modes of social organisation. Such ignorance in Hobbes is entirely understandable; but the argument of which it is the source need not detain us - except for long enough to point out that it is, in fact, significant that so-called 'savage people' do not live 'in that brutish manner'. But this is another point to which we shall return at a later stage. His second appeal - and here he is on somewhat better ground - is to the absence of restraint shown in the mutual relations of States which, precisely because they are sovereign States, have no common power set over them. To the extent that there is no international power able to regulate international relations as a sovereign regulates internal relations, such States are in a 'state of nature' relative to one another. Hence the mistrust and uncertainty which infect international affairs. This oft-noticed fact has, incidentally, been taken by political moralists from Dante to Bertrand Russell as an argument in favour of world government; and it is perhaps somewhat surprising that Hobbes makes no such point himself. His

third line of argument is to invite us to consider typical human behaviour even under government, where there are laws to protect the individual and officers appointed to enforce the laws. When a man travels, does he not arm himself and go in the company of others? When he is at home, does he not lock his doors, keep his belongings secured in chests, and so forth? Does he not, in short, display every sign of suspicion and mistrust, even towards his own servants and family? And 'does he not there as much accuse mankind by his actions as I do by my words?'⁹ This last suggestion has a very plausible ring to it; but it turns out, in fact, to be a very poor argument. On inspection, it becomes quite obvious that such precautions do not count as evidence for Hobbes's implied thesis that all men will be robbers if they can. When I leave my house, it is certainly true that I lock the door. But I do not do so because I suppose that all men are thieves - I do not 'accuse mankind'. I lock my door because,

- (a) I know that some men are thieves.
- (b) I do not know which men are thieves.
- (c) I am therefore prudent enough to assume that any man might be -

which is not at all the same thing as assuming that all men are.¹⁰

However, one salient point is by now clearly established. To Hobbes, the state of nature is a state of constant war, whether actual or potential. Assuming, as he does, that men obviously will not care for such a state of affairs, the burning question

will clearly be how they can escape from it. Hobbes is concerned, in other words, to deduce from the end-product of 'resolution' (i.e. from the state of nature) what men so situated might reasonably be expected to do; he has arrived at the jumping-off point of the 'compositive' stage. This, far from being a mere description of existing States, will be a deductive account of the generative processes which would produce a political order exactly suited to men's needs and propensities; and it will thus also function as an implicit critique of existing orders insofar as they deviate from this model.

The most general answer to the question of how men can escape from 'natural' anarchy is this. Although the state of nature is so dreadful, man is not compelled hopelessly to remain in it. His salvation rests upon the fact that he is both passionate and rational - a possibility of escape exists, founded partly upon man's reason and partly upon his passions. The passions push, the reason pulls; and, between them, they provide an escape route. The possibility of escape is founded partly upon the passions since, amongst these passions, there are several which, if circumstances permit them to predominate, conduce to a peaceful and orderly existence. These passions include 'fear of death, desire of such things as are necessary to commodious living, and a hope by their industry to obtain them.'¹¹ It is founded also upon reason, since it is reason which suggests to mankind the proper means of securing the gratification of the passions, including these peaceful ones. The reason 'suggesteth convenient articles of peace, upon which men may be drawn to

agreement.¹² The question which then immediately presents itself, of course, is this: How is it that men, who can only live by the unregulated and uncontrollable promptings of egoistic desire, can ever come actually to listen to these suggestions of reason? Hobbes answers this objection - rather lamely - by pointing out that we all have calmer moments, when rational reflection is unimpeded by the immediacy of passion; and it is then that these rational promptings towards 'articles of peace' are able to make themselves heard.

These articles of peace are called by Hobbes, 'laws of nature'. This is a term which he borrows from the scholastics whom he so profoundly despised, and which is capable of being traced back through the Roman jurists to the Stoic philosophers and beyond. It has, in fact, been one of the most fundamental and enduring concepts of moral and political thought from the earliest antiquity; and it is by no means dead to this day, surviving, for example, in the neo-Thomist writings of Jacques Maritain, or in the modern versions of the doctrines of 'human rights', 'rights of man', and so forth. A characteristic of Hobbes, however, is that he uses the traditional language of natural law to argue in favour of conclusions very different from those favoured by the main stream of natural law theorists. Far from asserting, say, that, in virtue of his nature, man ought to be left as free as possible to pursue his own good in his own way, Hobbes argues that the rational perception of 'natural laws' cannot but convince those who perceive them that, in their own interests, their 'natural' freedom ought to be very strictly curtailed. Also, at first sight, it seems rather incongruous

that Hobbes should be using the language of natural law theory at all, since he is an exponent of what is known as the 'command theory of law'. Law, to Hobbes, has nothing 'natural' about it. It is simply 'the word of him that by right hath command over others';¹³ and the state of nature, of course, is precisely the state in which no-one has such a right of command. As it happens, however, there turns out to be no fundamental inconsistency between Hobbes's use of the term 'laws of nature' and his view that a law is the command of a superior which cannot, as such, exist in the state of nature. He explains that these 'laws of nature' are not commands - at least, not the commands of any earthly power - but 'rules of reason'. They are, in other words, true universal propositions as to the conditions which must be observed if peace and security are to be achieved.

A law of nature, lex naturalis, is a precept or general rule, found out by reason, by which a man is forbidden to do that which is destructive of his life, or taketh away the means of preserving the same, and to omit that by which he thinketh it may best be preserved.¹⁴

Now, if we are to make sense of Hobbes's doctrine, his use of the word 'forbidden' in this context must be taken in a purely metaphorical sense. He wishes, in fact, simply to hold that, since every man desires as a matter of brute psychological fact to preserve his life, common sense tells him that it would be irrational to do anything that might endanger his life, or to fail to take any and all steps to protect it. So far, so good. But this prompting of reason, though in a very obvious sense it 'forbids' us to certain courses of action and exhorts us to

others, has no moral significance of itself. St Thomas Aquinas, for example, also holding that self-preservation is a 'law of nature', held that we can infer from this the moral precept, 'thou shalt not kill'. But, for Hobbes, reason is not conceived as furnishing us with the ends of action; because the ends of action are already given by the passions. What reason does is quite simply to indicate general rules as to the means by which such - purely egoistic - ends are to be achieved.

There are nineteen of these 'general rules found out by reason'. All of them are capable of being deduced from a single supreme rule, 'that every man ought to endeavour peace as far as he has hope of obtaining it, and where he cannot obtain it, that he may seek and use all the helps and advantages of war. The first branch of which rule containeth the first and fundamental law of nature, which is to seek peace and follow it; the second the sum of the right of nature, which is, by all means we can to defend ourselves.'¹⁵ Again, it is perhaps as well to make clear what it is that Hobbes really means when he says that men ought to endeavour peace. He means no more than that, because of the hazards of the war of all against all which obtains in the state of nature, it is plainly to the advantage of each individual to seek peace where he can. He is not suggesting, in any simple sense, that I ought to seek peace as a moral good - in other words, he is not suggesting that I ought to seek anyone's peace but my own, except insofar as my own peace depends upon other people also having a peaceful and ordered existence. The laws of nature, at least as we have so far considered them, are nothing more than the kind of rational conclusions that we might suppose would occur

to a psychological hedonist who desires peace and security.

Man, therefore, has, in the state of nature, what Hobbes calls a supreme 'right of nature', which amounts to a right to do whatever he thinks will conduce to his own safety. And because the state of nature is a war of all against all,

it followeth that, in such a condition, every man has a right to every thing, even to one another's body. And, therefore, as long as this natural right of every man to every thing endureth, there can be no security to any man, how strong or wise soever he be.¹⁶

To digress a little, it is rather curious that Hobbes should here have chosen to speak of a right of nature. He does not seem to have undertaken any analysis of what it is to have a right, or of what 'having a right' has traditionally been taken to mean. First, if I am to make any plausible claim to have a right, it is surely true that I must, in making such a claim, be able to indicate some other party who is, or who on some rational grounds capable of specification should be, under an obligation to respect my right. It is, I think, clear that there can be no rights in the absence of correlative obligations. The mutual existence of rights and obligations is what is constitutive of each, and it would make no sense to talk of either without acknowledging the existence of the other. Yet, for Hobbes, the state of nature is precisely a state in which there are no obligations: Every man has a right to every thing. Second, it is obvious that, when we speak of having a right, we are speaking of being in some sense¹⁷ entitled to do or be or become

or receive something. But we are also, surely, implying a right to refrain from doing what we are entitled to do. For instance, if I lend a sum of money, I have a right to require that the loan be repaid; but I also have a right to forgive debts if I so wish -- I have a right not to exercise my right. And if this idea of refraining, of not-exercising, were not implicit in the very idea of my having a right, then the conceptual difference between my having a right and being under an obligation would cease to exist. For example, in Great Britain, every adult citizen, with a few specified exceptions, has the right to vote; but he or she also has the right to abstain from voting. In Australia or the Republic of Ireland, where voting is compulsory, it would be odd to speak of a right to vote -- simply because there is no right to abstain. In Australia or the Irish Republic, one is under an obligation to vote -- the obligation being to the legislature which made the law, and which has the right to enforce it or not, as it pleases. Now, we see that, on Hobbes's account of the 'right of nature', every man is apparently entitled to do everything that he thinks will conduce to his own safety. But Hobbes's deterministic psychology certainly entails that a man who is threatened cannot refrain from protecting himself -- or at least that, if he does, he is simply acting irrationally or in such a way that his behaviour cannot be explained. Neither, however, can we really say that, in Hobbes's view, a man is under an obligation to protect himself; because we cannot identify anyone to whom this obligation is owed and who has the right to enforce it or dispense with it at will. Hobbes's discussion of human behaviour is supposed to be a discussion about psychological facts, and the concept of a right has no logical place in such a

discussion. It is difficult to see on what rational grounds he introduces it at all, unless it be that 'it already existed in the work of previous thinkers and he set out to render it innocuous' since, as we shall see, 'it is a cardinal point in his argument that if political authority and government are to be established, each man must give up his right of nature'.¹⁸ In any case, what Hobbes really seems to have in mind when he speaks of the 'right of nature' is simply a complete natural freedom - a total absence of obligation. Within his own terms of reference, to involve us in talk of rights before the commonwealth is set up is simply misleading.

To return to the main thread, an immediate consequence of the first law of nature is that each man should be

willing, when others are so too, as far forth as for peace and defence of himself he shall think it necessary, to lay down this right to all things, and be contented with so much liberty against other men as he would allow other men against himself.¹⁹

This is the second law of nature. According to Hobbes, it amounts to something like the 'Golden Rule of the Gospels - the rule of 'do as you would be done by'. This second law provides the foundation of the whole possibility of contract and, consequently, on Hobbes's account, of the foundation of the political order as well. This is so because what the rule provides for is the termination of the chief feature of the state of nature: the laying-aside by each individual of some part - perhaps a very large part, although never the whole - of his

natural right to everything. This process can take one of two forms. First, the right can be merely renounced. Second, if the right is to be laid aside for the benefit of a particular person or persons, it can be transferred to that person or persons. In other words, men may make contracts with one another. (It is difficult, incidentally, to see how A can transfer any right to B if they both already have a right to everything - if I have a right to everything anyway, you cannot add anything to it by transferring your own right to me. But this is a difficulty which Hobbes does not notice; and, in any case, we have already remarked that his use of the term 'right' is fundamentally incoherent.)

This transference of right, being an act voluntarily undertaken, is inevitably undertaken out of motives of self-interest. This is so since, according to Hobbes, some good to the actor is ipso facto the object of every voluntary act - this is the only sense in which an act can be said to be voluntary. In each such case of transference, the contracting parties all act with an eye to their own advantage. It is of no consequence whatever to any one of them that good consequences might also come out of the contract for any of the others. Moreover, since there are some things which self-interest itself dictates must not be relinquished, there are certain parts of the right of nature which cannot be transferred. In other words, there are certain things which a man cannot contract to do or refrain from doing. For example, a man cannot undertake to lay down his right to resist an attack upon his life or an attempt to injure or imprison him. More generally and more accurately, since the whole point of my making

a contract, i.e. of transferring my right, is to secure my life and the means to enjoy it, it would be unreasonable to interpret any word or deed of mine as indicating an intention on my part to let the means of my self-preservation go out of my own control. This fact, as we shall see later, is a limiting condition of the power even of the sovereign. Thus, contracts or bargains, which amount to transferences of right, are in principle possible. They are possible because men know by the light of natural reason that the transference of right is often a means to advantage. This is a pretty stark moral philosophy; but there it is.

It so happens, however, that when two parties strike a bargain, it may often be the case that one of them is required to perform his part before the other has performed his. Indeed, this will obviously be true in the vast majority of cases. In other words, in all contracts apart from straightforward corner-shop transactions or exchanges, a certain minimum of trust is a prerequisite. The party performing first has to trust the other party to do his part at some time in the future. In cases of this kind, the contract is called, from the point of view of the party who is trusted, a covenant. In view of this covenantal aspect of some kinds of contract, it is possible to deduce a third law of nature from what has gone before. And Hobbes takes this third law, 'that men perform their covenants made',²⁰ to be the basis of all obligation. The logical process by means of which we arrive at this third law of nature is quite clear. It may be expressed as follows:

- i. A breaks his agreement with B.
- ii. B's whole motive in entering into the agreement in the first place was to secure some advantage for himself.
- iii. A's failure to perform his part has removed the possibility of any such advantage.
- iv. Therefore, B no longer has any reason for fulfilling his side of the agreement, and the whole purpose of making covenants has collapsed.

To look at the same thing the other way round, if A performs his part of the agreement and B then refuses to perform his, it is hardly likely that A will be prepared to strike a bargain with B again. And, moreover, in the state of nature, where there is no legal redress, A will presumably take the law into his own hands and force B to do what he will not do voluntarily. In any case, the whole point of making agreements is vitiated by failure to keep them. Unless men do what they say they will do, there is no point in their having said that they will do it in the first place; and Hobbes takes this to be a 'law of nature' for no more esoteric reason than that it is obvious if we think about it. The argument is not that it is immoral, in any ordinary sense, to break an agreement; only that it is futile and self-contradictory to do so. While men do not do what they say they will do, 'covenants are in vain, and but empty words, and the right of all men to all things remaining, we are still in the condition of war',²¹ where we certainly don't want to be. This argument, though it is an argument from advantage rather than from principle, certainly has a strong Kantian flavour which, as A.E. Taylor points

out, is a characteristic of many of Hobbes's ethical positions.²²

Although it is not in itself a moral argument, Hobbes holds that this third law of nature forms the basis for the distinction of justice from injustice and, indirectly, the foundation of the whole of social morality. He takes this to be so since 'the definition of injustice is no other than the not-performance of covenant. And whatsoever is not unjust is just.'²³ This remark, in fact, seems to embody the rather curious belief that acting wrongfully is logically prior to acting rightfully - a belief which, incidentally, was also held by Schopenhauer. But this definition at least serves to clarify Hobbes's contention that, in the state of nature, there can be no injustice. Breach of covenant is precisely what injustice is; but the formation of covenant requires mutual trust. No two parties will enter into an agreement or 'transference of right' unless each can be reasonably sure in advance that the other will not renege on the bargain. But what can make such mutual trust possible? Only, according to Hobbes, a coercive power reliable and strong enough to inflict penalties so severe and so certain that it ceases to be worth anyone's while to be untrustworthy. Covenants can, in other words, only occur within civil society under sovereign power; and it is for the same reason that the institution of property can exist only under civil government. There can be no 'right of mine and thine distinct' without a power strong enough to see to it that such a right is not infringed. In the state of nature itself, there are only two kinds of contract which are possible. The first kind consists of those contracts which involve present performance - that is, transactions such that all

the parties to the agreement fulfil their undertakings at the same time. The second kind is simply the social compact itself, by which a coercive power strong enough to enforce that and all future agreements is instantaneously created. These are the only possible operative cases of contract in the state of nature, because they are the only instances in respect of which the need for trust does not arise. The object which the contract is intended to achieve is, in these cases, immediately realised. No reliance need therefore be placed on any kind of future conduct by any of the contracting parties.

There would obviously be certain practical difficulties involved in a 'social compact' creating coercive institutions instantaneously; and these practical difficulties would surely be insoluble. But this is a difficulty which need not for the present concern us. A more immediate problem is this: What real grounds are there for holding that it is a 'law of nature' that men always should perform their covenants made? We have already established, in uncompromising terms, what my motive for entering into any kind of 'transference of right' will be. At the most general level, it will be because I wish to achieve some advantage for myself. I make contracts only because it serves my turn to do so - my turn being the gratification of some desire or the successful avoidance of some object of my aversion. But if this is so, how can I be in any sense bound to keep them in cases where breaking them is likely to confer more advantages upon me than keeping them? The fact of the existence of such obligation is something which Hobbes never calls in

question. Indeed, his conviction that men are under such an obligation is carried to lengths that we might be inclined to regard as rather extreme. For example, he holds that a promise given to a robber to pay a sum of money in return for being released is binding upon the promisor unless declared invalid by a properly constituted court of law. However, Hobbes's arguments in support of this view are not very impressive. First, he asserts that a man who breaks promises for the sake of immediate advantage will lose in the long run because, as we have noted, there will eventually come a time when he will no longer be trusted - it is precisely this that makes contracts impossible in the state of nature. This, as we have seen, comes somewhere close to being a Kantian argument, and, as far as it goes, it is reasonable enough. But the trouble with men, on Hobbes's theory of behaviour, is precisely their constant tendency not to act with a view to the long run. In any case, it is difficult to take seriously the claim that anyone will cease to trust me because I do not keep a promise made under duress to a thief. Also, of course, the possibility exists that I might find that breaking a promise confers upon me benefits so great that the risk of incurring mistrust is worthwhile. Hobbes's second argument - or suggestion, for this is really no more than a hint - is that there may, in the long run, be a final judgment of God, at which, of course, the breaker of promises will get his comeuppance. This, of course, is again open to the objection that the immediacy of passion causes men to neglect long-term in favour of short-term considerations. But, in view of what we have already noticed of Hobbes's moral theory, this suggestion that the breaker of promises will be subjected to eventual divine

punishment raises a far more acute difficulty. It may be that it is made only as a sop to orthodox readers - Hobbes's contemporary critics were themselves very ready to tar all his religious remarks with the brush of disingenuousness, and, in the nature of the case, we have no sure way of knowing whether they were right or wrong. But then again, it may be taken as evidence, as by Professor Taylor in the paper already cited, of a belief, on Hobbes's part, that honesty is not just the best policy from the merely prudential standpoint, but that it is imbued with a higher sanctity in its own right. If this is so, then Hobbes certainly does seem to be guilty of an inconsistency, for it is quite clear that there is no room for such a higher sanctity in his psychologically-based and deterministic analysis of behaviour and morality. Perhaps all we can say is that a philosopher who genuinely follows his argument through to conclusions incompatible with his own private convictions might nevertheless sometimes allow these convictions to make an appearance in his writings. When and if he does so, there will be a body of moral doctrine stating the convictions alongside, and inconsistent with, a body of philosophical doctrine stating the conclusions of the argument. There certainly does seem to be a systematic inconsistency or ambiguity of this kind within Hobbes's writings; although this and the issues which it raises (the so-called 'Taylor-Warrender' thesis²⁴) continue to be fruitful sources of scholarly debate.

After he has dealt with the first three laws of nature, Hobbes goes on to enunciate sixteen more. All of them are precepts or maxims which contribute to the formulation of what Hobbes takes

to be the basic necessary conditions of peaceful coexistence. It is not necessary to enumerate them here - it is the first three which are fundamental. It is enough to make three general observations as to their character. First, they are all prohibitions: they all proscribe certain forms of behaviour which, if followed, might be expected to lead to breaches of the peace. Second, the deductive process by which Hobbes identifies them in each case takes as its starting point the supposition that men will invariably reason from self-interested motives. If, for example, I lust for revenge contrary to the seventh law of nature, or if I am arrogant, contrary to the tenth, or unwilling to refer disputes to disinterested arbitration, contrary to the sixteenth, then, in each case, I am simply prolonging the state of war. I am, in other words, throwing away the increased security and enjoyment of life which reason tells me that peace would confer upon me. Plainly, then, to ignore the laws of nature is to act in an irrational way; because, to Hobbes, any act of mine which is obviously against my own best interests can only be regarded as an irrational act. It may be true that, in the heat of the moment, I cannot refrain from acting irrationally. But, in moments of calm reflection, I can see the sense of setting up an authority able to prevent me from doing so in the future. Third, Hobbes says of the whole corpus of laws that they can be summed up in the simple precept which he has already used to express the second law - this simple way of putting it being for the benefit of those feeble intellects who cannot perform the necessary deductions for themselves:

To leave all men inexcusable, they [i.e. the laws of nature] have been contracted into one easy sum, intelligible even

to the meanest capacity; and that is, 'Do not that to another which thou wouldest not have done to thyself'; which showeth him that he hath no more to do in learning the laws of nature but, when weighing the actions of other men with his own, they seem too heavy, to put them into the other part of the balance, and his own into their place, that his own passion and self-love may add nothing to the weight; and then there is none of these laws of nature that will not appear unto him very reasonable.²⁵

Calculi of this kind are, of course, notoriously easier to recommend than they are to apply; but it is not difficult to see what Hobbes is driving at. The laws of nature amount, very simply, to a formulation of the basic negative conditions upon which the maintainance of a peaceful and ordered existence depends. No man should expect more of others than he is prepared to allow them to expect of him. No man ought to interfere with the doings of others except to the extent that he is prepared to allow them to interfere with his. It is as simple as that. We do not find in Hobbes any expression of a theme that recurs throughout the history of social philosophy - in Plato, Aristotle, the English Hegelians, and even in such an unlikely candidate as John Stuart Mill - namely, the theme of self-realisation, or the idea that, by submitting to rules and government, men may in some sense make their lives spiritually richer and more noble. Hobbes's laws of nature lead to the setting up of the State as a rational imperative, held to be deductively available to men as creatures of reason. But his view is that political life merely allows men to do in safety what they would

have wanted to do in any case; and nowhere does Hobbes consider as a possibility that the State might enable its members to realise to the full their spiritual and intellectual capacities as human beings. The State, according to Hobbes, comes into being so that men may live; but he does not go on, with Aristotle, to say that it enables them to live well. He has no notion of social and political organisation and sovereign power as instruments of progressive civilization. Such institutions and power are merely conventional devices which enable men to pursue individualistically conceived goals within a tolerable status quo; and we must now pass to a consideration of how such institutions are created, and to some account of Hobbes's understanding of the nature and functions of sovereignty.

NOTES.

1. Leviathan, E.W. Vol.3, p.61.
2. Leviathan, E.W. Vol.3, pp.85-86.
3. Cf. Hobbes's remark quoted earlier, that 'whatsoever is the object of any man's appetite or desire, that is it which he for his part calleth good; and the object of his hate and aversion, evil, and of his contempt, vile and inconsiderable.'
4. C.B. Macpherson shrewdly points out that Hobbes's allegedly 'natural' men do, in fact, have characteristics of a distinctively social kind. The passion for 'glory' is an example of this. I cannot receive (or, presumably, even desire) 'glory' unless it is, at least in principle, possible for other men to glorify me; and 'being glorified' is surely a function of having performed some rule-governed action well. Yet the state of nature is a situation in which there are by definition no 'rule-governed actions'. Actually, a similar objection holds against Hobbes's insistence that men desire to maximise their power over other men, since, as Macpherson puts it,

You can move from the universal struggle for power in society, or from the state of nature, to the necessity of the sovereign without further assumptions, but you cannot move from man as a mechanical system to the universal struggle for power, or to the state of nature, without further assumptions. And the further assumptions are...tenable only about the

relationships prevailing between men in a certain kind of society.... (The Political Theory of Possessive Individualism, p.18.)

5. Leviathan, E.W. Vol.3,p.113.
6. Leviathan, E.W. Vol.3,p.115.
7. Leviathan, E.W. Vol.3,p.113.
8. Leviathan, E.W. Vol.3,p.114.
9. Leviathan, E.W. Vol.3,p.114.
10. I owe this illustration, used in a different context, to Mr Henry Tudor.
11. Leviathan, E.W. Vol.3,p.116.
12. Leviathan, E.W. Vol.3,p.116.
13. Leviathan, E.W. Vol.3,p.147.
14. Leviathan, E.W. Vol.3,pp.116-117.
15. Leviathan, E.W. Vol.3,p.117.
16. Leviathan, E.W. Vol.3,p.117.
17. In what sense, of course, is a separate but crucial question. What is meant by 'entitlement' will depend upon whether we are talking about natural rights, legal rights or moral rights. In the case of a legal right, what entitles the holder of the right to have it is the law. But in the case of alleged 'natural' or 'moral' rights the case is somewhat more complex, and has been the occasion of much argument.
18. A.J.M. Milne, Freedom and Rights, p.41.

19. Leviathan, E.W. Vol.3,p.118.
20. Leviathan, E.W. Vol.3,p.130.
21. Leviathan, E.W. Vol.3,p.130.
22. A.E. Taylor, 'The Ethical Doctrine of Hobbes', in K.C. Brown (ed.), Hobbes Studies, pp.35-55.
23. Leviathan, E.W. Vol.3,p.131.
24. The ideas expounded in Professor Taylor's paper are taken up at greater length in Howard Warrender's book The Political Philosophy of Hobbes. So far as I know, the term 'Taylor-Warrender thesis' was coined by J.W.N. Watkins, in his book Hobbes's System of Ideas. I shall have a little more to say about the thesis in the following chapter.
25. Leviathan, E.W. Vol.3,pp.144-145.

CHAPTER SIX - THE POLITICAL ORDER.

The so-called 'laws of nature' which we have been considering amount, in the terminology of Kant, to assertoric hypothetical imperatives. They are the rules which must be followed if certain ends, namely peace, security and the preservation of life, are to be secured; and Hobbes take it as a psychological truism that these are ends which men do, in fact, wish to secure. If these laws of nature were always observed in actual conduct, then the peaceful coexistence of men with men would be realised, and all the attendant benefits of such peaceful coexistence would be within reach. Taken as they stand, they represent a code of behaviour necessary and sufficient to enable men to achieve their chief desires and to limit the impulses which make the achievement of security impossible. Indeed, if the laws of nature were obeyed more often than not, a tolerable degree of peace would presumably obtain in the state of nature itself. It would then be necessary to set up political institutions, not to escape the likelihood of violent death and the certainty of constant fear, but merely to overcome what Locke was to call the 'inconveniences' of the state of nature.¹ Formal political institutions would not be the absolutely necessary guardians of individual safety which Hobbes takes them to be. They would exist merely to provide such conveniences as lawcourts, judgments, fixed and known laws, and so on, and thus to enhance the quality of a life which would already be perfectly tolerable.

The difficulty, of course, is that, according to Hobbes, we can have no certainty, in the state of nature, that the rules which men's reason tells them that they ought in their own interests to follow will be followed. What we saw in the last chapter to be true of the third law of nature is true of them all. No-one will do unto others as he would be done by, because, the necessary minimum of trust which would enable an individual to believe that others would do the same is absent. Thus, the laws of nature will more likely than not be broken - in spite of the fact that all men, as rational creatures, are equipped to know them or, at least, to apprehend their most general formulation as the 'Golden Rule'. As Hobbes puts it,

The laws of nature oblige in foro interno; that is to say, they bind to a desire that they should take place; but in foro externo, that is, to the putting them in act, not always.²

Hobbes would, I think, more accurately have conveyed his meaning if, instead of 'not always', he had said, 'almost never'. We can see why this is so by considering the case of a man who kept the laws of nature while those with whom he came into contact repeatedly broke them. Obviously, such a man would suffer loss by acting as he did; and Hobbes's psychology insists that it is impossible for a man to go on doing what he knows will be contrary to his own interests. Thus, for as long as men remain in the state of nature, with no common superior over them, the laws of nature will not hold in foro externo. Indeed, they will not, strictly speaking, be laws at all; for a law, according to Hobbes, is a command given by a superior and capable of being

enforced by an identifiable person or persons. In Hobbes's own words,

These dictates of reason men used to call by the name of laws, but improperly: for they are but conclusions, or theorems concerning what conduceth to the conservation and defence of themselves; whereas law, properly, is the word of him that by right hath command over others.³

We have noticed this point before; but it is as well to make it again here, because it is crucial to the passage out of the state of nature and into ordered political life. This is so since precisely what is necessary if actual obedience to the laws of nature is to be secured is that these laws or maxims be enacted into positive laws properly so-called. That is to say, they must be enacted or codified by one who 'by right hath command over others' - they must be converted from mere theorems into commands. What Hobbes means by this is simply that the lawgiver must be a properly constituted authority with a claim to be obeyed which is also capable of being enforced. The authority of the lawgiver must be de facto as well as de jure. A necessary condition of this is that he have a degree of coercive power at his disposal adequate to ensure obedience by inflicting such penalties for disobedience as will make it worth every individual's while always to obey. In short, what is needed to ensure that the laws of nature actually hold in foro externo, that is, in act as well as in desire, is a transition from the state of nature to a political order with a certain distinct specification. Until such a transition occurs, men in the state of nature will be constantly confronted by the brute reality of

lust-driven self-destruction. In Hobbes's system of ideas, society and polity are coextensive - politics and what we should now call sociology have identical subject-matters; because the creation of a political order is identical to, or simultaneous with, the creation of society itself. By the same token, rebellion or civil disobedience amount to the dissolution of society as a vehicle of rationally-ordered being.

I have already hinted at certain difficulties and inconsistencies latent in Hobbes's moral theory and explored by the so-called 'Taylor-Warrender thesis'. It is at this point in the proceedings that certain aspects of these difficulties come to be very much in evidence.⁴ Although Hobbes insists that the 'laws of nature' do not, strictly speaking, become laws until they are enunciated by someone with power to command and compel obedience, he maddeningly refuses to hold this position consistently. In other words, he will not come down squarely on the side of identifying morality purely and simply with the will of the ruler. The laws of nature, he asserts on several occasions already noted, are maxims of prudence; but it turns out that they are not only maxims of prudence. As he puts it,

Those which we call the laws of nature...are not in propriety of speech laws, as they proceed from nature. Yet as they are delivered by God in holy scriptures... they are most properly called by the name of laws.⁵

And immediately after the passage from Leviathan cited above, where Hobbes tells us that 'law, properly, is the word of him that by right hath command over others', he goes on to say that

if we consider the same theorems, as delivered in the word of God, that by right commandeth all things, then they are properly called laws.⁶

The 'laws of nature', then, are also commands of God, and, as such, may properly be called 'laws' after all. Since they are such, it is the case both that,

- i. they ought to be obeyed (or, at least, we ought to desire that they be obeyed) in a categorical sense of the word 'ought'; and that,
- ii. before political institutions are set up, no coercion is applied to men to make them actually obey the laws of nature; but this, of itself, does not alter their status as laws.

God commands, but he does not compel - that is a function left to earthly powers. And in this respect, of course, Hobbes is perfectly in tune with the chief traditions of medieval political speculation. But the difficulty lies in this: Hobbes, as we have seen, sometimes makes it quite clear that the laws of nature are only 'laws' in the figurative sense. They are not laws in the way that the laws of motion are laws, since they do not formulate any established and observable regularity - they do not describe the world. Neither are they, strictly speaking, laws in the prescriptive sense, because, according to Hobbes, what makes a law a law in this sense is command and compulsion. But, having said all this, it now turns out that the laws of nature are laws after all, in the second sense. They are not, in the state of nature, the commands of any earthly authority; because, in the state of nature, there is no earthly authority.

But they are the commands of God, and therefore have the status of law as Hobbes understands it, even though, as it happens, God himself does not directly intervene to compel obedience. Now, when Hobbes is in this mood, it seems that the laws of nature are, after all, more than mere maxims of prudence. They are God's laws, and their character as such is quite independent of the fact that it is also prudent to observe them (this, again, is quite in tune with medieval natural law theory). When Hobbes says that they oblige 'in foro interno', he seems to have more in mind than that it is obviously in our interests to wish to see them obeyed. He seems to be asserting that this obligation is also a moral obligation in the usual sense. Yet this is plainly inconsistent with much of what he says elsewhere. We have already seen Hobbes unambiguously asserting that there is no morality in the state of nature. Now, we find him asserting that the need for a ruler arises, not to create morality, but to furnish the governed people with a constantly-applicable incentive to act morally. As I have already indicated, my own view, for what it is worth, is that more has been made of this difficulty than the nature of the difficulty demands; but it certainly seems that Hobbes's usually impeccable logic has faltered in this attempt to take up and re-use the medieval doctrine of natural law.

In any case, however they are read, Hobbes's political recommendations amount to a strong argument for absolute government. This fact has formed the basis of some of the most strident of the criticisms to which he has been subjected. Yet it is both interesting and important to note that his argument stands upon entirely rationalistic and democratic grounds. Nowhere does he

rely upon the type of argument found in Sir Robert Filmer's Patriarcha - that the king is entitled to obedience by hereditary divine right, in virtue of his descent from Adam. This kind of argument had become very enfeebled by the seventeenth-century, anyway - as witness the easy demolition of Filmer at the hands of John Locke. But Hobbes will have nothing to do with the Jure Divino argument which had become the chief stalking-horse of the Stuart kings; and neither, in fact, does he believe that mere force amounts to right, all appearances to the contrary notwithstanding. Hobbes's chief objective is to show that the absolute authority which he wishes to accord to the sovereign is grounded upon something more palpable and plausible than Jure Divino - upon natural rather than divine right. And he does so by tracing the origin of such authority back to a postulated 'transfer of right' made by the subject in his own interests - the social compact. That this transference is supposed to have been made by the subject in his own interests (how else could it have been made?) is, of course, profoundly significant. What Hobbes is trying to do, in effect, is to legitimate absolute political power by arguing along what may be called 'utilitarian' lines. The function of Hobbes's sovereign is to create harmony in place of chaos and dissonance. The sovereign has the strongest interest in requiring the great majority of his subjects to obey the law - since it is precisely upon such obedience that his remaining sovereign depends. And he also has the power to compel them, because, although no single individual desires to be restrained, it is in the interests of every other that he should be. Thus it is that, when the sovereign compels any man to obey, all other men, if they know their own interests, are allied with him.

The State is a collectivity of individuals within which it is the selfish interest of one man (or an assembly of men) to see to it that every other man behaves in ways which suit his neighbours; and where the fear that each man has of the mobilisation, by the sovereign, of the others against him, is enough to keep order. Hobbes's essential purpose, inconsistencies notwithstanding, is not to explain why or to what extent subjects are obliged to obey their rulers on moral grounds. His purpose is quite simply to prove that it is, on all but a few occasions (which we shall come to presently), in their best interests to do so. This is why, although he speaks of a sovereign established by covenant, he is also prepared to concede that, if such a sovereign is conquered in war, then his conqueror succeeds to his right to rule. If it ceases to be in the best interests of the subject people to obey their sovereign, it is not the case that they may then disobey him; the fact of the matter is quite simply that he is no longer the sovereign. Ultimately, it is Hobbes's view that, whatever the origin of the sovereign's power, his subjects' motives for obeying him remain the same - self-interest. And this, more or less, is exactly the same view which was later enunciated by David Hume.⁷ As John Plamenatz has expressed it,

Hobbes, like the utilitarians after him, thought it the great function of government to reconcile selfish interests, to make it worth every man's while to obey laws giving security to all men. It is this, more than any other part of his theory, that is the essence of it, in the sense that it gives it a unity which it would not otherwise possess. The state, according to him, is neither the

promoter of the good life nor the protector of rights; it is the conciliator of interests. Unlike the utilitarians, Hobbes calls interests 'natural rights', and so makes it appear that, like the contract theorists before him, he regards the state as the protector of rights. Yet it is, I think, easy to see that he means no such thing, though his special use of the words 'natural rights' misleads not only his readers but sometimes also himself. For he not only calls interests rights, but applies arguments to them that could only hold if they were rights, in some sense of the word precluded by his assumptions. This is the price that anyone is liable to pay who uses words in unusual meanings.⁸

And this, of course, is a point which we have already noted. In any case, it is not surprising that this 'utilitarian' approach made Hobbes extremely unpopular with (inter alia) supporters of the royalist cause - a cause by now based exclusively, as far as I know, upon the ideology of divine right. As soon as the concession is made that absolute sovereignty, though justifiable, is only justified if it can be shown to be in the general interests of the governed, then a fresh question is opened. This question is, whether any particular case of absolutism is in fact in the general interests of the governed. If the answer to this question turns out to be negative, then the general argument for absolutism can with equal facility be used to reject a particular case of absolute government. Thus, in practice, the argument comes very close to being an argument in justification of the kind of constitutional government to which it seems ostensibly to be most

strenuously opposed. In short, an argument for absolute government which asserts that such government requires a 'utilitarian' justification has an obverse side which is, in effect, an argument for revolution. This consideration no doubt never occurred to Hobbes, with his dread of political upheaval; but the fact nevertheless remains that he has far more in common with the most ardent opponents of absolutism than he does with the ultra-absolutist tradition associated with Filmer.

At the beginning of this thesis, I emphasised the close relationship which exists between Hobbes's political theory and the political events which, personally or vicariously, he experienced during his lifetime. I suggested that, for reasons having to do with Hobbes's own circumstances and disposition, this relationship was particularly close and significant; and it is now as well to point out again that Hobbes's deduction of the rights of the sovereign - the 'composition' of the body politic - is closely connected with contemporary political controversy. Above all, it is his wish to refute the claim made by Parliament, against the king, to be in some special sense the 'representative' of the governed people and of the rights of those people. The Parliamentary view, enunciated by Sir Edward Coke against James I, was that there is a fundamental law which is equally binding upon both king and people. Parliament is the representative of the governed people at large, operating as a species of court, and specifying in its statutes what the law binding both king and people is. It is against this view that Hobbes adopts the 'command theory' of law; and his task, as he conceives it, is chiefly to argue that, in every political community, the supreme executive authority is already and of itself

the proper representative of the whole community. Thus, the community cannot again be represented by any other institution or person - in other words, the community cannot be represented twice over. Any claim made by another person or institution, on the basis of an alleged representative character, to have an authority comparable to or higher than that vested in the executive is therefore simply redundant. And, in this respect, Hobbes is on a very good wicket: He has the authority of the Roman Law of corporations and their legal representation to back his argument; and he avails himself of this authority to the full. His argument may be summarised somewhat as follows.

A 'person', in the legal sense of the term, is

he whose words or actions are considered, either as his own, or as representing the words or actions of another man, or of any other thing, to whom they are attributed, whether truly or by fiction.

When they are considered as his own, then is he called a 'natural person'; and when they are considered as representing the words and actions of another, then he is a 'feigned' or 'artificial person'.⁹

The standard example of an 'artificial person' would be the managing director of a limited company, or a solicitor arguing a case for a client before a magistrates' court. The managing director is an 'artificial person' representing his shareholders, and the solicitor, likewise, is an 'artificial person' representing his client. In both cases, it is the shareholders and the client who are the 'natural' or real people. What the solicitor says, under certain circumstances specified by the

law of evidence and procedure, is regarded in law as if it were spoken by the client himself. And when a representative thus speaks or acts on behalf of another, the person on whose behalf he speaks or acts is said to authorise what he says or does. The representative thus acts with authority, which is to say that an act performed by him as representative is 'done by commission or licence from him whose right it is.'¹⁰ Hence,

it followeth that, when the actor maketh a covenant by authority, he bindeth thereby the author, no less than if he had made it himself; and no less subjecteth him to all the consequences of the same.¹¹

To repudiate a covenant made on one's behalf and with one's authority by a properly-authorized representative, therefore, is exactly the same thing as repudiating a covenant made by oneself. And this, of course, amounts to a breach of the third law of nature, that 'men perform their covenants made'. It amounts, in other words, to an act of injustice; for

in this law of nature consisteth the fountain and original of justice. For where no covenant hath preceded, there hath no right been transferred, and every man hath right to every thing; and consequently no action can be unjust.¹²

Having gone so far, it is but a short step to Hobbes's central task. This is to contend that all governments ought to be regarded as having their beginnings in an authorisation conferred by the whole community upon the government to 'represent' it in the sense just outlined. In other words, Hobbes wishes to assert that the transition from anarchy to civil order must be embodied

in a social compact, whereby all members of a collectivity agree with one another to submit themselves to the ordering of a particular government; and the terms of this social compact are furnished by the rationally-apprehended laws of nature. The way in which Hobbes approaches his central task may be expressed as follows.

A collection of individual men and women, he affirms, can only become a social collectivity to the extent that it exhibits, in some sense, a unity of will and purpose. After all, the salient characteristic of the state of nature, most generally stated, is exactly that, within it, there is no such unity - this is why the state of nature is non-social and non-moral.¹³ The affirmation that social life consists in such a unity of will and purpose is, of course, a commonplace of political and social theory; but the most notorious difficulty which it raises, of course, concerns the precise sense in which we are to understand this unity. What, in other words, is the cash-value of this phrase 'unity of will and purpose'? This has been one of the most stubbornly insoluble problems confronting political theorists since it was first formulated in a truly problematical form by Rousseau; and its intractability is well illustrated by the fact that linguistic analysis, the abracadabra of modern political thought, has not succeeded in dissolving it. In medieval political theory, of course, the problem did not exist in anything like the same form, since the unity of society was distilled into the concept of Christendom and its implications for human enterprise and motivation.¹⁴ But such ready and comprehensive answers had already ceased to be available by the

seventeenth-century; and the problem was presently to burgeon into difficult obscurity on an epic scale at the hands of Hegel and his followers - notably Bernard Bosanquet.¹⁵ Now, in comparison with what was subsequently to be made of it, Hobbes's exposition of the doctrine of social unity or identity is the very soul of lucidity; and it is also quite in keeping with what we have seen of his atomic individualism. He does not postulate any such thing as a 'general will' or will of society, held to be a thing apart from the will of each individual member of that society. He does not suggest, in other words, that there is some metaphysical entity greater than the sum total of individual wills or in any sense separate from or transcendent of such individual wills. Indeed, as we have already seen, the term 'will' in this sense is in any case quite foreign to Hobbes's usage.¹⁶ In his view, there is only one way in which we can speak meaningfully of anything but individual beings as possessing the kind of identity which we must necessarily predicate of a society; and that is by having recourse to a legal fiction. Thus, the unity of a society is possible only by representation. In other words, the identity of a society as such becomes real only when all the members of the original 'natural' aggregate agree that they will appoint a specific man or body of men as the representative of them all. The agreement consists, in short, of an undertaking henceforth to recognise the acts and words of the appointed representative as authorised by every individual party to the agreement. By this legal fiction, and only by it, can a collectivity of men become one 'person' - that is to say, a corporate entity collectively having legal rights and owing correlative obligations. As Hobbes puts it,

A multitude of men are made one person when they are by one man or by one person represented, so that it be done with the consent of every one of that multitude in particular. For it is the unity of the representer, not the unity of the represented, that maketh the person one. And it is the representer that beareth the person, and but one person; and unity cannot otherwise be understood in multitude.

And because the multitude is naturally not one but many, they cannot be understood for one, but many, authors of everything their representative saith or doth in their name, every man giving their common representer authority from himself in particular, and owning all the actions the representer doth. ¹⁷

In thus emphasising the reality of the individual and concrete, Hobbes is also adopting a familiar ideological stance - namely, that the State exists for the sake of the individual, and not vice versa; and this is true even though Hobbes's insistent belief in absolute government may tend to make it less than obvious. Each man has needs which he cannot satisfy alone. He needs to be protected from outside attack. He needs the benefits which can only be conferred upon him by social production. Above all, he needs to be protected from the destructive and anti-social tendencies inherent both in others and in himself. Hobbes would not agree with Rousseau's position, that the fundamental nature of man can be transformed by social living; but it can be restrained. And the only way for individuals to achieve the

security which their passions and their reason induce them to want, is to come together to form a political order. Thus, the political order exists to service the needs of its individual members; but it will always be such that the State functions as a repressive force. And part of what it means to authorise a representative is to entitle him to employ the united coercive power of the whole community, as though it were his own, in the suppression of all disobedience to his commands. Thus, the social compact creates a political power sufficiently strong to make it in each man's interests to obey - because each man, in contemplating disobedience, has to contend with the possibility that the collective power of all his fellows will be turned against him. And this consideration alone, in Hobbes's view, will furnish him with a sufficient incentive to obey. If he did not obey, he would clearly be acting against his own interests - which, as we have seen, no rational man will do; for 'a being who always acts in his own interests as he conceives them' is exactly what a rational man is.

The limits and nature of sovereign power are matters to which I shall return in due course. For the present, it is enough to remark that the 'resolutive-compositive' method, insofar as it is applicable to commonwealths, is almost complete. Resolve a commonwealth into its smallest parts, and you are left with atomic individuals, driven by necessary causes to satisfy their own desires and to escape from their aversions. In Hobbes's own rather peculiar way of putting it, they are endowed with a 'right to everything', which is really nothing more than a complete absence of obligation. While all men retain this right intact,

they are incapable of living under anything but the most insecure and fortuitous peace. War is always round the corner, and anxiety and tension are the lot of everyone. Men cannot help being the psychological egoists that they are, because their appetites, aversions and activities, and all the mental processes which underlie them, are ultimately identified as epiphenomenal movements responding to movements in the outside world. But men do have reason in addition to their passions; and while their passions incline them to want security, their reason is able to calculate the means of achieving it. This fact enables us, as philosophical investigators, to deduce what men in the state of nature would themselves deduce as the necessary conditions of peace. Following the process of deduction through, we are led, first, to the nineteen 'laws of nature'; and these provide rules which, if obeyed, would lead to peace. If the so-called 'laws of nature' held in foro externo, political subjection would not be necessary; and so Hobbes's enterprise of specifying the most effective kind of political subjection would itself not be needed. But, according to Hobbes, it is needed because, in the state of nature, the laws of nature would remain no more than unrealised ideals - they would hold in foro interno only. And this would be the case for two reasons. First, the degree of trust necessary for them to become operative would be absent. Second, men's egocentric desires are usually strong enough, in the short term, to override the farsightedness necessary to act in accordance with the long-term dictates of calm reason - and this is a doctrine very similar to that of Hume, whose similarities with Hobbes we have already noticed elsewhere. These two reasons are related,

since the first is obviously a function of men's knowledge of human behaviour as stated in the second. And it is as a result of these considerations that men conclude that peace can only be secured by setting up a political authority strong enough to coerce the recalcitrant. This is the logical step immediately precedent to the social compact, by which such an authority is brought into being.

All these matters are so central to Hobbes's philosophy of man and the State that it is perhaps as well to let him speak for himself at some length:

The only way to erect such a common power as may be able to defend them from the invasion of foreigners and the injuries of one another, and thereby to secure them in such sort as that by their own industry and by the fruits of the earth they may nourish themselves and live contentedly; is to confer all their power and strength upon one man, or upon one assembly of men, that may reduce all their wills, by plurality of voices, unto one will: which is as much as to say, to appoint one man, or assembly of men, to bear their person; and every one to own, and acknowledge himself to be the author, of whatsoever he that so beareth their person shall act or cause to be acted, in those things which concern the common peace and safety; and therein to submit their wills, every one to his will, and their judgment to his judgment. This is more than consent or concord; it is a real unity of them all, in one and the same person, made by covenant of every man with every man, in such manner as if every man should

say to every man, 'I authorise and give up my right of governing myself to this man, or to this assembly of men, on this condition, that thou give up thy right to him, and authorise all his actions in like manner.' This done, the multitude so united in one person is called a commonwealth....This is the generation of that great Leviathan, or rather, to speak more reverently, of that mortal god, to which we owe, under the immortal God, our peace and defence. For by this authority, given him by every particular man in the commonwealth, he hath the use of so much power and strength conferred on him, that by terror thereof he is enabled to perform the wills of them all, to peace at home, and mutual aid against their enemies abroad. And in him consisteth the essence of the commonwealth; which, to define it, is one person, of whose acts a great multitude, by mutual covenants with one another, have made themselves every one the author, to the end he may use the strength and means of them all, as he shall think expedient, for their peace and common defence.

And he that carrieth this person is called Sovereign, and said to have sovereign power; and every one besides, his subject.¹⁸

Before passing on to a consideration of the powers of the sovereign and the internal organisation of the State, this process of deduction, as far as it has gone, calls for one or two remarks. First, Hobbes has always been generally regarded as the apologist par-excellence of the absolute State. It may be that there are logical inaccuracies and methodological inadequacies within his work; but, considering his achievement overall,

he took the absolutism of the Stuart dogma of divine right and set it upon a logical foundation which all agree to be at least plausible. Nevertheless, although this absolutism is clearly central to Hobbes, it ought also to be borne in mind that, within the legal fictions just discussed, he is also expressing something very like the democratic idea of self-government. As I have already indicated, Hobbes is (albeit probably unconsciously) far closer to the spirit later to be expressed by Locke and Rousseau than he is to that of Filmer or James I. The power which the sovereign has to coerce his subjects is only legitimate or authoritative to the extent that it makes effective what is, in reality, the will of the whole subject people, and to the extent that it does so by their consent. And the truth of this is not a whit diminished by the further fact that, after consent is given, the sovereign is absolute and immovable for as long as he remains able to protect his subjects. The sovereign is the sovereign because he embodies in his own person the general will (to use a dangerous but serviceable phrase). Hobbes successfully contrives to avoid the confusions which came subsequently to dog this notion of a collective will; and he comes, as a result, very close to the modern theory of representative democracy. Hobbes is an individualist and a materialist. As such, he is not prepared to concede that any purpose which cannot be shown to be that of an identifiable individual has any reality. Therefore, he has to portray this 'collectiveness' as having no actual existence until and unless it becomes incarnate, so to speak, in the person of a representative, or in a representative assembly. The State is depicted as one entity with a will and purpose of its own; but this is really no more than a legal fiction. It is a logical

construction which regards the acts and volitions of an agent or representative as if they were those of the people whose representative he is. And a mild and rational conservative like Edmund Burke, who would no doubt have disagreed with almost everything else that Hobbes had to say on moral and political questions, would surely have had no fault to find with this.

Second, it is important to emphasise that Hobbes is an exponent of the doctrine that sovereign power is by nature indivisible - a doctrine which was to be resurrected in the nineteenth century by Austin and his followers. There can be no distinction between legislative, executive, and judicial acts of government; and the rationale of this is very easy to see. Quite simply, if the sovereign were to have power to enact laws which he could not then execute, or which could promptly be annulled by the judiciary, then he would not, after all, be the sovereign. In the sovereign, the final decision-making power is reposed. In view of this, he must be invested with all the functions of government, because, if he is not, he cannot be the final decision-maker and his status fails, in practice, to answer to its proper definition. If the sovereign power were divided, there would be, not sovereignty, but a congeries of competing power-groups within the society. Thus - and particularly in view of Hobbes's account of what men are like - the seeds of war would inevitably be sown, and the very purpose for which the commonwealth was set up would be vitiated. The standard liberal objection, that a man in whom all the functions of government were vested might freely abuse his power, does not bother Hobbes. As far as he is concerned, the sovereign can do as he pleases, as long as 'doing what he pleases' does not

include failing to protect his people. And if he fails to protect his people, he will, by definition, cease to be the sovereign - a turn of events which, since it is against his own interests, he will not allow to come about. The further, and more telling, objection, that the sovereign need, in fact, only command the support of a strategic few to hang onto power, does not occur to Hobbes.

In this account of sovereignty, it is obvious that the similarities which I have mentioned between Hobbes and Locke cease to hold. Locke, in his Second Treatise, gave a systematic exposition to what was, in effect, the ideology of the Whig Revolution of 1688;¹⁹ and his primary purpose was to argue that resistance to a chief magistrate who breaches his trust is justified. Hobbes's primary purpose, on the other hand, is to argue that the sovereign's power should be absolute, and that resistance on the part of the subject is never justified, unless he is actually threatened by the sovereign. Given this contrast of purpose, Locke could hardly fail to make a distinction which is diametrically opposed to the thinking of Hobbes in this area. In Locke's view, the original social compact arises out of the wish of men to avoid the 'inconveniences' of the state of nature - to live under a known and settled law instead of under the guidance of uncertain and variable personal interpretations of natural law. To Locke, in short, political society springs from the will to establish a common legislature; and there then follows the appointment of a separate executive branch with power to see to it that the laws are obeyed. The creation of an executive is a matter subsequent to the original political move; and the chief magistrate there-

fore becomes a mere appointee or trustee of the legislature. As such, he is vulnerable if he breaks faith or exceeds the powers entrusted to him. Locke is thus the immediate predecessor of Montesquieu as the author of the doctrine of the separation of powers between distinct and circumscribed branches of government, and of the theory of the central importance of constitutional checks and balances which operate to ensure that no one branch can usurp the functions of the others. No such doctrine, however, appears in any form in Hobbes's writings. To Hobbes's mind, plenitude of power is precisely what characterises the sovereign; since without such plenitude, he or it is not really the sovereign after all: the way is as much open to internecine strife as it was in the state of nature.

Third, however, Hobbes does have in common with Locke a doctrine, in an at least implied form, which was to become one of the chief features of liberal political theory during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. It is, indeed, a doctrine which has a great deal of life left in it at the present day - especially in the United States. This doctrine is that the sole function of government is to preserve 'peace and common defence'. While the government is doing this, it has the right to compel obedience by the exercise of coercive power. But while it is doing this, it is doing all that is required or expected of it. In this respect, Hobbes is enunciating the negative, laissez faire doctrine of the functions of the State - the concept of what Nozick, in his book Anarchy, State and Utopia, has called the 'minimal state'. The sovereign's role consists solely in the removal of certain intractable difficulties in the way of his subjects' secure

pursuit of their individualistically-conceived desires. His function is simply to prevent society from collapsing into anarchy. But, as we pointed out at the end of the previous chapter, Hobbes never began to conceive of the State in positive terms - as an association for the promotion of anything that subsequent thinkers have held to distinguish the rationally free man from the barbarian. Such concepts as 'self-realisation', 'the good life', 'progress' or 'civilization' are nowhere systematically formulated or used by Hobbes. The sovereign has purely negative and protective duties to fulfil. What is the extent of his power to perform them, and how he stands in relation to other persons and institutions, are matters to be considered in the next chapter.

NOTES.

1. Vide Second Treatise of Civil Government, Ch. IX.
2. Leviathan, E.W. Vol.3,p.145.
3. Leviathan, E.W. Vol.3,p.147.
4. The 'Taylor-Warrender' thesis suggests that the traditional egoistic reading of Hobbes's moral philosophy is mistaken. It is held that his characterisation of the laws of nature as commands of God implies a deontological theory of morality; and this, of course, calls for a complete re-writing of his political theory. My own view is that Hobbes is simply unable to dissociate himself completely from the Stoic-Roman-Medieval tradition of natural law as right reason reflecting upon divine purpose, but that his own preference is clearly for the egoistic view. That much, I think, is very clear from our exposition so far. Hobbes is certainly ambiguous; but I cannot think that these ambiguities are sufficient to overthrow the traditional and, indeed, obvious account of his psychology and moral theory.
5. Philosophical Rudiments concerning Government and Society,
E.W. Vol.2,pp.49-50.
6. Leviathan, E.W. Vol.3,p.147.
7. Thus, Hume remarks that, 'If the reason be asked of that obedience which we are bound to pay to government, I readily answer, 'Because society could not otherwise subsist'; and this answer is clear and intelligible to

7 all mankind.' (Of the Original Contract, p.229.) This, in a nutshell, is Hobbes's own view; although Hume has no time for the Social Contract doctrine. He makes the shrewd point that since both the obligation to keep contracts and the obligation to obey the government arise out of 'the general interests or necessities of society' there is no sense in deriving the one from the other. Each is a second-order principle subsumed under the first-order principle of 'general interests or necessities'.

8. John Plamenatz, The English Utilitarians, pp.14-15.
9. Leviathan, E.W. Vol.3, p.147.
10. Leviathan, E.W. Vol.3, p.148.
11. Leviathan, E.W. Vol.3, p.148.
12. Leviathan, E.W. Vol.3, p.130.
13. At least, it is 'non-moral' in all operative or practical senses.
14. Vide, e.g., W. Ullmann, Medieval Political Thought, esp. pp.100ff.
15. A brief and cogent discussion appears in S.I. Benn and R.S. Peters, Social Principles and the Democratic State, Chs. 11, 12 & 14.
16. Vide pp.101ff supra.
17. Leviathan, E.W. Vol.3, p.151.
18. Leviathan, E.W. Vol.3, pp.157-158.

19. The question is still by no means settled, but Peter Laslett, in the Introduction to his edition of the Two Treatises, presents much evidence to show that the second treatise is the earlier of the two, having been written between 1679 and 1681. If this suggestion is correct, then there is a clear possibility that the second treatise is a revolutionary document, written to give a theoretical basis to the struggle of Shaftesbury and his followers with Charles II.

CHAPTER SEVEN - SOVEREIGNTY AND SUBJECTION.

In the light of his account of human nature, Hobbes draws the conclusion that social order cannot exist in the absence of political order. And it follows just as clearly from his psychological beliefs that, if it is to be an effective antidote to natural anarchy, the legitimate power of the sovereign must be absolute in its scope and degree, within the sphere of competence to which the sovereign has been appointed. And this sphere of competence consists, quite simply, in keeping the peace and creating conditions conducive to continuous and reliable security.

As we might expect, Hobbes will not countenance the possibility of insurrection, or of any attempt to overthrow or replace the sovereign or to change the character of the sovereign power - at least, he will only allow such possibilities within a very narrowly-drawn range of circumstances. Indeed, all resistance to the sovereign, while he is doing what he was created to do, constitutes a breach of the social compact, and, as such, is an act of injustice. If I am a member of a commonwealth, then I have ipso facto authorised the sovereign of the commonwealth to exercise certain functions as my representative. I have authorised him to make such provision as he may deem necessary for the preservation of peace. I have authorised him to use the whole of the available physical force of the commonwealth

to punish those who threaten or disrupt the peace, and to deter potential offenders. Refusal to obey the sovereign's command, therefore, is a breach of my own promise. Also, since the sovereign is my representative in the sense outlined earlier, such a refusal is, in an easily comprehensible sense, a denial of myself. And to break my promise in this way is a violation of the third law of nature, that 'men perform their covenants made.' It is, in other words, a violation of the rational imperative which tells me that making covenants would be a pointless and self-stultifying operation unless covenants were kept. The implication of this for our understanding of Hobbes's moral thought is obvious. The moral obligation to keep my word appears to Hobbes to have a logical foundation. Breach of an agreement is simply an irrational or self-contradictory thing to do, because it negatives the very purpose for which the covenant was made in the first place.

Obviously, these considerations would not apply ~~except~~ in foro interno - in the state of nature. First, as Hobbes makes quite clear, there is no obligation to keep an agreement in circumstances such that there exists reasonable fear that the other party or parties will not perform the other side of the bargain.¹ And in the state of nature there is always, or nearly always, such fear. Second, as we have seen, I make covenants only to secure some good to myself; but, since this is so, it is clear that, if it becomes more worth my while to break than to keep an agreement, then I shall break it. Under government, however, both these possibilities cease to be material. First, there is now no reason to fear that the other side will not do

his part, because the sovereign will coerce him if he shows signs of wanting to renege. By the same token, it can now never be more in my interests to break than to keep an agreement, because I, too, shall be subject to coercion if I break my word. Presumably, retribution can never be certain, and it will always be true that, if I can pull a fast one, I will. But the coercive power of the sovereign will be at least sufficient to ensure that agreements are kept more often than not. Hobbes would, I think, have agreed with the view of the Sophist Antiphon, that

Doing justice amounts to not infringing the laws of the State of which one is a citizen. Thus, a man would do justice to his own greatest advantage if he honoured the laws in front of witnesses and the promptings of nature ($\tau\alpha\ \tau\eta\varsigma\ \phi\upsilon\sigma\epsilon\alpha\varsigma$) when alone, with no witnesses present.²

Justice, at least for all practical purposes, is a creation of the law; and the fact of the matter is that no-one will 'do justice' to his own disadvantage if he can avoid doing so. This is not a matter for condemnation; it is simply a statement of fact.

In a nutshell, then, the subject owes a duty of unconditional allegiance to the sovereign, and the sovereign will see to it that it is never worth the subject's while to neglect this duty. The sovereign himself, however, owes no reciprocal duty to the subject - subject to the narrow limiting conditions which we shall examine presently. The sovereign has been authorised by his subjects to act as their representative in making such regulations as will ensure peace and stability. Thus, the

subject is not in a position to call his judgment into question in respect of this or that decision. If this principle were not conceded, then the very act of setting up the sovereign would be vitiated - a sovereign whose executive acts were subject to question or control would simply not be the sovereign.³

This last point, of course, states a position which reaches back into the Middle Ages and beyond, and which was a favourite recourse of the Stuart kings: the Prince is above the law, and not in any sense legally responsible to his subjects. This conclusion is, after all, inevitable where a monarchy which is not a purely constitutional monarchy is the established form of government; and it is, moreover, obviously true. The king or prince is above the law simply because it is he who says what the law is, and it is he who has the enforcing of it. Hobbes, of course, has no time for constitutional monarchy, so he is led ineluctably to this position. It is a position which, prima vista, consorts rather strangely with the legal fictions of contract and representation through which he has propounded his doctrine of the origins of the State. But Hobbes's account of why it is that the sovereign cannot be unjust - that is, cannot break an agreement with his people - contrives to avoid any tension or inconsistency. The subjects of a ruler cannot enforce any agreement against their ruler simply because there never was any agreement for them to enforce, or for the sovereign to break. The social compact, by which the commonwealth was brought into being, was a compact between each putative member of the commonwealth and every other. It was not an agreement between the whole community on the one hand and the

sovereign on the other; and the reason why this is so is not far to seek. Before the political order is created, the parties to the social compact have no corporate existence as such; and the man or men who will become the sovereign is or are simply part of the crowd, undistinguished from the mass. There are, in short, no such parties as 'sovereign' and 'subjects' to strike a bargain with one another. Meaning is imparted to the terms 'sovereign' and 'subject' precisely by the compact itself - the meaningful use of these terms is logically subsequent to the formation of the compact. It is, of course, a possibility that the sovereign-to-be achieves his eventual position by drumming up support amongst the crowd, by canvassing and making promises with individuals or groups within the undifferentiated ruck of putative subjects. But this is not likely to prove a difficulty: When the sovereign actually becomes the sovereign, says Hobbes, all such promises are rendered null and void, since it is he alone who now has the right to determine which agreements shall and shall not be kept. Thus, the sovereign is by definition incapable of acting unjustly towards his subjects. Injustice is defined as the breaking of covenants; and there is no covenant between ruler and ruled for the sovereign to break. A subject who acts unjustly breaks a covenant, not with the ruler, but with his fellow subjects - so that his fellow subjects may justly move against him at the sovereign's command. (There is, of course, the possibility that the sovereign might enter into a covenant with the ruled after the social compact has been concluded; although even in these circumstances it is presumably the sovereign alone who is entitled to decide whether his covenants are binding or not. Also, since the sov-

ereign is himself beyond any coercion, he will be quite free to break any covenant which it does not suit him to keep, and would not, I take it, be acting unjustly.)

Hobbes supports his argument that the sovereign cannot be unjust by recourse to the authority of the Bible. He draws attention to Psalm 51, in which King David expresses contrition for the murder of Uriah the Hittite and his adultery with his wife Bathsheba. Hobbes invites us particularly to consider the fact that David never expresses the belief that he has wronged Uriah in seducing his wife and having him assassinated. It is not for wrong done to man, but for sin against God, that the Psalm asks forgiveness. Thus, according to Hobbes, the point that the king cannot be unjust towards his subjects is established not only by common sense, but by the evidence of scripture. The king is above the law in the sense that he cannot be held answerable to those who have undertaken to be bound by his orders, and to take those orders as the standards of justice and injustice. Nevertheless, it is still possible for the ruler to abuse his power, as David had done. And although such abuse cannot, strictly speaking, be called unjust, it may still be regarded as iniquitous. Although he cannot properly be accused by his subjects, the ruler is still susceptible to the judgment and condemnation of God. As Hobbes expresses it,

Though the action be against the law of nature, as being contrary to equity (as was the killing of Uriah by David), yet it was not an injury to Uriah, but to God. Not to Uriah, because the right to do what he pleased was given him by Uriah himself; and yet to God, because Uriah was

God's subject, and prohibited all iniquity by the law of nature. Which distinction David himself, when he repented the fact, evidently confirmed, saying, 'To thee only have I sinned.'⁴

This may be cold comfort for one whose misfortune it is to be the subject of an iniquitous ruler; but Hobbes is here quite in accord with a principle which had come down through the Middle Ages from St Paul, 'Pseudo-Dionysius' and St Augustine. The subject is answerable to the ruler; the ruler is answerable to God; but the ruler is not answerable to the subject, and a subject who finds himself under an 'iniquitous' ruler can really do little more than pray for deliverance - although we shall shortly see the ways in which the sovereign's power is, in fact, somewhat limited by the logic of social living itself.

Hobbes devotes a small amount of space to the problem posed by an individual who retorts that he, at least, does not consider himself a party to the original agreement by which this particular sovereign was appointed.⁵ And in such a case, the sovereign is clearly not the sovereign of that particular individual. Equally, the individual himself is clearly not a member of the society which was created when the sovereign was appointed. To the extent to which he wishes to push his claim, therefore, the individual concerned is still in a state of nature relative to all the other members of the commonwealth; and, as such, he may without injustice be treated as an enemy. He is in no position to complain that he is not protected by a sovereign whom he refuses to recognise. He still, in fact, remains vulnerable to all the hazards of the 'war of every man with every man.'

It is, of course, open to us to object that the notion of justice is open to a far richer and broader interpretation than simply the keeping of promises - although it may well necessarily include the keeping of promises. If we take Justinian's maxim cuique suum as a point of departure, we shall be able to cash the notion of justice far more generously than Hobbes is prepared to allow. We might, for example, make out a case for the proposition that giving to each his own implies a respect for human personality as such, formal bargains or covenants apart. We might, in other words, argue that we are obliged to act with humanity and restraint towards all fellow human beings, irrespective of whether or not we happen to be related to them by a promise or undertaking given or received. This, however, is a very difficult area, and, in any case, for the purposes of the present discussion we must accept Hobbes's own definition before we can make any further headway at all.

Although I have so far spoken only of kings and princes, it is not, in fact, Hobbes's view that only a monarch can be an absolute sovereign ruler. As he is at pains to point out, it follows from his account of the social compact that, once established, a government in any form has absolute authority over its subjects. And nowhere, in fact, is this more obvious than in a democracy, where the whole assembly of the citizens is itself the sovereign body. As Hobbes puts it,

When an assembly of men is made sovereign, then no man imagineth any such covenant to have passed in the institution, for no man is so dull as to say, for example, the people of Rome made a covenant with the

Romans to hold the sovereignty on such and such conditions, which not performed, the Romans might lawfully depose the Roman people. That men see not the reason to be alike in a monarchy as in a popular government proceedeth from the ambition of some, that are kinder to the government of an assembly, whereof they may hope to participate, than of a monarchy, which they despair to enjoy.⁶

Hobbes has a persistent and irritating tendency to assume that opinions different from his own arise simply out of wickedness or ambition - Behemoth is a choice example of this kind of thing. He seems to have had an unshakeable belief that he had constructed a system of such lucidity and rigour that no well-intentioned man could doubt its truth or fail, by taking thought, to arrive at the same conclusions himself. But, given the political circumstances of mid-seventeenth-century England, it may be that Hobbes's point has a certain shrewd accuracy. In any case, it is clear that, whatever the form of government, no covenant exists between sovereign and subject: the power of the sovereign is absolute, and there is no right of rebellion while the sovereign is properly functioning as such.

Although assemblies as well as monarchies receive a title to absolute power when they are appointed to govern, Hobbes's own preference is for the monarchical form of government. In view of the length of his service in an aristocratic and Royalist household, this comes as no surprise; but he adduces a number of allegedly dispassionate reasons for his belief. First of all

he holds that, under a monarchy, there is less likely to be a clash between public and private interests. The personal interests of one man are more intimately connected with those of his subjects than could be the case with the combined personal interests of the members of a sovereign assembly:

The riches, power and honour of a monarch arise only from the riches, strength and reputation of his subjects. For no king can be rich nor glorious nor secure whose subjects are either poor or contemptible or too weak through want or dissention to maintain a war against their enemies; whereas in a democracy or aristocracy the public prosperity confers not so much to the private fortune of one that is corrupt or ambitious, as doth many times a perfidious advice, a treacherous action, or a civil war.⁷

Look at it how I may, I cannot see that this is a very good argument. It is surely true that the members of a sovereign assembly are no likelier than a monarch to do well in a country whose subjects are 'poor or contemptible or too weak...to maintain a war against their enemies'; while, on Hobbes's own account of the way human beings are constituted, a monarch who stands to gain more than he will lose by selling out his country will surely do so. But Hobbes is certainly not alone in using weak arguments to support positions which are also strong personal preferences. A second point is that monarchs are more free than assemblies to receive advice from whom they choose and to keep such advice secret; although it might be objected to this that the collective wisdom of an assembly is more apt to select good advisers than the unaided judgment of

the monarch. Third, Hobbes holds that, while the decisions of a monarch can indeed be swayed by the inconstancies of human nature, this is not so great a hazard as it is under an assembly; for, in the case of an assembly, the weaknesses of each individual nature are compounded by disagreements between the members. Monarchs, in short, are more likely to be consistent and constant in their policies than are assemblies, the members of which may fall out amongst themselves, either out of genuine disagreement, or out of envy or personal greed.

Monarchies, however, do have disadvantages, of which Hobbes notices two in particular. First, the monarch's mind may be worked upon by flatterers and favourites, and this may have grave consequences if the flatterers are out for their own and not the public good (as will, presumably, inevitably be the case). Second, there is always the danger that the monarchy will come into the hands of a successor who is not yet adult, or who is mentally enfeebled to a degree that he cannot tell good from evil (by which, I take it, Hobbes means no more than that he cannot make judicious political decisions). Hobbes does not, however, feel that these objections are very weighty. First, flatterers exist in situations where the government is an assembly, as well as under monarchical government.⁸ Second, in cases where the king is for some reason unfit to rule, the usual practice is to replace him by a regent pro tempore. Any evil consequences which then arise, therefore, do not tell against the monarchical principle as such, but simply illustrate the inadequacy or cupidity of the regent.

All this, of course, is an instance of the immemorial political dispute which is most commonly associated with Aristotle:⁹ Is the collective wisdom of the multitude, who know where the shoe pinches, to be preferred to the efficiency and (supposed) impartiality of the monarch? Or, in more modern terminology, is the mass of the people better fitted to govern itself than the minority of experts? Good arguments can be formulated on both sides, so that the logical step is to try to devise a mixed constitution comprising the wisdom of the many and the efficiency of the few or of the one. But Hobbes, of course, will have none of that. He is able to argue to his own satisfaction that, of all possible forms of government, monarchy is to be preferred, and that the power of the monarch should be absolute. The monarch, in other words, should have power to govern simply by his own fiat, and should not be bound or compelled by any other institution or person. He should have the sole right to command the armed forces; and he should have the sole right to impose taxation. In short, Hobbes claims for the monarch all the rights and powers which the Puritan Revolution sought to deny the English crown.

Nevertheless, it is important to grasp that, in all this, Hobbes does not wish to suggest that the governed people have no rights at all; and, indeed, he could not have suggested anything of the kind. As we saw earlier, he himself has sought and found what he considers to be a 'utilitarian' justification of absolutism; and such a justification itself imposes certain inevitable limits upon the absolute power of the sovereign. To

put it another way, the logic of the very argument by which absolute power is established itself indicates a certain area of necessary liberty for the subject. And Hobbes explains that this liberty consists quite simply in that part of the supposed original right of nature which the subject cannot be regarded as having given up - namely, the right to use any and every available means of self-protection.¹⁰ The subject cannot be supposed to have transferred this part of his 'right to everything' when he entered into the social compact; and this is so for two independent reasons. First, given Hobbes's mechanistic and deterministic psychology, we may assume that no-one could refrain from protecting himself in circumstances where he was threatened. As Kant would have put it, we cannot reasonably say that a subject ought not to protect himself if the fact of the matter is that he cannot refrain from protecting himself. Second, if the subject were held to have surrendered his right of self-protection, then he would have thwarted his own purpose in entering into the social compact in the first place. Since this is so, the subject is free, for all the absolute power of the sovereign, to refuse to kill or injure himself if the sovereign so commands, or to resist those who are commanded by the sovereign to kill or injure him (the coercive power of the sovereign, therefore, must presumably be strong enough to overcome any possible resistance); and he is not obliged to confess any crime unless he is assured in advance that he will be pardoned for it. Furthermore, he may refuse to carry out an order to kill another man or to perform any other act which might require him to encounter dangers to himself; and, on this ground, Hobbes

holds that men of what he calls 'feminine courage' may refuse without injustice to do military service - Hobbes here draws a distinction between injustice and cowardice. And he holds that even a band of rebels or murderers is quite entitled not to surrender unless firmly promised that there will be no unpleasant consequences: by defending themselves, they add no new unjust act to those which they have already committed, since self-protection can never be unjust. In a nutshell, men cannot justly be required to act irrationally in political society: they cannot be required to do that which would disable the very purposes for which the political community was originally set up. And, where the law is silent, the liberty of the subject to act or refrain from acting as he pleases remains absolute.

Obviously, in practical terms these liberties will not amount to very much when the sovereign is very powerful; and it seems to be the case that the preservation of peace is always a more important end than the safeguarding of rights and liberties. Moreover, the absolute power of the sovereign remains with him for as long as he is able to guarantee peace. If he is defeated in war and submits to a conqueror in order to save himself, or if he voluntarily releases his subjects from their allegiance, then the political order is for the time being at an end. The state of nature once more supervenes. The mortal God is dead, and it is up to those who were his members to create another by entering into a fresh compact.

* * * * *

In the course of his disquisition upon political power, Hobbes contributes his own portion to the long-standing debate which had been one of the critical issues of political discourse throughout the Medieval period - namely, the question of the respective spheres of regnum and sacerdotium, of kingship and priesthood. The nature and extent of the powers which should rightly be attributed to the church and denied the prince, or attributed to the prince but denied the church, had been the subjects of strife - and sometimes of armed struggle - since the drawing-together of ecclesiastical and secular authority under Constantine. To the extent that he lived in a century of considerable religious animosity, and to the extent that he, like many of his contemporaries, tended very readily to espy ecclesiastical machinations behind civil disturbances, Hobbes's political ideas could hardly be complete without some account of the standing of the church in relation to the commonwealth. And his position in this respect is quite consistent with what we have so far seen. Since, in the interests of the peace and security which all men desire, the sovereign has sole and total power to decide which beliefs shall or shall not be taught in the commonwealth, it follows that the spiritual power can have no existence separate from or superordinate to the secular: Hobbes is a total Erastian. He holds, quite trenchantly and unambiguously, that the most fruitful source of political quarrelling lies in the competing claims of clergymen of different persuasions to hold certain rights and powers in virtue of their office. These rights are claimed to be independent of all secular authorisation. They include the right to decide which religious

doctrines shall be taught or suppressed; the right to order ecclesiastical discipline independently of the secular authorities; and, at the extreme, the right to rebel against and depose any earthly ruler who refuses to accept their judgment in such matters. These matters were by no means novel to seventeenth-century England - they reach back at least as far as the quarrel between Henry II and Thomas Beckett in the twelfth century. And ecclesiastical claims of this magnitude are precisely those which Hobbes wishes to undermine. He does so, not only by an appeal to the kind of argumentation which we have so far been considering, but also to an extensive body of astute and strikingly modern Biblical criticism. The bare bones of his argument may be stated as follows.

Religion is not philosophy, but law. As we saw earlier, religious doctrines are not matters which can fall within the philosopher's terms of reference, since the philosopher is concerned only with causal explanation. Hobbes would therefore wish to conclude that theological disputes are not only politically dangerous, but also devoid of any content which might form the subject of an argument. From this position, he is easily able to draw conclusions which are inimical to ecclesiastical ambition. It is, he argues, up to the sovereign to decide which doctrines shall be taught and which condemned, and the church has no say in this matter at all. This right does not, indeed, inhere in the sovereign because he is thought to have any peculiar theological insights. He does not proclaim that certain doctrines are true and others false - simply because

no-one can know which doctrines are true or false (or indeed, Hobbes might have added, that any doctrine is true or false). The sovereign simply encourages some beliefs and forbids others (or, at least, the expression of others) on the grounds that some beliefs conduce to peace, or at least do not threaten it, while others are associated with discord and war. When we give our assent to the religious proclamations of the sovereign, it does not seem to matter whether or not our heartfelt belief goes with that assent. What is important, no matter what our unspoken beliefs may be, is that we submit to the legitimate authority of the commonwealth's sovereign.

All this, of course, is open to what looks like a fairly severe objection. God has made available to man in his written word information as to what he should believe. He can know the truth by revelation, even though such knowledge is not philosophical in character - at least, not within Hobbes's understanding of what it is for knowledge to be 'philosophical'. Suppose, therefore, that a heretic sovereign commands men to express false beliefs and so to disobey God. On Hobbes's argument from the absolute power of the sovereign, men who disobey and suffer persecution or martyrdom are to be accounted criminals who are justly punished for their disobedience. It looks, in other words, as though Hobbes is recommending that men believe men rather than God; but he is, in fact, ready with an answer to this objection. The argument is essentially this: The true religion is contained in the canonical scriptures. But in virtue of what are the scriptures said to be canonical? Their canonicity is conferred upon them by nothing other than the

authority of the sovereign; and the sovereign has, moreover, the final say in matters touching upon the interpretation of scripture as well as its standing. And this right of decision emanates directly from the general power of the sovereign to suppress dangerous doctrines. Given that this is so, there can be no virtue in any claim made by an individual or association within the State based upon the interpretation of a supposedly inspired document - unless, of course, the sovereign agrees that the document in question is inspired and has been rightly interpreted. Certainly, any resistance to political authority based upon a scriptural passage cannot be justified. As for martyrs, Hobbes does not deny that there have been martyrs who were justified in suffering for their beliefs. He does, however, make a number of points in this direction which are intended to reinforce the absolute power of the sovereign. A martyr, he says, is a witness to the truth of a revelation from God; and from this it follows that no-one can be a martyr, properly so-called, except the man who has himself received such a revelation. All that anyone else who claims to be a martyr can bear witness to is his own belief in the person who claims to have had the revelation. To reject what he has to say, therefore, is not to reject the commands of God, but simply to declare as mistaken one man's belief in the claim of another to have had communication with God. Now the only conclusive proof which a man could offer to demonstrate that he had had a revelation from God would be the working of a miracle. But, as all Protestants agree, miracles no longer occur, so that no-one can now establish his claim to be God's messenger except indirectly, by showing that his teaching agrees with that of

Christ and the Apostles. But the documents in which their teaching appears owe their validation to the secular powers and, besides, Christ and the Apostles taught, by both word and deed, that men have a duty to obey the civil authorities; and so no man can claim their support in respect of any claim of his to be entitled to disobey the secular authorities. If a man were today to receive a communication from God, Hobbes is perfectly happy to concede that he would have an excellent motive for obeying God, even in defiance of the sovereign. God, after all, has it in his power to make things far more unpleasant for the disobedient than the sovereign can; and no rational being will act against what he knows to be his best interests. At the same time, however, no-one who now finds himself in this situation is able to substantiate his claim, so that he is not in a position to complain if the sovereign refuses to believe him and punishes him for persisting in his belief. This punishment will presumably only be inflicted if the supposed revelation is politically dangerous - although Hobbes tends to suppose that all religious innovation is politically dangerous, simply because it is open to anyone not to accept it, and the occurrence of such disagreements may well lead to civil strife. A man who supposes himself to have received a direct communication from God will presumably only be safe if the revelation is purely private and applicable to himself alone, and is not communicated; because Hobbes is generous enough to concede that, however potentially dangerous they may be, a man's thoughts remain his own affair for as long as he keeps them to himself.

Hobbes supports this argument by proposing that the 'kingdom

of God' of which the Bible speaks is not an ecclesiastical system separate from the secular power, but a system of civil government in which God, as represented by a visible human agent, reigns as civil sovereign. This arrangement has its origin in the installation by God of Moses as his representative in the government of the people of Israel; but it ceased to be operative when the Israelite people revolted against their rightful leader (Samuel, the latest successor of Moses) and instituted the kingdom of Saul. The mission of Jesus was to announce the restoration of the proper kingdom of God in this sense. This restoration was not to take place in his own lifetime, but in a future age when the righteous will rise from the dead and live in Palestine under the personal rule of Jesus as God's representative. Thus, the only condition imposed from the first as necessary for entrance into the Church was acceptance of the belief that Jesus was the Messiah - that is, that Jesus is the ruler who will preside over the kingdom of God when it finally comes to be established. In other words, all that a Christian is obliged to do is believe that, at some time in the future, Christ will reappear on earth as a civil sovereign, and intend to submit to his authority when the time comes. Meanwhile, the believer is bound by scriptural warrant to submit himself to such powers as happen to be ruling for the time being. Hobbes then proceeds to argue at length that the only commission given by Christ to his apostles, and by the apostles in turn to their successors, was the commission to teach and persuade - this is an argument very like that advanced by Marsilius of Padua in the Defensor Pacis. The only weapon which was conferred upon them to assist them in this commission was that of excomm-

unication - that is, the threat of exclusion from the future kingdom of God. It follows, therefore, that the powers which the clergy now actually possess in Christian countries is derived, not from divine commission, but from the political sovereign. All authority, both spiritual and temporal, comes from and is dependant upon the sovereign. In relation to him, the clergy amount, in fact, to no more than a body of civil servants:

The monarch or the sovereign assembly only hath immediate authority from God...and no man but the sovereign receiveth his power Dei Gratia simply; that is to say, from the favour of none but God: all others receive theirs from the favour and providence of God and their sovereigns; as in a monarchy, Dei Gratia et regis, or Dei Providentia et Voluntate regis.¹¹

The section with which the Leviathan closes is a bitter attack upon the pretensions of Papal supremacy. It is here in particular that 'his furious pen seems almost to jab and lacerate the paper as if it were a...Catholic.'¹² The section is called Of the Kingdom of Darkness; and this 'kingdom of darkness' is none other than the church organised as a society independent of the secular authorities, and arrogating to itself a special spiritual jurisdiction which it can call upon the secular powers to enforce by means of its coercive power. This notion first finds expression in the political writings of St Augustine, and it had been the dominant ideology of the Papacy throughout the Middle Ages - sometimes taking extreme political implications, and lying at the very centre of the dreary Investiture controversy.

Stated in typical form, the case for this conception of the church would run as follows.

Christ left with those who follow him on earth power of two kinds - secular or temporal on the one hand, and spiritual or ecclesiastical on the other. These powers were frequently referred to by controversialists as the 'two swords', in allegorical reference to the enigmatic passage in St Luke's gospel:

Then said he unto them, But now, he that hath a purse, let him take it, and likewise his scrip: and he that hath no sword, let him sell his garment, and buy one....And they said, Lord, behold, here are two swords. And he said unto them, It is enough.¹³

The secular powers belong to the civil authorities, while the spiritual powers reside in the church; and, in normal circumstances, the two areas of power should not attempt to invade one another's provinces. The civil authorities should not attempt to do the duty of the church; the church should not attempt to wield the sword of the secular arm. And ordinarily, of course, the Christian has an absolute duty to obey the decrees of the secular authorities - a duty rooted in the authority of scripture itself:

Let every soul be subject unto the higher powers. For there is no power but of God: the powers that be are ordained of God. Whosoever therefore resisteth the power, resisteth the ordinance of God: and they that resist shall receive to themselves damnation.¹²

This doctrine received an early and authoritative statement in the fifth century by Pope Gelasius I;¹⁵ and implicit in this way of viewing the relative disposition of church and secular authority was the belief that political peace depends upon neither sphere of competence being violated by the other:

In the same city and under the same king there are two peoples. Just as there are two peoples, there are two ways of life; and just as there are two ways of life, there are two authorities; and just as there are two authorities, there is a dual order of jurisdiction. The city is the church; the king of the city is Christ; the two peoples are the two orders within the church, the clergy and the laity; the two ways of life are the spiritual and the carnal; the two authorities are the priesthood and the kingship; and the dual jurisdiction is the divine law and the human. Give to each what is due to each, and everything will be in harmony.¹⁶

The difficulty always lay, however, in the fact that there would inevitably be occasions when the two areas of jurisdiction would not be clearly defined, or when some kind of tension between them would exist. Suppose, for example, the temporal sovereign were to command his subjects to do something which expressly contravenes the teaching of Christ of which the church is the appointed guardian - insisting that they worship pagan idols, for example, as did Julian the Apostate?¹⁷ Clearly, the church cannot refrain from claiming the right to intervene in such a case, by forbidding the faithful to obey the command and, if the sovereign persists, by encouraging them actually to overthrow and replace him. Similarly, if the church wishes to enforce its commands against an

intransigent subject or State, and yet has no coercive power of its own, it must feel itself entitled to call upon the sword of the secular power; and if that call is not answered, it must also feel entitled to dispense the subjects of that secular power from their allegiance.

This ideology therefore contrived both to assert the separateness of the secular from the spiritual, and yet at the same time to affirm the implicit priority of the spiritual power embodied in the church. The doctrine also implied, moreover, that, when it comes to determining the exact boundaries of the two spheres of competence, the final decision rests with the ecclesiastical authorities. And it is precisely this kind of argument that Hobbes so passionately wishes to confute in the final section of the Leviathan, where he allows his phobia of the church its most lavish expression. The 'kingdom of darkness', he maintains, owes its origins to the ambition of the Roman clergy. This ambition led them, in the first instance, to accept assistance and grants of power from the Roman Emperors from Constantine onwards; and then, when Imperial Rome entered into its decline, it led them still further to take over for themselves the status and powers of the Roman Empire which had originally protected them. As Hobbes puts it,

If a man consider the original of this great ecclesiastical dominion, he will easily perceive that the Papacy is no other than the ghost of the deceased Roman Empire, sitting crowned upon the grave thereof. For so did the Papacy start up on a sudden out of the ruins of that heathen power.¹⁸

And this, incidentally, is a comment with which, if we remove

its polemical content, modern Protestant ecclesiastical historians would not take very serious issue.

This ghost, of course, has now been partly exorcised in England. It was exorcised first by the Tudor sovereigns who overthrew the power of the Papacy in England. The process was continued by the Presbyterians of the Long Parliament who abolished the Episcopacy; and it was completed by the Independents who destroyed the domination of Presbyterianism. But the Leviathan ends on a warning note; for

Who knows that this spirit of Rome...may not return,
or rather an assembly of spirits worse than he, enter,
and inhabit this clean-swept house, and make the end
thereof worse than the beginning?¹⁹

It is Hobbes's constant asseveration that the ghost of Rome will never be entirely extirpated until a strong sovereign asserts himself over the universities; for

the divines, and such others as make show of learning, derive their knowledge from the universities, and from the schools of law, or from the books which by men eminent in those schools and universities have been published. It is therefore manifest that the instruction of the people dependeth wholly on the right teaching of youth in the universities.²⁰

It is from the universities that the arrogant pretensions of the ecclesiastics have originally come; and the sovereign should exclude from the universities all useless and dangerous teaching, and cause them to instruct their members in the proper grounds

of political submission. The universities should, in short, be converted into schools offering courses in 'political science' as conceived and expounded by Hobbes. And, presumably, his intention was that the Leviathan should be required reading for any such course.²¹

All in all, it comes as no surprise to find that Hobbes made himself so bitterly unpopular with contemporary churchmen and academics alike. Seth Ward and John Wallis, John Bramhall, Ralph Cudworth, Sir Charles Wolsey, and many other formidable opponents believed, each in his own way, but with unimpeachable sincerity, that the doctrines of 'Hobbism' were pernicious and dangerous. Bishop John Vesey held that the opinions of Hobbes 'have had so great a share in the debauchery of his generation that a good Christian man can hardly hear his name without saying of his prayers'.²² And an unknown pamphleteer reserved a special place for Hobbes in hell:

Old Tom, with a Recanting Verse,
Must his odde Notions dolefully rehearse
To new Disciples in the Devils-Ar-----.²³

It is a measure of Hobbes's stature that, though in seventeenth-century terms he was never more than a domestic servant - albeit a highly-favoured one - to an aristocratic household, he should have been so unanimously seen as a threat to so many established interests.

NOTES.

1. Leviathan, E.W. Vol.3, pp.124, 131.
2. Quoted from Diels and Kranz, Die Fragmente Der Vorsokratiker, 5th edn., Ch.87, sect.B, no.44. I have translated directly from the Greek, and not via the German. This Antiphon is known as 'the Sophist' to distinguish him from Antiphon the tragedian and Antiphon the orator - consent now being common that they were not the same people. As a matter of interest, Antiphon the Sophist was one of the earliest geometers to try his hand at circle-squaring, producing a bogus attempt described and illustrated in Kathleen Freeman's The Pre-Socratic Philosophers, p.397.
3. I say executive acts because the sovereign's legislative power is limited by natural law to the extent that the 'laws of nature' are the commands of God. For the sovereign to break natural law is not injustice relative to his own subjects, but he can act unjustly towards God, as God's subject - see pp.171-172, infra.
4. Leviathan, E.W. Vol.3, p.200.
5. Leviathan, E.W. Vol.3, pp.162-163.
6. Leviathan, E.W. Vol.3, p.162.
7. Leviathan, E.W. Vol.3, p.174.
8. Hobbes does not notice that, because of the lack of unanimity and clashes of interest already adduced as reasons against assemblies, flatterers will find assemblies more difficult to sway than monarchs.

9. Politics, III, 10,11,13,15.
10. Leviathan, E.W. Vol.3,pp.203-204.
11. Leviathan, E.W, Vol.3,p.228.
12. Richard Peters, Hobbes, p.30.
13. Luke,XXII,36-38.
14. Romans,XIII,1-2.
15. Vide Tractatus,IV,ii, and Ep.,XII,2, quoted by R.W. and A.J. Carlyle, Medieval Political Theory in the West, Vol.I, pp.190-191.
16. Stephen of Tournai, Summa Decretorum, Introduction, quoted in Latin by R.W. and A.J. Carlyle, Medieval Political Theory in the West, Vol.II,p.198.
17. Vide St Augustine of Hippo, Sermones, LXII,13; Ennarationes in Psalmos, CXXIV, passim.
18. Leviathan, E.W. Vol.3,pp.697-698.
19. Leviathan, E.W. Vol.3,p.700.
20. Leviathan, E.W. Vol.3,p.331.
21. A propos of which suggestion, see The Times, Thursday, 13th April, 1978, p.3,col.1:

'Herr Reinhard Rupprecht, a vice-president of the German Federal Criminal Bureau...said: "Even if the old cliché is not confirmed that all terrorists have studied either sociology or political science, the trend towards the social and educational sciences is clearly visible."'
22. 'The Life of Primate Bramhall', in Bramhall's Works, Dublin, 1677, quoted by Mintz, The Hunting of Leviathan, p.57.

23. Quoted by Mintz, The Hunting of Leviathan, p.21.

SUMMARY AND CONCLUDING REMARKS.

In the early part of this thesis, I emphasised the importance of attending to the systematic, holistic character of Hobbes's philosophical achievement. I stressed the need to approach his moral and political recommendations as an integral part - although, to our minds, incomparably the most important part - of an articulated system. And this has been a leitmotif throughout the foregoing chapters. It is therefore as well, at this point, to give a brief summary of Hobbes's philosophy of nature, man and the political order as it has emerged during this exposition.

Philosophical knowledge, or what we should today more naturally call scientific knowledge, is knowledge of the relations between cause and effect. Such knowledge has not only explicative and predictive value, but, in its moral and social dimensions, prescriptive value as well; and it is achieved, not by mere observation, but by reasoned enquiry into causal relations. It is thus rigorously separated off from other branches of our cognition. And if Hobbes is correct in supposing that scientific enquiry is capable of yielding conclusions about human behaviour of the same kind as it yields about the behaviour of natural bodies, then he is not guilty of the 'ought-is' fallacy; since 'prescriptive' will now take on a new, quasi-scientific meaning. The question is, is he correct in so supposing? In other words, is 'pro-naturalistic historicism' a viable method of social investigation? I think that Professor Popper has advanced

arguments which show as conclusively as such a thing can be shown that it is not; but that is another story.¹

The method to be used in the pursuit of scientific/philosophical knowledge as Hobbes conceives it is both rationalistic and empirical. It involves an analysis and synthesis of complex wholes after the manner of Galileo, starting from the initial presumption that all causation is due to the motions of matter, proceeding to a deduction of such consequences as are entailed by this presumption, and verifying (or falsifying) these deduced consequences by reference to further sensory experience. If all the phenomena which fall within the observer's field of experience are satisfactorily explicable as forms and configurations of motion (and Hobbes is satisfied that they are), there is no reason why this should not be as true of the human as it is of the natural world. All men's mental processes, passions, aversions, desires, are thus taken to be merely epiphenomena of events in the outside world. And since events in the outside world occur as effects of necessary causes, it follows that men cannot but act in the ways that, according to Hobbes, they actually do act. In other words, they cannot but seek to gratify their own desires and avoid danger to themselves, without any more regard for others than is necessary to serve their own purposes.

Thus, if we take a commonwealth, a specimen of a political order, and analyse it into its component parts (i.e. individual persons), we are left with 'atomic' men in a 'state of nature';

and Hobbes's individualism simply does not recognise the possibility that a commonwealth may be in some sense more than the sum of its parts, or that the social chain amounts to more than the individual links. The state of nature, on Hobbes's account of it, is such that it is worse than even the worst form of political life. And from this supposed fact, and from our knowledge that men are both passionate and rational, we can proceed to deduce what men placed in a state of nature would do. They would arrive, by 'ratiocination', at certain maxims, somewhat invidiously called 'laws of nature', and reckoned also to be divine commands, which they would recognise as necessary and sufficient means to peace. But they would also be well aware that these laws would not in fact be obeyed unless there were a sovereign authority with enough power to make obedience more in the interests of men than disobedience. It may be (according to the 'Taylor-Warrender' thesis) that the laws of nature derive their authority from the fact that they are God's commands. But, such is the strength of immediate and impulsive passion, there is, in the state of nature, no motive which will impel men to obey them. It happens to be true that God does not, in fact, send thunderbolts to enforce his commands. Some means must be found, therefore, of making the desire to obey stronger than any possible desire which might be gratified by disobeying. Men are thus led by reason and passion to the social compact, whereby a sovereign authority with absolute and undivided power is created to represent the whole community, and to govern it in such a way as to keep at bay the horrors of the state of nature. Under such a sovereign, the prescriptive laws of nature which are seldom or never followed in the state of nature can at last become practical realities, and men can enjoy the peace which they

so much desire.

* * * * *

Now for all the attractiveness of a purely naturalistic argument which has all the appearances of objectivity and validity of a scientific demonstration, Hobbes's science of politics has been subjected to constant and persistent attacks. Indeed, as Watkins remarks, part of the significance of the Leviathan from the point of view of later generations has been its eminent criticisability. But a great deal of Hobbes criticism is nowhere to the point as far as we are concerned. We have seen enough of his opponents to know that many of them were simply unworthy of him, and that much of what they say amounts to no more than abuse. Moreover, many of his weightier critics (Ward, Wallis, Bramhall, etc.) frequently deal with issues which are only of peripheral importance to us, or with matters which are now of interest only to the historian of science or of religious controversies. The more interesting and relevant arguments have tended to centre upon the idea of a social compact; and many of the most resolute assaults on Hobbes's system have been concentrated in this area. Also, of course, all critics of the idea of a social contract, whether they name Hobbes or not, are, in fact, critics of Hobbes. At the risk of some oversimplification, such arguments may be classified under the following four headings.

1. The Practical Impossibility of the Social Compact.

It is argued that the kind of agreement involved in the social compact would be impossible to arrange in practice between

individuals numerous enough to comprise the population of a viable and self-sufficient State. This argument would, of course, be particularly to the point if it were really true that men are as vividly individualistic, untrusting and hostile as Hobbes takes them to be.

2. The Logical or Conceptual Impossibility of the Compact.

This is a rather less naive argument, which points out that the very concept of a compact is itself a highly sophisticated one. It is essentially a legal notion and, as such, presupposes a legal system; and a legal system, in turn, presupposes a degree of social awareness, organisation and co-operation, and skill in communication which men in the state of nature by definition do not possess. On this view, as George Sabine has put it,² if a contract were possible it would not be necessary - for men who had such attributes would already be living the kind of ordered social life which the compact is supposed to bring into being. By the same token, if the contract were necessary, it would not be possible, precisely because these attributes were lacking. If this argument is valid, then Hobbes's theory is involved in a vicious circle. If agreements cannot be made in the natural state of man before a social contract has created organised social life, then it is impossible for a social contract itself to be made. If the idea of moral obligation depends upon the conventions of law, then men in the state of nature, where there are no conventions of law, will have no conception of obliging themselves by a contract. In other words, if ever there had been 'natural men', they would never have been able to cease from being natural men.

3. The Unreality of 'Free Choice'.

The social compact is held to derive its binding force from the fact that it arises out of the free (that is, the necessitated but uncoerced) choice or consent of the contracting parties. The transference of right involved in making such a compact is free in the sense that it is supposed not to be compelled. If this were not so, the compact would not, properly speaking, be a compact or covenant at all, and so no obligation could be held to flow from it. Obligation, to Hobbes, is obligation to keep my word.³ This, in turn, presupposes that I gave my word - that my word was not, so to speak, wrested from me. But to what extent is a man realistically to be called 'free' to enter civil society when the alternative (i.e. the war of every man with every man) is so appalling? A course of action which no sane man would dream of not taking can hardly be said to be a matter of uncoerced choice, save in the most unusual and attenuated sense of the word 'uncoerced'. It would be unusual, for example, for me to declare myself 'free' to choose whether or not to blow out my brains. Yet Hobbes seriously suggests, for instance, that a man might be 'free' to choose whether to submit to an enemy or be killed by him - even though, in practice, he will always choose the option of submission. This, I think, is just as silly as the Hegelian suggestion that a man is only really free when he is obeying. Quite apart from the fact that this kind of suggestion consorts oddly with Hobbes's empirical psychology, it is surely somewhat curious to suggest that a man might be 'free' to live a life which is 'solitary, poor, nasty, brutish and short'.

4. The Unreality of 'Consent'.

Even if the above argument is disallowed, a further objection remains. To enter into civil society by freely-given consent is one thing. To bind your sons and daughters to remain within that society is something else again. Yet unless the descendants of the original contracting parties are held to be so bound, the commonwealth will be of exceedingly short duration, since the possibility will remain open that it will fly apart with the coming of age of the new generation and the passing away of the old. This is not, as it happens, a difficulty which is peculiar to Hobbes. Clearly, it will dog anyone who wishes to ground political obligation in consent. Locke attempts to escape it by introducing the notion of 'implied' consent: anyone who uses the highways of a commonwealth, or inherits property within its territorial limits, or takes lodgings within it, is held to have consented to the terms under which it is constituted.⁴ And what this means, quite simply, is that, if people do not leave, they are presumed to be remaining by their own free, albeit implied, consent. The difficulty, of course - and this was noticed by Hume⁵ - is that the advice to emigrate is a great deal easier to give than it is to take. In short, it is not at all beyond the bounds of possibility that a so-called 'free' political association may comprise a significant number of members whose only reason for staying is that they cannot leave; which makes consent quite unreal. And a similar objection holds against Hobbes. Civil society is held ultimately to depend upon free consent embodied in a social compact appointing a sovereign representative - it is precisely this which makes the absolute power of the sovereign legitimate.

However, the sovereign power thus created is held also to bind the generations succeeding the parties to the original compact, even though the members of these succeeding generations cannot, in any real sense, be said to have given their consent. So it cannot, after all, be true that political organisation rests upon the consent of those who are to be politically organised; and the argument from a social compact collapses. Also, on Hobbes's account of operative justice as defined by the will of the sovereign, it will always be up to the sovereign to stipulate that, in future, consent or otherwise will not be material to political obligation.

(More generally, of course, the objection which we have just considered is pertinent to all liberal political theory in that it draws attention to a real and unbridgeable gulf between political philosophy and political practice. There is not a great deal of point in spinning out philosophical systems centred upon moral concepts such as freedom or consent or justice - or, at least, there is not much point in claiming that such systems have any grip upon affairs in the real world. Real, as distinct from philosophical, politics is not about ethical notions, but about the distribution of power. If I dislike the rules of the political community in which I live, then I have two choices: to submit to them, albeit grudgingly, or to leave. If I do not or cannot leave, then I must abide by the rules. If I do not abide by the rules, then I shall be coerced until I do. And my feelings about justice or fairness will not matter in the smallest degree. This, I think, is Hobbes's real position; and one cannot help feeling that it is a position which is prior to rather than a result of his supposedly philosophical reflections

about political matters. It might seem disingenuous to compose an allegedly scholarly and philosophical argument from which positions that you hold in any case are purported to flow; but, at least, Hobbes sins in good company.)

As arguments go, the four objections to the social contract theory of government which we have just noticed deserve to be taken seriously. There is, I think, no doubt that they are fatal to any attempt to uphold a social compact as an historical origin of government; and this is true quite apart from the ease with which any such attempt could be falsified historically. Even such an apparent historical instance as the U.S.A. is not, of course, an example of men moving from a 'state of nature' into a wholly new realm of political experience. It is a case of men replacing one political experience by another, and justifying their acts in philosophical terms which are bogus in the sense mentioned a moment ago - in the sense that the status quo would not really be altered if the philosophy were to be subtracted. Yet however much these four arguments may be canvassed as arguments specifically against Hobbes, the fact of the matter is that none of them damages the essential structure of his argument. This is so for two reasons, which may be identified very readily.

First, Hobbes's argument is not an historical one; he does not invite us to believe that there once was an actual social compact which really did deliver men from a pre-political state of nature and by which political society as we now know it was constituted. We might, it is true, readily find forgiveness for experiencing

a certain amount of confusion in this respect, because Hobbes's language is frequently very ambiguous. He often speaks as though he intends us to believe in the historicity of the social compact. But he, like every philosopher, is often constrained by the conventions of language into saying something which does not quite catch what he means; and he is, I suppose, as entitled as anyone else to a sympathetic and imaginative interpretation on the part of his readers. In a word, it is manifestly clear overall that Hobbes is engaged in a thought-experiment of the kind undertaken in John Rawls's book, A Theory of Justice. He is performing upon the commonwealth a piece of mental analysis comparable to that performed by Galileo upon projectiles moving through space; and his conclusions are as follows. Men are so constituted that they could not long enjoy peace and security without extrinsic regulation strong enough to overcome their individualistic, and therefore(?) anti-social tendencies. Hobbes takes it for granted that men do prefer peace to war and security to danger, and that their desires and their rational natures combined are sufficient to show them how to achieve peace. Thus, submission to authority is a rational necessity. It is not that there has been a covenant in history. Rather, it is that men must behave as if they were bound by such a covenant. It is manifestly in their interests to do so, because they are able to know by reason and experience the consequences for them of political disorders: they are able, as it were, to sense the 'state of nature' lurking below - and not very far below - the surface of organised life, even though such a state of nature has never generally obtained. Thus, all arguments against Hobbes which depend upon objections to the social contract theory

literally and historically conceived turn out to be beside the point; because Hobbes's theory is not meant to be literally and historically construed. Hobbes is not writing history.

As Michael Oakeshott has put it,

The Leviathan 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.⁶

Second, Hobbes stands in a tradition of moral and political thought which has its origins in the doctrines of St Augustine of Hippo.⁷ This tradition conceives the State not, as in the Aristotelian tradition, as an aid to or necessary condition of human fulfilment, but as a remedy for man's destructive and self-destructive tendencies. Political organisation is necessary only because man is, in the main, a creature of selfishness and cupidity; and it comes into being precisely for the purpose of restraining those urges which would otherwise be his undoing. Much is said about Hobbes's pessimistic theory of man; but we should do well to remember that Hobbes is, in fact, by no means hard on human nature when measured against contemporary opinion. None of his contemporaries believed that man, with or without society, is essentially good. Man, according to seventeenth-century theology, is born evil, the inheritor of the original sin of Adam; and he can only obtain merit through the operation

of divine grace. Hobbes's peculiarity, and the reason underlying much of his condemnation as an 'atheist', lies not in the fact that he proclaims the intense selfishness of man - this proclamation he has in common with generations of theologians. It lies in his denial of man's essential wickedness. To Hobbes's mind, the proposition that man is as he is is simply a matter of psychological fact. It is not an occasion for condemnation. As he puts it, the desires and passions which men feel are not sinful in themselves: they only become so when they are stipulated as such by the law. If a man wishes to recognise his destructive characteristics and take steps to mitigate them, the Leviathan is there to furnish his natural faculty of 'ratiocination' with a helping hand. And it is clear from all this that, no matter how many objections are urged against it, the social compact theory is in any case not a necessary step towards Hobbes's conclusions. If we were to remove from Hobbes's writings all mention of a social compact, or if we were to discover an absolutely watertight objection to it, his political theory would lose a great deal of its rhetoric, but very little of its force. For Hobbes's political philosophy turns, not upon the social compact, but upon his account of psychology. If men are as he says they are - egoistic, hedonistic, proud, short-sighted individualists - then absolute government is obviously the only help for them if they wish to have peace. It does not really matter in the slightest how this government comes into being, provided only that it does come into being. In short, no attempt to launch an attack on Hobbes by way of his doctrine of the social compact will reach the heart of the matter. The heart of the matter is not really human agreement, hypothetical or actual,

but human psychology. If Hobbes's psychology is true, his political recommendations clearly have much to be said for them. Indeed, Hobbes would really like us to conclude that these recommendations are something like logical necessities - 'a true and certain measure of right'. But is his psychology true?

It is significant enough that Hobbes himself does not even allow this question to arise. If we comb his works looking for evidence to support his contention that all men are egoists, we shall do so in vain - because there isn't any. For the most part, Hobbes simply takes it as axiomatic that men are as he says they are, and does not bother with discussion. Yet we noticed in chapter three that his view is that all statements purporting to be 'about the world' must be supported and confirmed by empirical evidence. The most that Hobbes has to offer is the suggestion that, if we look into ourselves, we shall see that we are as he says we are;⁸ but such an invitation to introspection is hardly empirical evidence. Moreover, the suggestion that anyone who looks into his heart will find there nothing but egoistic hedonism is one which it is open to anyone not to accept - as Butler pointed out in his critique of Hobbes. And this paucity - indeed, total absence - of anything which might be called evidence seems to bear out the suggestions of Professor Popper to which I referred earlier. What could possibly count as evidence for a general, purportedly scientific, account of human psychology, given the diversity and unpredictability of human behaviour, the impossibility of controlled experiment, the impossibility of accurately predicting the future, and so on?

Indeed, in asking whether Hobbes's psychology is true, we are only raising the corner of a much larger question - namely, the question of whether a psychology is the kind of thing which is capable of being true. A psychology is a theory of the human mind formulated by human minds; and this raises what might be called the 'electron microscope' or 'radio astronomy' difficulty. When we look through an electron microscope, or listen to the radio waves collected by a radio telescope, how can we know that our apparatus is giving us true information? How can we know that it is evidence, and how can we know what it is evidence for? The only way of arriving at the evidence in question is by using the electron microscope. If, therefore, we wish to test the hypothesis that the microscope is a reliable piece of apparatus in that it gives us accurate information about that part of the universe too small to be seen, we shall find ourselves in a jam. Because we cannot test the hypothesis without presupposing its truth - without using the electron microscope. So, surely, it is with psychology. A theory of the human mind devised by a human mind must apply as much to the mind that devised it as to any other. The theory cannot, therefore, be tested without presupposing its own truth.

Suppose we ask whether or not the account which Hobbes gives of human motivation and activity coincides with observed facts as we know them. Straight off, of course, there is the objection that, if Hobbes were right, no-one would bother to ask this question, since a moment's reflective introspection would be enough to convince us that there is such a correspondence between theory and reality. So we begin to smell a rat at

once. Quite apart from this, however, our immediate impulse, of course, is to retort that Hobbes's psychology is obviously false - that every martyrdom, every act of self-denial, every display of courage or self-sacrifice falsifies Hobbes's psychological egoistic hedonism. Unfortunately, however, this line of argument gets us exactly nowhere. It leads only to a tightening of the logical knot, because it is an objection which is easily answered from the Hobbesian side. The exponent of Hobbesian psychology can perfectly well claim that the martyr chooses death because he desires the rewards of heaven which will follow it more than he fears the pains of martyrdom itself; or that the self-sacrificing hero finds the attraction of posterity's adulation more powerful than the repulsion of the prospect of self-sacrifice. It may be implausible to try to explain the lives of Christ or Socrates or Gautama in terms of purely selfish hopes and fears; but it is certainly not a logical absurdity. In short, it is quite open to the Hobbesian psychologist to maintain, in respect of every case that we may care to cite, that men necessarily and inevitably seek their own gratification, even though some men seem to find gratifying what others find repulsive. And there would be no way in which we could refute such a claim, because the claim is now taken to be true by definition, and is, as such, placed beyond the reach of refutation by any empirical evidence. We could no more refute such a claim than we could refute the claim that the sum of the angles of a triangle is 180 degrees.

But although it might be possible to establish such a claim as true by definition, it is still not thereby established as true

by correspondence. It has not, in other words, been shown to be true in the sense of mirroring the way things actually are; and this is precisely what Hobbes must show if his psychology, and therefore his political and social philosophy, are to hold water. I wish now to make one or two brief remarks about 'the way things actually are' which do, it seems to me, tell against Hobbes's psychological claims. I would stress, however, that these are only 'brief remarks' - it would obviously be impossible, in a work of this kind, to attempt a point-by-point refutation.

First, even if we concede that men do, in fact, always act in such a way as will gratify their own desires, it is a long, and by no means a necessary, step from here to the conclusion that this impulse will, unless severely checked, always have the terrible consequences which Hobbes anticipates. The chief trouble with the statement that 'all men seek always to gratify their own desires' is that, even if it is supposed to be true by definition, it tells us nothing about what these desires actually are. Indeed, it is difficult to see how one could specify in advance all the possible desires that a man is likely to have, since (to alter a phrase of Wittgenstein), 'in order to draw a limit to desiring, we should have to desire both sides of this limit'.⁹ But, in any case, there seems to be no reason to assume from the outset that the gratification of these desires will inevitably have destructive and anti-social results unless restrained by a strong coercive power. Hobbes recognises that men desire peace; yet he holds (without even an attempt at substantiation) that this desire is too weak to survive temptation to selfish and peace-destroying

behaviour; and he thinks that this conclusion follows with luminous clarity from a study of human motivation. Yet suppose that, by way of reply, I were to suggest that the desire for peace and happiness and what Bentham called the 'pleasures of benevolence' are man's overriding passions, and that wars are regrettable and avoidable occasions rather than the continual and inevitable nature of things. Now, if Hobbes's position were indeed self-evident, as he holds that it is, then such a suggestion would strike the hearer as dangerous madness, or as a piece of incomprehensible nonsense. Yet this is precisely the kind of thing that Locke said in the Second Treatise; and no-one suggests that Locke was a political or philosophical nincompoop. Indeed, the Second Treatise has been infinitely more influential in practice than any of the recommendations of the Leviathan. It seems to me that Hobbes's position perfectly exemplifies the remark of Benn and Peters that 'self-evidence is more an index of our habituation to an assumption than of its truth'.¹⁰ In a word, if you are as passionately committed in advance as Hobbes was to a particular conclusion, you will ensure that your preliminary arguments are not disfigured by anything that is inconsistent with that conclusion. If, as with Hobbes, your conclusion favours absolute government, then you will argue that men's unchecked desires are such as will obviously make their lives a misery until absolute government is established. And you will certainly disallow any claim that men in the main experience the kind of desires which allow them to live under very mild government, or even under no government at all. There is, in short, a very strong temptation to conclude that Hobbes's psychology is ready-made to fit in with

certain political convictions arrived at in advance and by quite other means. Hobbes wished to create a world safe enough for himself to live in; and, consciously or unconsciously, he was not above rigging appearances to enable himself to do so.

Some years ago, an American sociologist wrote a paper called 'Queue Culture: The Waiting Line as a Social System'¹¹ - a paper which has more relevance for us than may be immediately apparent. Consider a queue which has formed for the purpose of buying tickets to a football match. If the queue is not to break up in disorder, the established convention of 'first come first served' must be recognised by all, or, at least, by the great majority, of its members. People must not jump the queue. Yet everyone desires a ticket; and waiting for the gratification of his desire is presumably painful for everyone present - particularly since there is a risk (especially acute for those at the far end of the queue) that the tickets will sell out before everyone has been accommodated. But common sense and experience tell us that queues do not inevitably break out into skirmishes which result in the strongest or best-armed or most cunning getting served first - which is, presumably, what would happen if Hobbes were correct in his exposition of the factors which govern human behaviour. Indeed, experience tells us that fights in queues are the exception rather than the rule. If this were not so, then it would be impossible to speak meaningfully about 'queues' at all. Or, better, the word 'queue' might come to be used only to name an extraordinary occurrence which we occasionally see by way of relief from the usual round of fights and duels of cunning which normally occur

whenever we are trying to obtain a share in some scarce resource. Now, it is true that the coercive power of the law - of the 'sovereign' - is ultimately present, since queues form within established commonwealths. But the point is that, as a member of a queue, I do not think, 'I mustn't jump the queue. If I do there will be an argument, then there will be a fight, and then the black Maria will come and it will be the worse for me.' I do not even necessarily fear the physical blows which the man in front of me is capable of dealing if I try to get in front of him - and in any case, is it really our normal expectation to suffer physical assault if we jump a queue? Are not football hooligans and the like newsworthy precisely because their behaviour is exceptional rather than the rule? More generally, is there not a case to be made for saying that we condemn violence precisely because it is exceptional rather than normal behaviour? The feelings which dissuade me, as a rule, from jumping queues are not just primitive hopes and fears of the kind described by Hobbes's egoistic psychology. What I fear is the disapprobation of my peers if I break a convention which is, in fact, purely informal. By the same token, what I respect is a mode of behaviour which is neither created nor (in any direct sense) enforced by the law and its coercive power. My behaviour is controlled informally; and, what is more, the tendency to obey the convention of queueing is not directly imposed upon me from without (there is not usually a bunch of toughs waiting to spot queue-jumpers). It arises from within as a matter of my own rational deliberation. In a word, there seem to exist rational and informal checks which operate upon human behaviour quite independently of the fact that formal coercive sanctions exist in the background; and which

are therefore, presumably, also capable of existing in the state of nature.

Further examples are provided by those social anthropologists who have called attention to numerous pre-industrial societies which exist perfectly peacefully without coercive - or, indeed, any - government. These so-called 'stateless societies' are very numerous, and their ways of life have been very well documented. They have no courts, no executive machinery, no legislature - no formal institutions of government at all. They exist by custom, by co-operation, by leaving decisions to the old and wise, but not through any kind of formally-mobilised political power. The Kalingas, the Tiv, the Sirionos, the Nuer, and many other 'stateless societies' can and do exist;¹² and life within them certainly does not seem to be 'a war of every man with every man'. It is certainly true that such a form of social organisation would not be appropriate to any very sophisticated mode of social production. It would certainly not do for a 'possessive market society'.¹³ But it is clearly not impossible or inconceivable, as Hobbes would invite us to conclude.

Hobbes seems to have believed that only the most spectacularly bad consequences will dissuade me from trying to satisfy a personal desire of any strength. More accurately, he seems to have in mind some kind of unreal, Benthamite felicific calculus which demands that a given desire for pleasure can be countermanded by a pain which is as acute as, or more acute than, the pleasure itself. But at least three plausible points arise out of the remarks which I have just been making. First, it is not, in fact, obvious that men cannot live together without coercion;

and this point is in no way impaired by the obvious fact that they sometimes do need to be coerced. Second, our rational experience of mankind, as manifested in the study of stateless societies or in participation in queues or similar situations, suggests to us that the faculty of self control is much more highly developed than Hobbes would wish us to believe. Third, in his insistence upon the concepts of coercion, law, command, and so forth, as formal checks upon man's destructive tendencies, Hobbes gives far too little recognition to informal, extra-legal or pre-legal social controls which are, in fact, very powerful: approval, disapproval, respect, dislike, and so on.

If all this is so, then Hobbes's empirical psychology begins to look implausible. His depiction of man as a complex pleasure-seeking and pain-avoiding mechanism driven by extrinsic and necessary causes plainly does not explain enough. And if Hobbes's psychology is wanting in sophistication, then his insistence upon absolute government to control the impulses of mankind no longer looks so impressive. It is, in fact, revealing to note the extent to which Hobbes's own life belied his account of human motivation. He quite straightforwardly identified human volition with animal desires of a fairly basic and uncomplicated kind - pleasure, power, glory. From this identification, he is forced to pass to the conclusion that the political order can never furnish mankind with any new objects of volition. At the last analysis, civil society can do only two things. First, it can increase its members' chances of satisfying desires which, in themselves, remain no more than the desires of the hypothetical savage in the state of nature. Second, it can furnish new motives

strong enough to impede the satisfaction of destructive desires. On this account, all that distinguishes the citizen from the savage is the fact that the citizen is better informed as to the likely outcome of an attempt to satisfy a particular desire in particular circumstances. Also, he is able to contrive artificial consequences of an unpleasant kind to attach to attempts to gratify desires of a certain kind. Civil society, in short, is only the state of nature suppressed and controlled: the act of becoming a political man does not transform the individual's human nature. And if this were true, then attempts on the part of any one man to achieve a rational understanding of human life would presumably be impossible - simply because the desire for such a rational understanding is one which, in the very nature of the case, the 'natural' man, concerned only with himself, could not formulate. And the implication of this is that, if Hobbes were right about human psychology, he himself could not have lived as he did; and neither could those of his contemporaries whom he most liked, admired and feared.

But, to Hobbes's mind, living as he did pinched between alarming political circumstances and a preternaturally timid disposition, the men of his generation needed, above all things, self-awareness - awareness of what he took to be their own natural, limitless, and, in itself, blameless capacity for self-destruction and self-defeat. They needed a 'true and certain rule' for their actions. And Hobbes thought that he could supply such a rule, derived from the newly-emergent mechanical conception of nature which he found so conveniently ready to hand, and

reinforced by the rigour of geometrical method. If, to our eyes, the attempt is more important than the achievement, this does not much diminish his significance in the history of ideas. From our point of view, it is as a social scientist that Hobbes continues to occupy a place of eminence. He is convinced that scientific method, as he understands it, is capable of being systematically applied not only to physics, astronomy, physiology, and the like, but also to psychology, ethics, sociology and politics. And he is convinced that it is only by so doing that men can save themselves from the horrors of uncertainty and war. Hobbes has a long line of successors whose thought has followed essentially similar lines; and it is in this respect that he still has a certain kind of contemporary relevance. Odd as so much of what he had to say may now seem, very many of the questions which concerned him in the field of social-scientific explanation are still open. Social scientists continue to debate the poverty or otherwise of historicism; continue (at least in many cases) to try illegitimately to derive 'ought' from 'is'; and so continue to fall into the glaring equivocation between 'laws' which describe the regularities of nature and 'laws' which prescribe what men ought to do. From the point of view of modern exponents - particularly those who lack a sense of history - Hobbes's contribution to the method and practice of the social sciences is still worthy of a close look. It may well be that the outcome of such a look is refutation. But Hobbes is very well worth refuting; and no-one, I suppose, needs to be reminded that refutation is a process of growth.

NOTES.

1. K.R. Popper, The Poverty of Historicism, esp. chs. II & IV. Vide also 'Postscript: After Twenty Years', in Popper, The Logic of Scientific Discovery. Popper's book is (avowedly) a diatribe against Fascism and Communism, and he does not name Hobbes. The question is, then, is Hobbes a theorist who claims to be able to predict the future by formulating 'scientific' laws allegedly like the laws of physics? I think that, without too great a distortion of Professor Popper's meaning, he may be considered as such a theorist. His claim is, in effect, that by considering men in a state of nature - admittedly a hypothetical state of nature - we might, by naturalistic means, predict what their future might be. I concede, however, that Hobbes's standing as an 'historicist' is a little unsteady. I do not want to labour the point - which is why I have banished Professor Popper to a footnote.

Professor Popper's arguments can be summarised as follows. Historicism claims to be able to predict the future course of history. But history itself will be much influenced by changes in human knowledge. It is obviously impossible for us to predict, by naturalistic or non-naturalistic means, what changes in human knowledge will occur. We could not say what men will know in the future unless we knew it already. Thus, a theoretical and predictive history resembling theoretical physics in the scope and character of what it can do, is impossible -

we cannot predict the future course of history, and political philosophies which rest upon a claim to be able to do so are nullified.

This is only a pale shadow of what Professor Popper actually says; but since I do not intend to rely very much on him, there is no need to carry the discussion further.

2. A History of Political Theory, p.395.
3. Vide W.von Leyden's reply (Philosophical Quarterly, 1973) to G. Parry, 'Performative Utterances and Obligation in Hobbes,' Philosophical Quarterly, 1967.
4. Second Treatise, VIII, 119.
5. Vide Of the Original Contract, pp.221-222. As Hume puts it,

Can we seriously say that a poor peasant or artisan has a free choice to leave his country, when he knows no foreign language or manners, and lives from day to day by the small wages which he acquires? We may as well assert that a man, by remaining in a vessel, freely consents to the dominion of the master, though he was carried on board while asleep, and must leap into the ocean and perish the moment he leaves her.

Hobbes and Locke, as exponents of 'possessive individualism', were not, of course, much concerned with poor peasants and artisans; but that, perhaps, only goes to strengthen Hume's point.

6. Leviathan, Introduction, p.xviii.

7. This, of course, is not strictly true - its has its origins in certain of the Sophists of fifth-century Athens. But it was a tradition which dominated Medieval political thought until the time of Aquinas, and which remained very potent thereafter; and, to this extent, it was consciously taken from Augustines's De Civitate Dei, without reference to his forebears.
8. Leviathan, E.W. Vol.3, pp.xi-xii.
9. Wittgenstein's actual words are, 'in order to draw a limit to thinking, we should have to think both sides of this limit.' (Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus, Preface.)
10. Social Principles and the Democratic State, p.39.
11. Leon Mann, in the American Journal of Sociology, 1969.
12. For a general survey, see the article on 'Stateless Societies' in the International Encyclopaedia of the Social Sciences, Vol.15.
13. C.B. MacPherson, The Political Theory of Possessive Individualism, pp.53ff.

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