On The Problem of Uncertainty in Thomas Hobbes's *Leviathan*

Ina Simon

A Thesis
in
The Department
of
Theological Studies

Presented in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree of Master of Arts
(Theological Studies) at Concordia University
Montreal, Quebec, Canada

April 2019

CONCORDIA UNIVERSITY School of Graduate Studies

This is to certify that the thesis prepared

By: Ina Simon

Entitled: On The Problem of Uncertainty in Thomas Hobbes's *Leviathan*

and submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

Master of Arts (Theological Studies)

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_____   Graduate Program Director

    Dr. André Gagné

_____   Examiner

    Dr. Christine Jamieson

_____   Examiner

    Dr. Lucian Turcescu

_____   Supervisor

    Dr. Paul Allen

Approved by:

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_____   Dean of Faculty

    Dr. André G. Roy

Abstract

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Ina Simon

In the following paper I argue that uncertainty is a key hermeneutic in Thomas Hobbes's *Leviathan* by referring to an analysis the original text. Uncertainty is a barrier to the standard of reciprocity in social interactions that is dictated by God via natural law. The importance of uncertainty is tied to several key conceptual distinctions – among these the division of individuals according to two character types, modest and vainglorious, is key. Another important distinction is the difference in social relations between the state of nature and the civil state. I will argue that within the civil state the tension resulting from the uncertainty born of the two-fold division of characters is resolved in a way that makes Christian ethics possible.

Dedication

To my mother – I could not have gotten this far without your continued encouragement and support.

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The Problem of Uncertainty in Thomas Hobbes's *Leviathan*

Introduction

What initially drew me to study the work of Thomas Hobbes is the fact that his ideas evade easy categorization. Centuries after he lived and wrote, Hobbes remains almost as controversial as he was in his own time. Indeed, it has often been difficult for analysts to reconcile what they see as contradictory tendencies in Hobbes's work. As such, it has not been uncommon for Hobbes to be accused of being an inconsistent thinker. Famously, Arendt criticized him for being too authoritarian, Schmitt for being too liberal, Nietzsche for being too much of a humanist, and more recently, Taylor for being too mechanistic.

Of course, other scholars, like Skinner, Malcolm, Curley, and even Strauss, have argued the opposite: that Hobbes is not just self-consistent but an especially brilliant thinker. They tend towards the position that such perceived inconsistencies are imagined more often than not and actually tend to result from deficiencies of analysis and method. Based on my study of Hobbes, I am also personally inclined to take the view that Hobbes is not inconsistent – instead, he is an especially complex and holistic thinker.

Still, the sheer extent of the disagreement between some famous Hobbes analysts is confusing at best. I initially started out my inquiry by asking questions like: is Hobbes a liberal or an authoritarian? Is he a mechanistic thinker or a humanist? Finally, is he a rhetorician or a political philosopher? However, at the end of my academic inquiry, I have come to realize that these are perhaps the wrong questions. To explain, I believe that such categories tend to be anachronistic and limiting so that they threaten to distort Hobbes's ideas. In truth, there are elements of both sides of each of the aforementioned dualisms in Hobbes. Furthermore, the

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'dualisms' themselves are fluid given the fact that the meaning of words changes over time and space; this has led some to (often unfairly) accuse Hobbes of being inconsistent when it is in fact the analysis that may be lacking in some way, like failing to account for the fluidity of terminology over space and time.

However, this hermeneutical issue is increasingly being addressed in the more recent Hobbes scholarship, which is more in tune with new developments in the study of language and communication. For instance, in my overview of the Hobbes literature, I have noticed two significant positive hermeneutical developments – one methodological and the other conceptual – which I have also tried to incorporate in my work. First, unlike many traditional analyses, recent Hobbes scholarship is more willing to step outside the field of political philosophy and incorporate methodology from other disciplines like linguistics, literature, communication, and history. This seems to be largely thanks to the influence of scholars such as Quentin Skinner who emphasizes the importance of historical and intellectual context in understanding the meaning of utterances. Second, I have noticed that recent Hobbes scholarship tends to be influenced by 'critique of liberalism' analytical perspectives rooted in Charles Taylor's seminal work[1]. Whatever their limitations, these analyses are suspicious about highly politicized categories such as 'liberalism', 'authoritarianism', and even 'rhetoric'; because such categories are increasingly recognized as broad, vague, and historically fluid, these analyses can offer important conceptual corrections to studies of Hobbes[2]. For example, it is increasingly recognized that Hobbes's so-called authoritarian and liberal tendencies are actually neither contradictory nor mutually exclusive within a properly contextualized analytical framework. In other words,

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[1] I have also often seen these perspectives labeled as 'crisis of liberalism' and 'post-secular', depending on the field of study.

[2] In fact, it seems that post-Taylor tendencies to analytical self-consciousness regarding terminology has led to a reassessment of both Hobbes's and Machiavelli's important contributions to liberal traditions and a renewed in interest in the term "republicanism".

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liberalism/authoritarianism, philosophy/rhetoric, and humanism/mechanistic are in many ways false dialectics[3].

The aforementioned positive hermeneutical developments might be a result of the fact that Hobbes is increasingly being studied by scholars who do not see themselves as political philosophers. This brings a much needed conceptual and methodological diversity to Hobbes studies. In the end, I believe that such interdisciplinarity leads to a better represents of Hobbes himself. To explain, Hobbes writes a lot about politics, which is why he is commonly (and not unreasonably) labelled as a political theorist. However, the label is constrictive and reductionist[4]. For example, by following Hobbes's use of the term 'politics', I have come to understand that Hobbes's fundamental concern is actually with ethics, which Hobbes politicizes; furthermore Hobbes often approaches ethics through the lens of theology and religion – in fact, I hope that this thesis will provide an example of how Hobbes mediates questions of politics (which are fundamentally about ethics) through religion. In light of this insight, my own interest in Hobbes has been mostly centered on his views on the intersection between religion and politics, which I believe to be central to his philosophy.

Briefly, in this thesis, because the category of 'religion' is too ambiguous, I will discuss religion through the key Hobbesian concept of 'uncertainty'. Generally, my analytical approach has been to identify the concepts that are most fundamental to Hobbes's thinking about religion. However, like 'liberalism' or 'authoritarianism', it is important to note that 'religion' is a difficult and elusive concept in Hobbes's work. The most obvious difficulty is that he sometimes uses the term 'religion' to refer to both 'true religion' and 'false religion' (or 'superstition'),

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[3] See Skinner (2008) for an example of a historically contextualized analysis of the category of "liberty".

[4] Reading once of the available biographies makes it clear that Hobbes was much more than a political philosopher. He was also a: teacher, educator, advisor, historical and political commentator, translator, linguist, theologian, mathematician, gentleman scientist, and tinkerer.

which are technically part of a dialectic. Also, sometimes he uses 'religion' to denote religious institutions while at other times he uses it to denote general systems of belief or particular ideologies of sub-groups within them. Finally, he sometimes seems to equate 'religion' (both 'true' and 'false') with Christianity while frequently lapsing into comparisons with pagan practices and beliefs; in fact, his definition of 'Christianity' is also ambiguous and unorthodox – for instance, Hobbes tends to give hermeneutical priority to the Old Testament and Hebrew Bible traditions so that it is hard to distinguish between what is typically labeled 'Judaism' and 'Christianity' in his exegesis[5]. Therefore, somewhat ironically, in an analysis of Hobbes's thoughts on religion, the term 'religion' itself is of only limited usefulness due to its complexity, which is why I have looked elsewhere for an analytical anchor.

That being said, not using 'religion' as an axiomatic category in my analysis is not a problem because Hobbes's most important and interesting thoughts on religion actually tend to be implied, assumed, and mediated through other (less politicized) concepts. Just like Hobbes generally uses the language of politics as a framework to define ethics and ethics to define religion, I find that he often engages theological issues obliquely through discussion of other key terms, like fortune, foresight, the body politic metaphor, fear, and natural law. Because of this, I have searched for a key term that Hobbes uses to explain and define religion – the independent variable so to speak. In other words, I have tried to better understand Hobbes's definition of religion by identifying key concepts that Hobbes took to be foundational to the notion of religion. This inquiry has led me to focus on the axiomatic concept of "uncertainty", which is the topic of this thesis.

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[5] I believe that this might be because Hobbes actually does not see a distinction between Christianity and Judaism as a result of his (qualified) rejection of tradition and experience as sources of theology. However, he clearly acknowledges them as different historical traditions, Further investigation is needed to clarify this.

I have found that uncertainty is the most fundamental concept in Hobbes, which is to say that it is used to define most other key terms associated with religion. Furthermore, the concept of uncertainty is axiomatic because Hobbes relies on it extensively but almost always implicitly, never actually explaining the concept. Put differently, 'uncertainty' is axiomatic in Hobbes's thought because it precedes definition and argument which means that it is self-defining[6]. Having identified uncertainty as a key axiomatic concept, through engagement with game theory and Charles Taylor's work on language theory, I have traced the origins or causes of 'uncertainty' in social interactions to a distinction that Hobbes makes between two types of characters: the psychological models of the modest and the vainglorious individuals. My thesis also explores the connection between the axiomatic concept of uncertainty and these two types of characters.

Therefore, the main idea that I want to convey in this thesis is the importance of uncertainty to Thomas Hobbes's philosophy in general and to his thought on the role of religion in civil society in particular. According to Hobbes's epistemology, uncertainty is a necessary feature of human life and all interactions are defined by it in various ways. Unlike most other important concepts in Hobbes, 'uncertainty' is uncomfortably metaphysical, seemingly trying to map how humans relate to each other as embodied beings within space-time with a political language framework. Therefore, an apt question is: when does uncertainty become a problem, and how can it be addressed? By referring to game-theoretical analyses of the state of nature, I will demonstrate that uncertainty is a problem in the context of social relations within a community and it can be addressed by increasing similarities between individuals and confirming existing ones – preferably through contract and covenant. This uncertainty, which is

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[6] I believe that uncertainty, not unlike Kierkegaard's notion of 'anxiety' (also explained with recourse to the Hebrew Bible), is defined by an appeal to experience, to the place where physiology meets intellectual abstraction. In other words, Hobbes believes that the feeling of uncertainty is somehow fundamental to being a human creature.

the cause of what Hobbes calls the state of war, can be phrased as the problem of not 'knowing other men's hearts' (see *Lev.* intro, 3); in a social interaction, one basically asks: 'who is the other to me'? And 'who will I be in response'? I will argue that, despite man's intrinsically peaceful nature, uncertainty in social relations is the reason why the state of nature is a state of war – if left unsolved, uncertainty breeds mistrust, aggression and ultimately war[7]. Hobbes's answer to uncertainty, however repugnant to democratically-minded commentators, is a return to a biblical, Old Testament-style, society where obedience is the key political as well as theological virtue. I will also consider the Christian ethics of charity in relation to reciprocity and I will argue that charity is only possible in a political context of obedience.

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[7] A Nietzschean critique would ask: Why is aggression undesirable? Hobbes's axiomatic position is that human life, human comfort, and general human flourishing, which is measured by the achievements of human culture, are good. See *Lev.* xiii, 9. He offers no other defense of this axiomatic starting point other than suggesting that such things are 'natural' in the sense of knowable by most individuals using only the common sense they are born with.

Chapter 1: <u>Reciprocity</u>

Questions about what to do are ultimately questions about who to be. Therefore, 'how I treat another' is inseparable from 'who I am'. As such, Hobbes argues that social relations ought to follow the golden rule of reciprocity: "This is that law of the Gospel: "whatsoever you require that others should do to you, that do ye to them." And that law of all men: *quod tibi fieri non vis, alteri ne feceris*" (*Lev.* xiv, 5). Briefly, the maxim of reciprocity neatly sums up Hobbes's understanding of the laws of nature, which are the basis of his understanding of 'true' religion and also the model of governance that politics ought to strive for (see *Lev.* xvii, 2; xxvi, 8).

An ethical measure stick, the principle of reciprocity is an ancient maxim found in most cultures in one form or another. Reciprocity is enshrined in documents as old as the "The Eloquent Peasant" ("do to the doer to cause that he do [the same to you]"), Hammurabi's Code, the work of Thales, Isocrates, and Seneca (on the treatment of slaves); in Leviticus 19:18 God dictates to Moses the following: "you shall love your neighbour as yourself", a law that St. Paul reaffirms in Galatians 5:14.

<u>Equality</u>

The principle of reciprocity addresses the problem of uncertainty in social relations by attempting to establish expectations about others' character and behaviour by assuming that the other will respond in kind to whatever one does. As such, reciprocity is founded on an assumption of equality or even equivalence between the parties involved; an assumption that 'you do as I do' or 'you are as I am'. There is a transactional aspect to reciprocity that becomes evident when one considers that one party to a social transaction must perform first, hoping that the second party will respond in kind. As hope is, according to Hobbes, an "*appetite* with an opinion of attaining [it]" (*Lev.* vi, 14), reciprocity requires some measure of hope and trust and is

therefore perhaps more accurately phrased as: "I will treat you well *if/so that* you treat me well" or "I will love you *if/so that* you love me".

The conditional nature of the transaction that can be noticed in any reciprocal exchange emphasizes the uncertainty as well as the equality that is always inherent in social interaction. Hobbes offers a notoriously anti-social version of reciprocity stemming from equality that is phrased as: "the weakest has [physical and mental] strength enough to kill the strongest, either by secret machination or by confederacy with others" (*Lev.* xiii, 1). In other words, the Hobbesian argument for equality is an equal and mutual capability of most interlocutors to kill each other if need be. From this rather violent understanding of equality, Hobbesian reciprocity is rephrased along the hopeful yet fearful lines of "I will not kill you *if/so that* you will not kill me" (see *Lev.* xiii, 1-2)[8].

Defection and Retaliation

So what if, against all hope, another treats you badly? The other side of reciprocity is (proportional) retaliation. Accordingly, in such cases, Hobbes believes that "an eye for an eye", or *lex talionis,* comes into effect. As God commands in Leviticus 24:19-20 (NRSV): "Anyone who maims another shall suffer the same injury in return: fracture for fracture, eye for eye, tooth for tooth; the injury inflicted is the injury to be suffered." Very similarly, in *The Elements of Law* Hobbes writes that: "The sum of virtue is to be sociable with them that will be sociable, and formidable with them that will not" (I, xvii, 15). Therefore, when one other treats another badly so that there is defection from the maxim, reciprocity demands (proportional) retribution[9].

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[8] Hobbes controversially phrases the political contract as a mutual laying aside of *the right* to attack another.

[9] Hobbes is not wrong here in relying on the maxim of reciprocity – Robert Axlerod's research shows that a simple tit-for-tat strategy, or "equivalent retaliation", where each player responds by imitating his interlocutor's previous move, generally dominates in assurance games and can therefore be said to be the 'natural' response in the Hobbesian sense of the word. See Axelrod (1984) *The Evolution of Cooperation*.

While Hobbes continues to advocate this principle throughout the entirety of his *corpus*, his wording becomes both softer and more indirect over time, especially when compared to his earliest work such as *The Elements*. In *Leviathan*, Hobbes argues for the retributive side of proportionality by making it a component of the first main dictate of natural law, which is to seek peace, by qualifying it with a *right* of nature, which is that man is bound to preserve and defend himself against those who would treat him badly (see *Lev.* xiv, 4). Actually, the second law of nature reconciles the first law and first right of nature much more neatly by advocating that one should deal fairly *only when others do so as well* (*Lev.* xiv, 5). Conversely, ignoring proportionality in retaliation would be wrong. To illustrate, if a man acts fairly with one who cheats him, then "that were to expose himself to prey (which no man is bound to), rather than to dispose himself to peace" (*Lev.* xiv, 5). Note the implicit criticism to an ethics of forgiveness that is inherent in the dictate of self-protection.

Forgiveness vs. Proportionality

Hobbes is careful here to hide his preference for the Old Testament over the New and as such scrupulously avoids quoting Leviticus 24:19-20, or any similarly explicit Scriptural passage, despite the fact that he clearly advocates this exact model of reciprocal retaliation; and for good reason: he is not only contradicting New Testament "turn the other cheek" ethics, but criticizing it, strongly suggesting that it is an unjust and foolish thing to do. In fact, Hobbes suggests that, outside the civil state, Christian ethics is actually unnatural because it violates one of the abovementioned components of natural law[10].

The Christian ethic of "turn the other cheek" effectively breaks with the transactional aspect of social interactions by setting up forgiveness, charity, and even suffering (allowing

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[10] I want to emphasize the fact that Christian values are inappropriate only in the state of nature. Within the civil state Hobbes seems to think that they become especially important.

oneself to be victimized[11]) as the epitome of morality. To illustrate, in the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus says: "if anyone strikes you on the right cheek turn the other also" (Matt. 5:39 NRSV). Similarly, the Christian parable of the Good Samaritan tests and challenges the boundaries of the scenario according to which reciprocity and trust come easier within one's own moral community. Therefore, Christian ethics are not really about reciprocity, which seems to be Hobbes's most fundamental key value in the state of nature as well as the civil state, because they never really respond to another's action. To illustrate, whatever an interlocutor does, whether or not he cheats, one's ethical duty to treat him well and even love him remains unchanged. It is interesting to note that, because variation in the actions or character of an interlocutor do not matter (i.e., will not change how a Christian responds), Christian virtue is counterintuitively dominant and self-assertive in its message of charity in a way that is oblivious to the personality and actions of the other interlocutor; in fact, it is more about conversion than reciprocity and therefore is a rather radical approach to social relations that denies Hobbesian natural equality as follows: not by making oneself *more* or *greater* than another, but by counterintuitively making oneself *less* or *smaller*, to use somewhat Nietzschean terms.

Equality in Relationships

To explain, in a reciprocal exchange, the first performer sets the tone of the interaction and therefore 'changes' the other to mirror himself. In other words, as Hobbes puts it, if 'how another treats me' determines 'how I treat him', then 'who another is' effectively determines 'who I am', at least to some extent[12]. Therefore, just as the truly aggressive will strike first and therefore set the tone of an interaction and 'change' their interlocutor to mirror their own

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[11] Hobbes's first right of nature, self-preservation, criticizes this position.

[12] To what extent can another change me? As will be discussed later in the paper, Hobbes suggests that this influence is limited. For example, another's aggression can change how I act (more aggressively) but cannot change my fundamental preference for peace, as preference for peace is intrinsic to human nature.

violence, the truly non-violent will similarly dominate the interaction by refusing to change in response to an interlocutor's decisions. Basically, "turn the other cheek" ethics means that a Christian always performs first in a sense – he never responds but always seeks to set the tone despite the self-victimization inherent in such action. Therefore, Christian ethics challenges reciprocity at a very fundamental level[13].

Because Hobbes believes that men are roughly equal in terms of not only physical strength, psychology, and intellect, but also even faults and idiosyncrasies[14], he does not believe that Christian ethics are appropriate in the state of nature. In fact, Hobbes lays so much store on natural universal equality that he proposes that forgiveness is actually naturally *offensive* because it suggests inequality. For example, Hobbes writes that: "To have done more hurt to a man than he [the doer] can, or is willing to, expiate, inclineth the doer to hate the sufferer. For he must expect revenge or forgiveness, both which are hateful" (xi, 8). This is one of the more surprising passages in Hobbes because it sounds similar to some of Nietzsche's positions where, based on a hierarchical notion of 'greatness', weakness is actually offensive. However, for Hobbes, based on his belief in equality, *any* extreme concentration of power, whether weakness or excessive strength, is equally offensive in spirit, both in general and to the parties of a social transaction. Therefore, unlike Nietzsche, both extremes of inequality and disproportionality in the state of nature are equally undesirable according to Hobbes – forgiveness is as offensive to universal human equality as cruelty is, which Hobbes also strongly denounces as something unnatural (see *Lev.* vi, 47; xv, 19).

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[13] I am not engaging here with eschatological and soteriological considerations. Briefly, it could be argued that Final Judgement would technically return any situation to a cosmic balance of reciprocity by rewarding the good an punishing the bad in the 'afterlife'.

[14] Interestingly, passages like *Lev.* xiii, 2 suggest that Hobbes offers an early treatment of cognitive biases.

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However, I should note that the considerations outlined above apply mostly to a state of nature. Actually, in the end, Hobbes does believe that Christian ethics apply *within* a civil state; the role of the civil state is to permit such Christian-type social transactions. Briefly, where there is civil law, forgiveness and charity become not only rational but necessary. Nonetheless, in the state of nature, the same values are irrational and dangerous. Note the importance of the state (as a *sine qua non)* to Christian ethics of forgiveness – this 'tribalism' according to which politics precedes and enables ethics actually seems more in line with Jewish traditions. Note also the importance of external, systemic circumstance to human interactions and to human identity (since 'what I do' is inseparable from 'who I am'); the relationship between identity and action is a mutually constitutive 'two-way street'.

Imagined Social Transactions

Going back to the observation that in a social interaction, just like in a transaction, one party must perform first and another then responds, note that maxims of reciprocity such as "an eye for an eye" and even "turn the other cheek" are *post factum.* In their application, these maxims tend to respond to a judgement passed on some action already taken by another party and therefore constitute matters of *justice*. In other words, they are questions for the one who performs second in an interaction, once the tone of the exchange has already been set by the first performer.

Unlike many justice theorists' treatment of reciprocity, Hobbes is more deeply concerned with the motives and circumstances of the one who performs first. Actually, to be more precise, Hobbes is not even concerned with any actual *real* interaction but instead with the *ex-ante,* which he sometimes refers to as the activity of "anticipation" and other times as "forecasting". For example, Hobbes writes that: "from this diffidence of one another, there is no way for a man to

secure himself so reasonable as anticipation, that is, by force or wiles to master the persons of all men[15] he can, so long till he sees no other power great enough to endanger him" (*Lev.* xiii, 4). It is not clear how anticipation relates to justice since whatever injustice it responds to is actually imagined: is proportionality actually an injustice when retaliation responds to an imaginary wrong?

The *ex-ante* is the reflective 'space' where the first performer *prepares* to act[16], which in a sense precedes questions of justice like it precedes the actual deeds[17] (see *Lev.* xi, 9; xiii). It is relevant to note that even though it only comes into being after the establishment of the state, justice is nonetheless fully consistent with the dictates of the law of nature which it seeks to imitate and serve (see *Lev.* xxvi, 4). As evident from Hobbes's discussion of the state of nature, the *ex-ante* perspective is completely imaginary – it is a forecast or a hypothesis about a future interaction that relies on some preconception about the interlocutor's character and action preferences; and this pre-conception is unfavorable for practical reasons: it is too risky to trust in a relative stranger when one's life and livelihood are in the balance. According to Hobbes, given the ever-present risk that the other will cheat or attack, in the absence of mechanisms that guarantees compliance, such as those supplied by the civil state, it would be irrational and irresponsible to perform first, which is to say that it would be unwise to trust a stranger to maintain reciprocity so that, somewhat ironically, it becomes logical to break with reciprocity

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[15] By "master the persons of all men", Hobbes is referring to a general understanding of human psychology applied to foresee particular dangers and plan out interactions ahead of time. Similarly, Hobbes thinks it important that a sovereign to understand human psychology: he "must read in himself not this or that particular man, but mankind, which though it be hard to do, harder than to learn any language or science" (*Lev.* intro, 4). Anticipation is the goal of political science, which Hobbes argues is an *a priori* and therefore *ex-ante* science.

[16] Hobbes's epistemology and psychology are consistent with this observation. For example, Hobbes writes that "because *going, speaking,* and the like voluntary motions depend always upon a precedent thought of *wither which way,* and *what,* it is evident that the imagination is the first internal beginning of all voluntary motion" (*Lev.* vi, 1).

[17] See also *Lev.* vi, 55 more generally on "deliberation": "Deliberation if expressed *subjunctively*, which is a speech proper to signify suppositions , with their consequences, as if *if this be done, then this will follow*, and differs not from the language of reasoning, save that reasoning is in general words, but deliberation for the most part is of particulars."

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first. The *ex-ante* scenario might be hypothetical, but the question that it struggles with is eminently practical; when there is uncertainty and mistrust of others, as per the first right of nature, one must seek self-preservation and therefore, when in doubt, prepare for the worst.

Game Theory

Once the transactional nature of the ethics of reciprocity is recognized, the ethical problem of uncertainty in social interactions can be represented in part as a game theory optimization problem – many such studies of Hobbes exist (for example, see Curley 1994, xxviii). However, before further engaging with game theory hermeneutics, I want to point out that it would be a mistake to reduce the ethical conundrum that is the state of nature to a mere game. The game analogy can create a useful model of the system within which humans interact. However, the analogy breaks down at many points, most notably when it comes to understanding individuals themselves – their preferences and motivations, as well as the origins thereof, which affects the outcome of games. Nonetheless, game theory is often used to explain Hobbes's major theorem that the state of nature (i.e., the absence of institutions and law) is a state of war without much thought to further qualifications. As such, in true Procrustean fashion, game theory has popularized a "universal psychological egoism" scenario; by this I am referring to the mistaken notion that Hobbes conceives of all human beings as self-interested value maximizers and therefore thinks that people are naturally anti-social. Most serious Hobbes scholars reject this view (see Gert 1991) but nevertheless it remains a dominant misconception among more casual interpreters (see Taylor 2016 on HLC model of language theory).

Universal Psychological Egoism

According to the universal psychological egoism scenario, a set of universal individual psychological characteristics (often seen as 'failings of humans nature') predetermine

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interactions in the state of nature as inescapably hostile. Briefly, in this neat but Procrustean understanding, humans are self-interested value-maximizing "players" locked in an endless competition for power that only ends with their death[18]. Because of this, humans are naturally unsuited to peace (and politics). Peace is therefore maintained artificially[19] when a higher power such as a civil government imposes and maintain it, *despite* human psychology/anthropology. The implication here is that without institutions, peace would inevitably collapse. Briefly, in game theory language, although peace is the optimal state of the game, because universal peace makes everyone better off than before, players are naturally egoistic at the expense of community values and therefore must be forced to alter their behaviour by a quasi-tyrannical government so as to achieve the pareto optimal game balance. As understood by universal psychological egoism hermeneutics, politics and governance are a kind of a behavioural hack to optimize efficiency in a community, which is understood as an amalgam of egoistic individuals.

While it does the job of mapping the problem tolerably well in *some* specific situations, game theory is neither a valid nor a complete general hermeneutic because it tends to shape the particulars of the original theorem so as to fit the preconceptions of particular games. Universal psychological egoism, whose association with game theory hermeneutics is briefly described above, is a serious hermeneutical distortion of Hobbes that results from using the rough map that is game theory analysis as if it were really equivalent to the actual terrain of Hobbes's philosophy. Most importantly, universal psychological egoism misrepresents Hobbes's conception of human nature and therefore conceals the nature of uncertainty and the fundamental role it plays in social relations; as a consequence it also implicitly dismisses the religious-ethical foundation of social interactions by mischaracterizing the importance of natural law. Chung

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[18] Power being the epitome of a scare resource/zero-sum game.
[19] (literally through art)

(2015) argues that the universal psychological egoism scenario is a straw-man argument meant to weaken Hobbes's justification for government[20]. I would add that it also builds a straw man of Hobbes's take on religion – though perhaps this is not as straightforward or as immediately obvious because Hobbes tends to filter his opinions of religion through the language of natural law.

Modified Bayesian Game Theory Model

So why are game theory analyses so wrong about Hobbes? According to Hun Chung, the problem is not game theory itself but rather its consistently incorrect application to Hobbes's state of nature. In an insightful article, Chung (2015) argues that classical games like Prisoner's Dilemma and Stag Hunt misrepresent Hobbes as a universal psychological egoist because they fail to properly account for all the parameters that Hobbes ascribes to the state of nature. After deconstructing and critiquing traditional analyses, Chung applies his own more accurate Bayesian game theory model of the state of nature with much better results. Briefly, the five key conditions of the state of nature as listed by Hobbes and summarized by Chung are: (1) rough universal human equality (of physical and mental capabilities)[21], (2) competition for limited resources, (3) division of men between two types of character: a modest (peace-loving) majority and a vainglorious (glory-loving) minority (*), (4) non-universal egoism (*), and finally (5) uncertainty in social relations arising from the inability of people to "reliably know other people's types" (*) (2015, 486-488). According to Chung, classical game theory lacks either one or all of the last three parameters, each marked with an asterisk[22]: the distinction between modest

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[20] Chung's description of the straw-man argument goes as follows: if government is necessary because humans are all egoists, but it is demonstrably false that humans are all egoists, then government must not be necessary after all. Numerous scientific studies falsify universal psychological egoism and therefore some interpreters have wrongly assumed that this is an argument against Hobbes's justification for government.

[21] Hobbes is not quite arguing that all humans are equal but that the differences are negligible, so this is correct for the purpose of the game.

[22] The PD and Stag games miss two of the five :the existence of two types and uncertainty about each other's type. The Assurance Dilemma misses the uncertainty aspect. Therefore, these games reach the incorrect conclusions that

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and vainglorious, the fact the former are not egoists but the latter are, and the state of uncertainty in social interactions that arises from the non-egoists' inability to identify the egoists ahead of time. To this I will add the more general critique that game theory also fails to properly differentiate between the aforementioned *post factum* and the *ex-ante* of an interaction (i.e., whether it is actual or imagined/hypothesized) and consequently fails to understand Hobbes's *ex-ante* understanding of war as a disposition.

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the state of nature turns into a state of war because of psychological egoism. The results of these games *technically* match Hobbes's own conclusion that: the state of war is inevitable in nature, the Nash equilibrium of mutual defection is Pareto-inferior, while the situation of mutual cooperation would bring the most overall benefit. Therefore, it might seem like the games support Hobbes's position. Despite this, the initial assumptions damage Hobbes a lot more than they help him; as Chung argues, given that Hobbes's purpose is to mount a credible argument in favour of having government, the assumption of psychological egoism weakens Hobbes's ultimate argument simply because the universal psychological egoism is directly contradicted by both general life experience and empirical evidence from modern psychology – psychological egoism simply does not represent human beings accurately. In other words, a PD reading of Hobbes would be that Hobbes is correct IF universal psychological egoism holds. Therefore, a critic (who has not read Hobbes's texts carefully enough) can dismiss Hobbes's argument for government simply by dismissing psychological egoism (which is easy to do).

Chapter 2: <u>War</u>

Hobbes mostly thinks of war in the context of the *ex-ante*, i.e., as a possibility with a certain probability distribution that varies over time and can be estimated hypothetically at any given point. For example, Hobbes compares war to bad weather, constantly threatening but only occasionally actually happening: "the notion of *time* is to be considered in the nature of war, as it is in the nature of weather. For as the nature of foul weather lieth not in a shower or two of rain, but in an inclination thereto of many days together, so the nature of war consisteth not in actual fighting, but in the known disposition thereto" (*Lev.* xiii, 8). Therefore, a state of war is said to exist as soon as war becomes a real option of interaction, regardless of whether it actually comes to pass. Hobbes's key point is that: "War consisteth […] in a tract of time wherein *the will to contend by battle* is sufficiently known. (*Lev.* xiii, 8, added emphasis). Note that Hobbes is once again engaging in the logic of anticipation and forecasting instead of dealing with practical questions and therefore *bellum omnium in omnia*, or the *warre of every man against every man*, is something entirely different from either *jus in bello* or *jus ad bellum*.

<u>Causes of War</u>

Hobbes identifies three main reasons for why people go to war which he then ties back to two main psychological dispositions: "in the nature of man we find three principal causes of quarrel: first, competition; secondly, diffidence; thirdly, glory" (*Lev.* xiii, 6). However, I propose that "gain" is not a proper category because the *telos* of gain is ambiguous, and therefore the triad becomes a pair: diffidence and glory. To explain, security and reputation are ends in themselves but gain can actually be instrumental to either. In other words, the *telos* of gain can in the end qualify as either 'diffident' (ultimately seeking security) or 'glorious' (ultimately seeking status as an intrinsic good). Therefore, all things considered, there are *three ways* to go to war but

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only *two real underlying ends*: security and glory. Note that the former is practical and tangible (and therefore reasonable) and the latter is what Hobbes would call vain (and therefore unreasonable). While Hobbes does not state this very clearly in this particular passage, I believe that this revised formula is a more accurate representation of his meaning throughout *Leviathan* – I hope this will becomes clear by the end of the paper.

Hobbes believes that diffidence, understood as violence that pre-empts or anticipates victimization, is the only rational and overall 'natural' reason to make war. By 'natural', I mean to say that diffidence is the only way to make war in a manner that is actually consistent with Hobbes's natural laws. To explain, diffidence is a logical choice in scenarios where first law of nature (seek peace) and the first right of nature (seek self-preservation) conflict with each other, as they do in the state of nature, where following peace can get one killed, which means that killing another is never really 'unjust'. Therefore, in the state of nature, because sometimes man cannot follow both natural dictates at the same time, it is the situation itself that is 'wrong' and not the individual; the only remedy for this contradiction is the civil state. However, going to war for glory instead of self-defence violates not only one but both principles of the first dictate of natural law and is therefore wholly 'unnatural' as a result.

The distinction that I propose between reasonable and unreasonable reasons to make war corresponds with two distinct character typologies in Hobbes: the modest and the vainglorious, who can be understood as cooperators and defectors to reciprocity-games respectively. For example, consider Hobbes's original description of the three causes of war and note how he ties each back to a certain type/disposition of individual: "The first [cause] maketh men invade for gain; the second [cause], for safety; and the third [cause], for reputation. The first [type of men] use violence to make themselves masters of other men's persons, wives, children, and cattle; the

second [type of men], to defend them; the third [type of men], for trifles, as a word, a smile, a different opinion, and any other sign of undervalue" (*Lev.* xiii, 7). Once again, 'what individuals do' is inseparable from 'who they are'.

The Two Types

The twofold distinction that I have already discussed between reasonable and unreasonable causes of war reflects a further distinction between two different character types within the Hobbesian narrative: the diffident (or modest/cooperator) and the vainglorious (or the proud/defector). For example, this two-fold distinction of characters is reflected in a distinction that Hobbes makes between those who make war for security and those who do it for pleasure: "And therefore, if any two men desire the same thing, which nevertheless they cannot both enjoy, they become enemies; and in the way to their end, which is principally their own conservation, and sometimes their delectation only, endeavour to destroy or subdue one another." (*Lev.* xiii, 3). Note the implication that those who seek "their delectation only" in war are in the minority (*ergo* "sometimes"). Therefore the diffident make war (reasonably) for "their own conservation" while the vainglorious make war (unreasonably) for the pleasure of feeling superior to other men ("delectation only"), which is wrong/unnatural because it contradicts the Hobbesian principle of universal natural equality. I propose that this distinction is a key hermeneutic as it ties back directly to Hobbes's notions of equality and reciprocity which anchor civil law onto natural law; natural law in turn being the principal way that God chooses to make his divine law accessible to human beings (see *Lev.* xxvi, 41). Briefly, uncertainty stems from the interaction between these two types of individual dispositions and therefore it is necessary to understand the latter in order to explain the former.

The vainglorious, who are in a sense the root cause of the uncertainty that plagues social interactions in the state of nature, are described as follows: "there be some that taking pleasure in contemplating their own power in the acts of conquest, which they pursue farther than their security requires" (*Lev.* xiii, 4). These "some" are vainglorious individuals who defect from the maxim of reciprocity and equality and make war in the pursuit of gain and glory and therefore are in violation of both the first right and the first law of nature. Hobbes also identifies a second group of individuals who cooperate as per the maxims are therefore not inherently problematic. Hobbes describes them as follows: "if others (that otherwise would be glad to be at ease within modest bounds) should not by invasion increase their power, they would not be able, long time, by standing only on their defence, to subsist [against the vainglorious]" (*Lev.* xiii, 4). These "others" are the modest, who are in a sense *forced* make war to secure their first right of nature (self-defence) against the vainglorious, but, unlike the vainglorious, would actually prefer to follow the first law of nature (seek peace). It is evident that Hobbes believes that the violence of the modest is wholly rational and not to be condemned, though the same cannot be said of the vainglorious.

This modest-vainglorious dialectic is perhaps most clear in the following passage from Hobbes's earlier work, *On the Citizen (De Cive)*:

> "All men in the state of nature have a desire and will to hurt, but not proceeding from the same cause, neither equally to be condemned. For one man [the modest], according to that natural equality which is among us, permits as much to others as he assumes to himself; which is an argument of a *temperate man*, and one that rightly values his power. Another [the vainglorious], supposing himself above all others, will have a license to do what he lists, and challenges respect and honour, as

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due to him before others; which is an argument of a fiery spirit. This man's will to hurt ariseth from vain glory, and the false esteem he hath of his own strength; the other's from necessity of defending himself, his liberty, and his goods, against this man's violence." (*De Cive* 1, 4)

Note once again that the modest individual accepts the principles of natural equality and reciprocity while the vainglorious actively defies them, both in belief ("supposing himself above all others") and action ("[he] will have a license to do what he lists"). It is certainly significant that Hobbes styles the Leviathan "King of the Proud", in reference to Job 41:33-34 (*Lev.* xxviii, 27); pride, which is the Devil's sin, is clearly the defining characteristic of the vainglorious. This observation further supports the thesis that Hobbes singles out a specific group or people, the vainglorious, as the fundamental reason behind the uncertainty that turns the state a nature into a state of war; note once again that the distinction between two types directly contradicts all and any universal psychological egoism scenarios.

Fear of Vainglory

As previously argued, one of the distortions of universal psychological egoism is to overlook or mischaracterize the fear that exists in the state of nature: the modest majority's fear of depredation at the hand of the vainglorious minority[23]. Fear in the state of nature is *ex-ante,* which is to say that the modest do not fear the vainglorious *per se* but instead fear *not knowing who the vainglorious are, since* vainglorious reveal themselves by their actions (at which point it is too late for the modest to defend themselves)[24]. Put differently, the vainglorious are 'wolves in sheep's clothing' – this discrepancy between appearance and actuality creates uncertainty which

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[23] Sometimes the modest-vainglorious dualism sounds eerily similar to the concept of trophic level predation, with the vainglorious at the apex position.

[24] This is where the privacy of men's hearts is somewhat of a problem instead of a good. The vainglorious are good at disguising themselves and their intentions. This is captured by popular maxims about how politicians are untrustworthy; the popular idea that there is something wrong with those who seek power.

breeds fear for the modest. This 'hiddenness' of the vainglorious is important; for example, Hobbes writes that an interlocutor's aims "are so easy to be kept from our knowledge, that the characters of man's heart, blotted and confounded as they are with dissembling, lying, counterfeiting, and erroneous doctrine, are legible only to him that searcheth hearts [i.e., God]" (*Lev.* intro, 3). To summarize, although the modest are aware that their interlocutor might be a vainglorious type and therefore might seek to take advantage of them, they are nonetheless usually unable to identify the vainglorious ahead of time. Therefore, the safest choice for the modest is to assume that anyone could be vainglorious and act accordingly so that they will be protected in all eventualities.

The fear born of uncertainty makes the modest proactive so far as they shift their attitude in a defensive yet aggressive manner. Ironically, as a result of the fear they have of the vainglorious, the modest come to actually act like the vainglorious themselves, i.e., more aggressively. Another way to put this 'mirroring' effect it is that the vainglorious come to dominate and set the tone of all interactions in the state of nature by reputation (i.e., fear) alone. It is interesting to note that, to a superficial universal psychological egoism interpretation, these proactive modest types appear *to actually be* vainglorious types[25]. However, this indicates a limit as to how far actions determine personality.

The fact that, based on their actions alone, the modest are indistinguishable from the vainglorious, emphasizes uncertainty as the underlying problem in social relations – the impossibility of knowing 'who is what character type'. To explain, if the modest are forced to act in a way contrary to their nature, then 'what I do' is not longer a good indicator of 'who I am'. Therefore, the privacy of one's thoughts, which Hobbes sometimes refers to as the 'object of

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[25] Fear can cause the modest to change their behaviour but not in their essential nature – this seems to be the limit to the extent to which someone can influence their interlocutor through their behaviour.

passions' and other times as the 'content of one's heart', is both a blessing and a curse – it allows for freedom of thought but it also conceals potentially nefarious intentions, thereby making individuals in the state of nature weary and fearful. In the end, privacy of thought, the discrepancy between (external) obedience and (internal) belief 'disguises' the vainglorious, which allows them to coexist with the modest within the *corpus permixtum* of the community.

Fortune.

Hobbes is not the first to identify uncertainty (resulting in a state of war) as a major concern in the human experience. Uncertainty, under the guise of "fortune", was an important concept for many Ancient Greek and Roman schools of philosophy[26]. For example, according to Rosemary Wright, "Epicureanism started as a theory of hedonism and desires, and resulted in practice in the recommendation of a restrained and virtuous life that was proof against the vagaries of fortune" (1991, 7). Note the if one defines "hedonism and desires" as the precepts put in man by the law of nature, what Epicureans believe sounds very similar to what Hobbes argues.

Furthermore, representing the later Stoic schools, Seneca's answer to the question of how to live with uncertainty is summed up in the maxim of *nihil perditi*. On this, Nicholas Nassim Taleb (2012) comments that "Stoicism, seen this way, becomes pure robustness […] attainment of a state of immunity from one's external circumstances, good or bad, and an absence of fragility to decisions made by fate". Therefore, according to Taleb, the Stoic way to deal with uncertainty is to adjust one's behaviour to defend oneself against *the very possibility* of some threat. Again, this echoes Hobbes's *ex-ante* style of anticipation whereby the modest achieve "robustness" by pre-empting attacks by the vainglorious (i.e., by acting aggressively *first*) – this

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[26] Hobbes somewhat disapproves of this equivalence because it seems that fortune is in perpetual danger of reifying uncertainty

is basically why the state of nature is a state of war. However, as Hobbes goes on to argue, the ideal way to achieve robustness is actually within a civil state.

Uncertainty is also a key theme in Machiavelli's work. Machiavelli generally uses *fortuna* to refer to beneficial or detrimental events that are outside one's sphere of control. In other words, *fortuna* is the amalgam of things that happen to someone, as distinct from the things that one causes to happen. Machiavelli's *fortuna* differs somewhat from the Epicurean, Stoic, and Hobbesian understanding of fortune, mostly because of Machiavelli's comfort with the uncertainty of fortune. Very much unlike Hobbes, Machiavelli's opinion of *fortuna* (as an incarnation of uncertainty) is actually rather positive and opportunistic in a way that reeks suspiciously of vainglory. Hobbes's description of vainglorious individuals is actually similar in many ways to Machiavelli's understanding of the virtue of *manliness*[27]. However, the two philosophers differ greatly on the question of whether *manliness* is a good thing. Machiavelli suggests that, like other pagan gods, *fortuna* is temperamental, capricious, cruel, and vain; but, *fortuna's* favour can be courted. In fact, Machiavelli claims that a prince can court fortune as he would court a woman. For instance, he writes that like most women (of Machiavelli's acquaintance), Fortuna is impressed by *virtus* (manliness) above all. Therefore, by being virtuous (manly, i.e., bold, aggressive, courageous, etc.), a prince can gain Fortuna's favour. In other words, a prince can sometimes make his own luck. This implies that Machiavelli views many of the qualities associated with vainglory favorably. Then again, Machiavelli is nowhere near as staunch advocate of natural universal equality as Hobbes.

Interestingly Hobbes seems to criticize Machiavelli implicitly in the following passage[28]: "The final cause, end, or design of men (who naturally love liberty and dominion over others) in

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[27] From the Latin *virtus* which has connotations of both "virtue" and "manliness"

[28] If I am right about this, then Hobbes actually serves Machiavelli in-kind: Machiavelli himself criticizes Cicero in the exact same way on the exact same topic of the virtue of *manliness*. See Skinner's *Oxford Lectures*

the introduction of that restraint upon themselves in which we see them live in commonwealths is the foresight of their own preservation, and of a more contented life thereby" (*Lev.* xvii, 1). In this passage, Hobbes suggests that those "who naturally love liberty" are the same as "[those who naturally love] dominion". This seems to be a direct reference to Machiavelli's distinction between the two humors found among men: those who want to avoid being dominated (i.e., want liberty) and those who want to dominate (i.e., want dominion) – note the similarities with Hobbes's own distinction between the modest and vainglorious. By joining liberty and dominion together, Hobbes is implying that the state of nature is so out of balance because of the anxiety created by the vainglorious that it would be best to erect a supreme power to dominate over everyone so that particular individuals may not dominate each other. Basically, under such supreme dominion, the modest do not have to fear the vainglorious anymore – therefore, the modest achieve a kind of *liberty* from anxiety under the *dominion* of the civil sovereign so that, contrary to Machiavelli, liberty and dominion do go together after all.

Religion as War

Finally I want to advance what might be a rather contentious claim: that Hobbes believes that religion is sometimes manifest as a form of the state of war. It is crucial here that I begin by making a twofold distinction: between religion itself and its institutionalized form, and between what Hobbes believes to be a mistaken and superstitious understanding of religion and 'true' religion as (mostly) revealed through natural law and (sometimes) Scripture.

Interestingly, Hobbes sometimes defines religion in a very similar way to fortune, which is another way to problematize uncertainty. As the notion of fortune can reify uncertainty, religion can be used as a jack-of-all-trades explanation that in turn deifies fortune (which is already a reification) (see OL xlvi, 21). Another way to think of this mistaken basis of religion

as resulting of fortune and uncertainty is that whenever religious belief is substituted for reasonable or scientific inquiry it must be wrong and therefore merely superstition. To illustrate, Hobbes writes that such superstition is born of the "the privilege of absurdity, to which no living creature is subject but man only" (v, 7). This idea can be tied back to the interpretation of free will as pertaining to Genesis 3 whereby man effectively gains the ability to be objectively wrong as well as act wrongly.

The human desire and need to understand causality coupled with the intellectual failure to do so often makes humans fearful and anxious. This is true of social interaction in the state of nature as well as interaction with any object or process in general. When it comes to uncertainty in the latter understanding as relating to a process or object, Hobbes suggests that man *invents* causes of things he does not understand just to get rid of the stressor created by the awareness of his own intellectual failure. For example, Hobbes remarks that "some of the old poets said that the gods were at first created by human fear" (xii, 6). Unfortunately, this process whereby man invents explanations sometimes turns out to be the basis of religion. As Hobbes puts it, "when there is nothing to be seen, there is nothing to accuse […] but some *power* or agent *invisible"* (*Lev.* xii, 6) so that that "the second ground for religion […] is men's *ignorance of causes*, and thereby their aptness to attribute their *fortune* to causes on which there was no dependence at all" (*Lev.* xii, 17, emphasis added). Obviously, Hobbes thinks that this will always result in a false religion. However, this explanation should not be understood as Hobbes rejecting religion – but instead only *false* religion that is understood as part of an equally problematic dialectic of belief vs. knowledge.

Chapter 3: Evil and Sin

Equality between all men is the premise of reciprocity, which sums up the essence of natural (and divine) law. However, Hobbes claims that equality can be a cause of both war and peace. To illustrate, on one hand, equality is a reason for war so far as each man has a right to everything, including the other's person and possessions (*Lev.* xiv, 4); but this is an example of an *ex-ante* scenario and therefore is mostly theoretical and best understood as an instance of "I could". However, when individuals realize that each man is equally likely to kill each, equality is an effective practical deterrent understood as an instance of "I won't". Because it ends up being the 'last appetite' in a deliberation and (therefore is an exercise of one's will instead of a mere inclination), equality is stronger as a deterrent than as an incitement to violence. To put it differently, because equality as an incitement to violence is only an intervening variable in the process of deliberation, it does not really influence action and therefore remains unactualized or hypothetical[29]. To sum up, equality-as-deterrence, as the last appetite, is more powerful and tangible than equality-as-incitement (for discussion of "will", "appetite" and "deliberation", see *Lev.* vii, 1-2). This is consistent with Hobbes's belief that the law of nature, premised on the reciprocity born of natural equality, can be summed up as "seek peace" even though, in the un-ideal state of nature, it also disposes men to war.

It is unclear how Hobbes thinks of evil. Hobbes often suggests that evil is to go against the laws of nature (like 'seek peace'), which are divine laws revealed (for example, see *Lev.* xliv, 1). He makes it very clear however that the state of war, which Hobbes calls "the ill condition which man by mere nature is actually placed in", is not a blanket denouncement of mankind in

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[29] Note that, given Hobbes's definition of war as a disposition, this is sufficient to create a *state of war* but not to lead to actual instances of fighting – the distinction is crucial.

general but instead more of a bad situation in which to find oneself (*Lev.* xiii, 13). Furthermore, on the suspicion born of uncertainty in the state of nature that leads to a state of war (as the modesty are driven to act aggressively), Hobbes similarly writes that one should not "accuse man's nature in it [because] [t]he desires and other passions of man are in themselves no sins" (xiii, 11). The Latin version actually adds to this the following emphasis: "But why try to demonstrate to learned men what even dogs know, who bark at visitors, sometimes, indeed, only at those who are unknown, but in the night at everyone?" (OL, xiii, 11). Therefore, I believe that it is fair to say that Hobbes does not think of human beings as inherently evil or sinful, nor of the state of war as a reflection of some general fundamental failure in humanity.

Briefly, I propose that Hobbes's notion of uncertainty suggests that Hobbes does not believe that people do evil because they are themselves evil and as such represents a limit to how far action determines personality. If one believes that Hobbes is a universal psychological egoist, then human nature is necessarily a problem – it is the direct cause of war and suffering. However, once universal psychological egoism is de-bunked and the uncertainty arising from interactions between the two dispositions is recognized as a key concept, it becomes evident that the real problem is the state of nature itself, i.e., *the system within which humans interact*[30]. Therefore, given the systemic nature of uncertainty, evil becomes externalized and even politicized.

Nonetheless, man retains some agency despite the trap of his circumstances, which suggests some proto-ethical obligations of behaviour; these are to be found in man's participation in natural law. To illustrate, Hobbes claims that there is a "possibility to come out of it [the state of war], consisting partly in the passions, partly in his [man's] reason", which is to say that man may bring himself out of the state of nature by following natural law (*Lev.* xiii, 13).

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[30] I will discuss this more in the section about Genesis 3

Note that the seeds of man's salvation from war are to be found in the law of nature, which operates through the universality of passion and reason. However, it is also evident from Hobbes's discussion of the causes of war that he believes that *some* individuals are less likely to follow the dictates of natural law than others and therefore are more problematic from the perspective of the proto-ethical community as a whole.
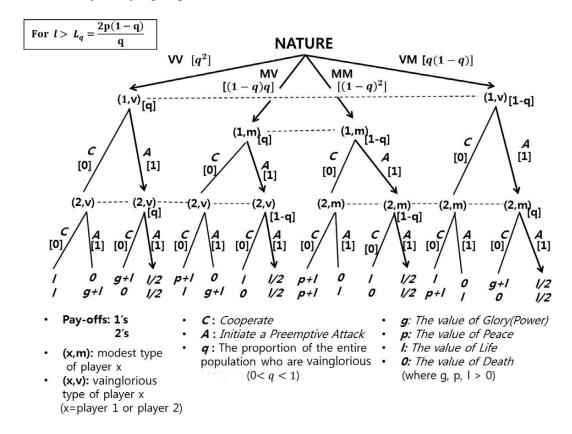
Distribution and Predestination

I would argue that the concept of uncertainty is as important to John Rawls's theologically charged concept of the 'veil of ignorance' as it is to Hobbes's 'state of nature'. Hobbes's definition of the state of nature as essentially the state of 'not knowing what the other will do' and therefore 'not knowing who the other is' seems like Rawls's veil of ignorance in reverse. To explain, the veil of ignorance is a (*ex-ante*) thought experiment that imagines a state of not knowing *one's own character,* i.e., not knowing 'who you will be' ahead of time (rich or poor; modest or vainglorious). For both Hobbes and Rawls, the trick to politics is to come up with a system that somehow makes this problem of not knowing someone's (the other for Hobbes and oneself for Rawls) character irrelevant by coming up with a system that neutralizes the danger inherent in the uncertainty by compelling behaviour using law. Another difference between Hobbes's and Rawls' respective thought experiments is that Hobbes emphasizes uncertainty as an end, i.e., as 'not knowing how you will die' (since anyone could kill anyone) while Rawls phrases it as 'not knowing who you will be born as' – this hints at the limits of the precept that 'who I am' is a reflection of 'what I do'.

Uncertainty about identity as discussed by both Hobbes and Rawls can be phrased theologically as questions of 'predestination' in a way that is very similar to how game theory considers questions of 'distribution'. Bringing the two language-games closer together, I would

argue that game theory analysis 'problematizes' God as the *source* of both game parameters and independent variables. For example, consider Chung's (2015, 504) Bayesian model of the state of nature, reproduced below; the Bayesian formula, in the top-left corner, forecasts the outcomes of the game starting from a set of variables, but what is its source? In other words, who or what decides the distribution of vainglorious ('v') and modest ('m') players in an interaction? The diagram hopefully illustrates the fact that the way that the Bayesian theorem hypothesizes about interactions is similar to Hobbes's conception of natural law and the *ex-ante* activity of anticipation/forecasting, which is his favorite way of doing theology implicitly. Furthermore, another relevant questions is: what is the source of independent variables of the game, i.e., the probabilistic of distribution of each character type, represented in the model as the first branching? A way to re-think the question is to ask: why (and maybe how) are some individuals vainglorious in the first place? As seen in the diagram, Chung trances all initial branches back to the ambiguous category of "NATURE", at the center-top, again, much like Hobbes traces all his axiomatic positions back to the laws of nature (aka. God's agency). To restate, the implicit questions here are: why are some individuals essentially predestined to be defectors to the maxim in the first place, and, in Rawlsian fashion, who decides who will be a defector? As I will discuss shortly, Hobbes's conception of natural law, considered alongside the twofold division of characters, engages the same question. However, there is no further possible explanation for the existence and distribution of vainglorious and modest characters other than 'uncertainty' (for Hobbes) or 'nature' (for Chung), which in a sense are ways of saying 'just because'. The observable fact simply is that according to the rules of probability, certain people are in a sense predestined to be 'vainglorious' (i.e., defectors) in a way that defies any further causal explanation other than theological ones, such as predestination or even double-predestination

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(some are destined to be modest/cooperators, others to be vainglorious/cheaters)[31]. The question of who decides who the vainglorious will be, or, in Rawlsian terms: who is behind the Veil of Ignorance, is a way of trying to problematize God.

For $l > L_q = \dfrac{2p(1-q)}{q}$

NATURE

VV $[q^2]$ VM $[q(1-q)]$

MV $[(1-q)q]$ MM $[(1-q)^2]$

$(1,v)_{[q]}$ $(1,v)_{[1-q]}$

$(1,m)_{[q]}$ $(1,m)_{[1-q]}$

C [0]   A [1]   C [0]   A [1]   C [0]   A [1]   C [0]   A [1]

$(2,v)$ ---- $(2,v)_{[q]}$ ---- $(2,v)$ ---- $(2,v)_{[1-q]}$ $(2,m)$ ---- $(2,m)_{[1-q]}$ ---- $(2,m)$ ---- $(2,m)_{[q]}$

C [0]   A [1]   C [0]   A [1]   C [0]   A [1]   C [0]   A [1]   C [0]   A [1]   C [0]   A [1]   C [0]   A [1]   C [0]   A [1]

| l | 0 | g+l | 1/2 | p+l | 0 | 1/2 | p+l | 0 | l | 1/2 | l | 0 | g+l | 1/2 |
| l | g+l | 0 | 1/2 | l | g+l | 0 | 1/2 | p+l | l | 0 | 1/2 | p+l | l | 0 | 1/2 |

- **Pay-offs: 1's**
  2's
- **(x,m):** modest type of player x
- **(x,v):** vainglorious type of player x
  (x=player 1 or player 2)

- *C*: Cooperate
- *A*: Initiate a Preemptive Attack
- *q*: The proportion of the entire population who are vainglorious
  (0< q < 1)

- *g*: The value of Glory(Power)
- *p*: The value of Peace
- *l*: The value of Life
- *0*: The value of Death
  (where g, p, l > 0)

Vainglory

In the end, all evil as conceived by Hobbes follows from a denial of natural equality; whenever men think themselves to be smarter, stronger, or *better* than others, war emerges as a possibility (see *Lev.* xiii). Despite the fact that he clearly does not condemn humanity in general for the state of war, Hobbes is very clear on the following: those who deny natural equality (and reciprocity) are inevitably wrong and their pride, which Hobbes prefers to call vainglory (Lat. *Inanis Gloria*), is the closest thing to a coherent concept of evil (as something that can be said of a particular person) to be found in Hobbes. However, it is important to consider that the

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[31] This is very likely a Protestant influence in Hobbes's hermeneutics and exegesis.

vainglorious' type of 'evil' might be situational and therefore not really inherent. For example, while the vainglorious do have some innate tendencies to disregard the law of nature, they can nonetheless be adequately restrained by civil law, which in practice negates any 'evil' or 'sin' in them; this argument might sounds like a technicality but keep in mind that, if 'what someone does' is inseparable from 'who someone is', this begs the question: if someone never *does* evil, can he truly be called evil, regardless of any 'natural' predisposition? If this was indeed so, then, as previously discussed, the modest, who act aggressively for reasons of self-defence, would be equally guilty. Hobbes clearly believes that the modest individuals' aggression in the state of nature is to be excused because of its logical consistency with natural law. Briefly, Hobbes believes that the modest act aggressively mostly out of fear born of a logical and natural desire for self-preservation that is consistent with the right of nature. As to the fearfulness of the modest, it is interesting to note that Hobbes argues that humans get scared in a way that is different from the way an animal might be scared[32]. This human kind of fear implies anticipation, desire, and curiosity to understand causes and perhaps more akin to the current common usage definition of "anxiety".

Some aspects of the full meaning of the (16th c.) Hobbesian term "vainglory" are lost in the current common usage definition. The English "vain", as related to "vanity", indicates a certain self-conceit and exaggerated (unrealistic) good opinion of oneself. This is consistent with Hobbes's usage. For example, Hobbes describes vainglory as pride resulting from an over-estimation of one's own abilities: "*vain-glory* […] consisteth in the feigning or supposing of abilities in ourselves (which we know are not)" (*Lev.* vi, 42). Also, as related to the idiom "in

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[32] This has to do with the fact that language has allowed humans to reason much better than animals. One of the consequences of this improved power of reasoning is that they begin to think long-term, which exposes them to problems of uncertainty.

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vain", it suggests the futility of an endeavour – this is also consistent with Hobbes's argument that, given universal human equality, vainglory is only imagined.

The Latin term Hobbes chooses for vainglory is *inanis gloria* – this choice is interesting for several reasons. Because, technically, *gloria* by itself could be translated as "vainglory", as well as "boasting", "fame", and "renown", the addition of *inanis* is a significant qualifier to the term. Also, Hobbes's choice of *inanis* over *vanus,* which is the root of the English "vain", reveals something further of what he means by the term vainglory. To explain, *Inanis* is the root of the English "inane," which means "stupid", "silly", or "nonsensical" at best, and "idiotic", "asinine" or "absurd" at worst[33]. Furthermore, aside from the meanings of "vain" already listed, *inanis* also has connotations of both "hollowness" (as in a lack of substance) and "foolishness" which have mostly been lost in today's understanding[34] but were certainly present in the older (archaic) definition that Hobbes was using (see *Lev.* vi, 39, 41). Therefore, vainglory implies all of the following: exaggerated self-conceit, uselessness, futility, stupidity, hollowness, and foolishness.

It is not always evident that Hobbes takes the problem of vainglory extremely seriously. For example, he believes that vainglory can result in insanity, as indicated in the following passage: "The passion whose violence or continuance maketh madness is […] great *vain-glory,* which is commonly called *pride* and *self-conceit*" (*Lev.* viii, 18). As pertaining to the gravity of the defect, I believe that Hobbesian vainglory is a rough equivalent of the Ancient Greek concept of *hubris*. For example, *hubris* is a very important theme in Thucydides' *History of the Peloponnesian War*, which is one of Hobbes's most important confirmed sources. The dangerous pitfalls of the foolishness or rashness that comes from pride is emphasized in the following

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[33] These are translations of the English term and do not all necessarily apply to the Latin term.

[34] Preliminary research on the evolution of the term's definition suggests that this might be an effect of the turn to individualism in late modern and post-modern culture which generally tended to validate concern with oneself that might at another historical time be seen as narcissistic.

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passage: the modest who are "men that distrust their own subtlety are, in tumult and sedition, better disposed for victory than they that suppose themselves wise or crafty. For these [the modest] love to consult, the other [the proud] (fearing to be circumvented) [love] to strike first" (*Lev.* xi, 10); Hobbes continues his warning: "Vain-glorious men […] are inclined to rash engaging, and in the approach of danger or difficulty, to retire if they can" (*Lev.* xi, 12). *Hubris* is a theme that is also present in Jewish and Christian Scripture – Hobbes is certainly aware of this since he calls his Leviathan, which restrains vainglory, "the King of the Proud".

Chapter 4: <u>Similarity</u>

Hobbes writes that "men measure, not only other men, but all other things, by themselves" (ii, 1).Therefore, whether in the state of nature or in civil society, Hobbes believes in the idea of a common universal "humanity". Despite the distinction he makes between the modest and vainglorious, throughout *Leviathan*, Hobbes always seems to insist upon similarities between people, both in terms of their strengths and failures. In the state of nature, he believes that all men are roughly equal and that all men are fundamentally similar. For this reason, Hobbesian wisdom is sympathetic, which is to say that it is premised on understanding another through analogy with oneself (i.e., being able to 'put oneself in another's shoes') (see *Lev.* intro, 3). Hobbes explains: "[because of] the similitude of the thoughts and passions of one man to the thoughts and passions of another, whosoever looketh into himself and considereth what he doth […] shall thereby read and know, what are the thoughts and passions of all other men upon the like occasion" (intro, 3).

This inborn wisdom is premised on similarity, which is another form of equality that comes from God via natural law[35]. Hobbes argues that, when followed to its natural conclusion, the wisdom that results from recognizing similarity leads men to exit the state of nature by contracting (with each other) and covenanting (with a sovereign) so as to establish the Leviathan for the common benefit of all. The Leviathan, the ideal civil state, actualizes natural law by compelling the vainglorious to follow natural law, i.e., to behave as the modest do instead of the other way around. However, note that in the state of nature, given the threat of the vainglorious, sympathetic wisdom can also work *against* a good man – yet another instance of how 'morality' can get one killed in the state of nature. Hobbes explains: "And though by men's actions we do

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[35] It is unclear based on my reading so far whether Hobbes believes that this is through *imago Dei* or as a later particular act of self-revelation from God.

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discover their designs sometimes, yet to do it without comparing them with our own, and distinguishing all circumstances by which the case may come to be altered, is to decipher without a key, and be for the most part deceived, by too much trust, or by too much diffidence, as he that reads is himself a good or evil man" (*Lev.* intro, 3). This emphasizes that an individual who is "a good man" by nature is disadvantaged and, if he would survive (as per the right of nature), he must make himself more similar to those who he fears.

<u>Community</u>

As such, it is only inside the Leviathan that similarity between individuals is permitted and maximized and therefore social transactions become predictable enough that the fear born of uncertainty is negligible. In other words, a civil state creates enough trust to have peace: civil law *allows* "good men" to behave well and *forces* "evil men" to do so as well. Overall, civil citizenship brings a level of confidence to social transaction, which is defined as being in a state of "constant *hope*" (*Lev.* vi, 19), whereas the uncertainty of the state of nature makes it a state of diffidence, or "constant despair" (*Lev.* vi, 20).

In a social transaction, the identity of one's interlocutor matters a great deal since if one knows 'who his interlocutor is', then he can predict with some certainty "what he will do'. The question of moral communities is another instance where Hobbes prefers the Old Testament over the New. As most Hebrew Bible traditions see it, although there is a general kinship between all humans resulting from the *imago Dei*[36], the covenantal distinctiveness of the Jewish community as God's chosen people is always maintained. Similarly, even when setting aside questions of obedience and covenant, Hobbes believes that there are rules of behaviour depending on whether one with within or without one's own immediate community, for the simple reason that the former kind of interaction carries less uncertainty and more trust compared to the latter; the

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[36] Which could be argued is roughly equivalent to Hobbes's concept of natural law

implication is that, within a moral (or even better, a civil) community, 'who one is' is much more likely to be consistent with 'what one does'.

As such, generally, the level of trust in an interaction increases where there are similarities between the two parties, so that an Englishman might expect to interact more easily and faithfully with another Englishman, or a Christian with another Christian, than with a complete stranger. Cultural, ethnic, and especially religious commonalities increase trust for the simple reason that parties implicitly agree to deal fairly because they adhere to the same ethical standards of behaviour. In fact, membership in a community brings with it social pressure to adhere to these standards, which is a weaker (non-institutionalized) form of compelling reciprocity. Additionally, as game theorists often observe, familiarity and reputation born of repeated interactions also increases trust by setting precedents and establishing reputations. Finally, nothing increases trust like institutions, which have mechanisms of compelling compliance and thus turn norms into 'realities', making natural law into civil law – this dynamic has interesting ontological and epistemological implications.

<u>Christian Ethics in the Civil State</u>

It is interesting to note that the application of the law of reciprocity changes upon the creation of civil society. Within a state, reciprocity is interpreted in a more tolerant and indeed more *Christian* way. For example, Quentin Skinner (2016) points out in "Hobbes and the Social Control of Unsociability" that Hobbes believes that unsociable people must be tolerated within the civil state (as long as they do not seriously threaten the security of the state in a tangible way). Within the civil state, as Skinner puts it, "Self-control, as much as the coercive force of law, is the key to peace" (2016, 448). Similarly, Edwin Curley (2007) writes in "Hobbes and the Cause of Religious Toleration" that Hobbes advocates toleration within the civil state to an

almost surprising degree. Therefore, Christian ethics, which are unnatural outside the civil state, become natural and even necessary after the social contract[37]; the Leviathan is a surprisingly tolerant state. Still, it is important to keep in mind that law and ethics, as versions of pre-existing natural law, are not created by the state; the state simply changes the conditions of human interactions so that the laws of nature can manifest more freely *through individuals*.

As discussed above, within a state, uncertainty is eliminated in the ways that matter, which is to say that the establishment and enforcement of laws makes non-performance of reciprocity impossible. However, the similarity that citizenship forces onto individuals should not be exaggerated – the only important thing is that, in mutual obedience to civil law, one can predict what his interlocutor will *not* do: treat him badly – cheat or kill him[38]. Law therefore limits the uncertainty that so plagues the state of nature by setting limits to interactions through the punishment (and therefore discouragement) of 'vainglorious' behaviour. As such, potential defectors are restrained and tentative cooperators are encouraged. Within the bounds of civil law, individuals become similar in their (compelled) commitment to an ethics of reciprocity, which implies a moral and religious equality of all people under the civil law; note that civil law simply enforces ethical ideas that Hobbes believes to already exist in the state of nature as quasi-universal desires and inclinations[39].

Civil society not only allows the natural similarities between individuals to manifest but also makes individuals more similar through education. While Hobbes believes the passions (psychology) are universal, the particular objects of said passions differ between individuals. For example: "I say the similitude of *passions*, which are the same in all men, *desire, fear, hope,* &c,

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[37] I suppose that this is Hobbes's way of saying that there can be no such thing as Christian anarchism.

[38] If, as Hobbes advocates, civil law should also enforce customs of politeness, then 'disrespect' is also 'take off the table' in 'civil' inteactions.

[39] Or, to put it differently, civil law fulfils the intrinsic human moral and religious equality that has so far been denied actual manifestation by the condition of nature.

not the similitude of the *objects* of the passions, which are the things *desired, feared, hoped,* &c; for these the constitution individual and particular education do so vary" (*Lev.* intro, 3). The importance of education to Hobbes's conception of citizenship, which implies justice and ethics, is well-known and well-studied.

Hobbes believes that civil law is premised only on authority, and not truth, just as it is based on obedience, not belief (see OL xxvi, 20). Conversely, because of its universality and constancy, it seems that natural law would qualify as the seat of truth. For example, civil law can force compliance, which implies conformity in both action and discourse, but cannot force belief, which is influenced by passion and reason (which are both part of natural law) (xxvi, 41). Conversely, natural law allows for freedom of thought and action but binds desire ('what I want') and reason ('how do I get there'). Because 'who I am' always comes back to 'what I do' and *vice versa*, civil law can never stray too far from natural law given the latter's innateness. To illustrate, consider the proper realms of natural and civil law respectively. As previously discussed, the state of nature is dominated by *pre-ante* considerations, or hypotheses about future social interactions. In the civil state, law and custom replace these hypotheses by taking defection 'off the table' for all players[40]. Therefore, the main concern within civil states shifts towards *post factum* questions of justice, which respond to interactions already past, based on whether or not they were consistent with the law. The distinction between truth and choice is crucial, as reflected in Hobbes's interpretation of Genesis 3 the Biblical narrative of the Fall.

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[40] Put otherwise, law eliminates the need to engage in such constant anticipation.

Chapter 5<u>: Free Will, Obedience, and Knowledge</u>

There is much disagreement over Hobbes's perspective on religion that often stems from explicit or implicit disagreement over how civil and natural law relate. There is an undeniable synergy and correspondence between civil and natural law; as Hobbes puts it, "The law of nature and the civil law contain each other" (*Lev.* xxvi, 8). As to the nature of the relationship between the two, I would argue that Hobbes believes that civil law 'actualizes' natural law by compelling obedience. For example, Hobbes writes: "For the laws of nature, which consist in equity, justice, gratitude, and other moral virtues on these depending […] *are not properly laws, but qualities that dispose* men to peace and to obedience" (*Lev.* xxvi, 8, added emphasis). Therefore, whereas natural law "disposes" individuals to follow reciprocity, civil law compels them to do so – therefore civil law is a version of natural law "properly" enforced by effectively taking away individuals' choice about whether or not to adhere to principles of reciprocity. Implicitly, those restrained are the ones who would act against the laws of nature if given a chance: the vainglorious. Keep in mind that, for Hobbes, obedience is the key political and theological virtue.

As already discussed, natural law seems to be premised on its innateness and its universality and therefore precedes the human artifice that imitates it. Therefore, civil law exists as a self-contained ontological (and epistemological) 'bubble' within nature[41]. Civil law comes from sovereignty, which emerges from the social contract in imitation of "the art whereby God hath made and governs the world," by which Hobbes is referring to physical law – the object of science – which is manifest in orderly chains of cause and effect (*Lev.* intro, 1). In contrast, natural law manifests as an innate inclination or instinct which, as a consequence of free will,

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[41] This is reminiscent of the microcosm-macrocosm idea which was especially prevalent in medieval theology and philosophy.

allows the individual the choice of whether to follow it or not. Civil law allows no such room for free will. In its *imitatio Dei* as *mimesis* of nature, civil law comes to occupy an interesting epistemological place that is neither arbitrary nor universal but something in between the law of nature and physical law. To illustrate, while laws vary between different cultures, they are similar in essence more often than not[42]. This reflects the universality of the laws of nature that underlie civil law but also accounts for cultural subjectivity. Furthermore, similarly, the power of law to compel is neither absolute not relative– for instance, cheaters are most often caught and punished according to the law but there are always exceptions.

Note that the law of nature itself exists and operates in the exact same way in both the natural and civil dimensions. Put differently, the dictates of natural law do not change as individuals pass from the state of nature to the civil state – reciprocity (qualified by self-preservation) is always 'the right thing to do', both emotionally and rationally, whether one decides to follow it or not. However, as the context of social interaction changes, in a civil state, labels such as "just" and "ethical" are simply added to the instinctive unchanging 'rightness' evoked by natural law. Consequently, civil law can be thought of as a layer that is added onto natural law, not to modify it (which would not be possible in any case) but to change *individuals* according to it as needed by changing their behaviour through an impositions of new parameters (*via* institutions that guarantee cooperation)[43]. To summarize, the essential change that happens in the move from a state of nature to a civil state is that individuals simply lose the option of either misinterpreting or disregarding the dictates of natural law in their actions – civil law 'rigs the game' (or, alternately, *fixes* it) to eliminate the problem of defection caused by the vainglorious in the state of nature. Note that, in a civil state, instead of the modest having to

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[42] Murder, theft, and perjury for example tend to be illegal.
[43] Since 'what I do' is inseparable about 'who I am'

change themselves to mirror the personality of the vainglorious in the actions, it is the vainglorious who must change.

Free Will and Obedience

Hobbes's account of the Fall is often criticized. For example, Edwin Curley writes that: "Hobbes's account of the fall is puzzling": (a) he denies that Adam and Eve acquired a new ability to distinguish between good and evil, but (b) says that only after they ate of the tree did they judge their nakedness to be improper. (a) and (b) will be consistent only if their judgement after eating of the tree does not reflect a new ability to judge between good and evil" (1994, 134). Briefly, Curley believes that Hobbes either contradicts himself or else he misjudges the biblical narrative. His opinion that Hobbes's account of the Fall is bizarre and perhaps self-contradictory is shared by many commentators.

I believe that there is some confusion about what Hobbes understands by "knowledge". To me, Hobbes's position seems quite clear: Adam and Eve gained free will but not God's wisdom[44]. In fact, Hobbes often tends to differentiate between thought and action in a similar fashion. In this case, he writes that: "[when] God saith *Hast thou eaten,* &c. [it is] as if he should say, doest thou that owes me obedience, take upon thee to judge of my commandments?" (*Lev.* xx, 17) Note the distinction that Hobbes makes between "obedience", which relates to action, and "judgement", which relates to opinion or belief. The same distinction between obedience (doing) and opinion (believing) is evident in the following passage on civil law: "Bound, I say, to *obey* it [civil law], but not bound to *believe* it; for men's belief and interior cogitations are not subject to the commands, but only to the operation of God, ordinary or extraordinary" (*Lev.* xxvi, 41, added emphasis). Therefore, the distinction between 'believing' and 'doing' is a general

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[44] This might be related to Hobbes's belief that wisdom comes with experience. A man, unlike God, has a limited life-span and therefore limited experience and wisdom.

theme in Hobbes. In a pre-lapsarian state, obedience was inseparable from judgement, which was implicitly understood to be *God's judgement*, not one's own. Therefore, in an ideal pre-lapsarian state, *through* God's (intellectual) mediation, 'what I do' was the same as 'who I am' which, through substitution of God's judgement for one's own, always resulted in 'I do *the Good*' and 'I am *Good*'. In contrast, in a fallen post-lapsarian state, by losing the value of obedience, humanity has also lost the benefit of God's mediation understood by Hobbes as God's (intellectual) knowledge[45].

Free Will

The free will that Adam and Eve gain implies two abilities according to Hobbes: first, freedom of action is *the right to act* against or irrespective of what one believes to be good or else what is actually objectively good (as decreed by God). In other words, freedom of action allows man to act in a manner that is inconsistent with his beliefs. Second, freedom of thought is the ability to challenge God's understanding, or the *right to choose* what to believe is good and evil independent of any questions of truth (see *Lev.* vi, 49-53). Put differently, freedom of thought basically permits man to be objectively wrong. To conclude, in Hobbes's commentary on Genesis 3, the knowledge gained from eating of the tree amounts to the right to an opinion that does not necessarily correlate with objective truth and to the right to act contrary to one's belief. For example, think of the 'knowledge' of a racist man, or of a climate-change skeptic – this is no *true* knowledge but only opinion. As such, Hobbes writes that "having both eaten [fruit from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil], they did indeed take upon them God's office, which is judicature of *good* and *evil,* but acquired no new ability to distinguish between them aright[46]" (*Lev.* xx, 17). The key distinction that Hobbes makes and Curley seems to miss is

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[45] As God is omniscient, this knowledge is implicitly perfect, in a way that leave no room for the uncertainty that plagues the post-lapsarian state of nature.

[46] Aright = correctly or properly

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between: 'God's office of judicature', which correlates with free will and implies freedom of opinion and freedom of action, and 'the ability to correctly judge', which refers to wisdom as the ability to recognize what is objectively true as distinct from opinion. The separate question of (God's) wisdom is also discussed at length by Hobbes, mostly through his view on ontology, epistemology, and science.

<u>Obedience</u>

I think that this rather brief and misunderstood account of the Fall is more important to Hobbes than it might seem to be at first glance. Following the logic of the distinctions that Hobbes makes between objective truth and opinion and well as between belief/knowledge and action, it seems that the origins of the state of nature are consistent with the account of the Fall. To explain, the main problem of the state of nature is uncertainty: not being able to know 'who the other is' as a result of not being able to know 'what the other will do'. The 'unknowability' of the other stems more generally from the possibility of discrepancy between belief and action, as manifest in the ability of man to disregard natural law (even though its precepts are written in his heart by God). In contrast to something like St. Augustine's reading of Genesis 3, Hobbes sees the problem of uncertainty as mostly external to the human individual. For example, unlike Augustine's doctrine of Original Sin, according to which humans are genetically predisposed to violate Christian ethics as a consequence of their disobedience, Hobbes focuses on the loss of obedience as (externally) compelled by law instead.

Both Hobbes and Augustine think that society is a mix of people who are more or less anti-social – a *corpus permixtum*. However, while Augustine believes that the war of all against all resulting from the *corpus permixtum* is a fact of secular life that must be simply accepted and borne with Christian virtue (as well as contained through good governance), Hobbes believes

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that it is possible to re-gain the benefit of obedience by re-binding individuals in a new political covenant. Therefore, in response to the idea of the *corpus permixtum* (understood as a rough equivalent of the mix of modest and vainglorious individuals in the state of nature)*,* Hobbes's political-religious project can be seen as an attempt to homogenize the citizenry – to build a *corpus homogeneus* in the *saeculum* so to speak. This reading is usually the source of some commentators' suspicions that Hobbes, as some sort of atheist, seeks to replace the Christian God with the sovereign state. While not entirely false, this entire argument is problematic, most likely because it begins with an incorrect assumption: universal psychological egoism. As already discussed, Hobbes conceived of 'evil' as something that is external. I would argue that evil is a consequence of the loss of the benefits of obedience.

Based on the Hobbesian narrative, what has man gained from eating of the forbidden fruit but the freedom to be wrong and to act unnaturally? Hobbes seems to believe that mankind *lost* something that is much more important then whatever he might have gained. As such, another (more Hobbesian) way to understand the consequences of the Fall is to think of man's loss of all the benefits that come with the obedience due to God – the loss of obedience effectively leads to the conditions that make the state of nature into a state of war. However, it is spiritually impossible for man to return to a prelapsarian state of obedience just as it is physically impossible for him to crawl back into the womb – the damage has been done. However, Hobbes seems to believe that pre-lapsarian conditions can be replicated (or imitated) by re-instituting a state of obedience. As such, Hobbes's conception of the civil state, the Leviathan, is in a sense a substitute for the prelapsarian state of obedience to God.

This understanding of the Leviathan in relation to Hobbes's reading of Genesis 3 frames Hobbes's insistence that the Leviathan is an artificial God (see *Lev.* intro). Furthermore, it

challenges interpretations of this claims as either heretical or atheistic. Briefly, Leviathan is God-like because it compels obedience to the laws of nature, as God allegedly did in the pre-lapsarian state. Furthermore, Leviathan is man-like because the essential nature of man is contained in the laws of nature that Leviathan makes binding upon all – therefore the 'shape' of the state reflects that of man, in the manner of the cosmic microcosm-macrocosm correspondence theme. In imitation of pre-lapsarian society, civil law takes away that free will, which might *sound* like a good thing but is actually a very bad thing. Free will, re-defined as the loss of obedience, puts men in the state of war. Conversely, obedience puts men in a state similar to the pre-lapsarian one. In other words, civil law re-establishes the justice that once existed in a pre-lapsarian society by restoring a consistency between 'who I am', 'what I do', and also 'what is good' that was lost in the Fall. Once again, as Hobbes puts it, "Civil and natural law are not different kinds, but different parts of law" (xxvi, 8).

Knowledge

The distinction between free will (freedom of thought and freedom of action) and God's wisdom problematizes human knowledge: having lost the direct benefit of God's wisdom, how do individuals distinguish between true and false beliefs? In the absence of a restored pre-lapsarian state of obedience, man must deal with the uncertainty born of the fact that he has free will but lacks the wisdom necessary to use it well. Therefore, I will briefly consider Hobbes's thoughts on human knowledge.

Hobbes's understanding of the world can be summed up as follows: everything that exists is "matter in motion" [47] (*Lev,* i, 4); that is to say that objects interact by moving each other along set patterns of cause and effect (*Lev.* v, 2). Animal and human reason is part and parcel of the reason that governs nature. Therefore, through this participation in reason, humans can access

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[47] Physicist James Clerk Maxwell famously said something very similar a couple centuries later.

some of reality by *mapping*[48] events as chains of causality. Nature works in logical ways and life-forms themselves are a sort of distinct self-sustained internal motion machines (*Lev.* intro, 1). However, full understanding of the nature of reality is not accessible to humans. In Hobbes's words, "No discourse whatsoever can end in absolute knowledge of fact past or to come" (*Lev.* vii, 3). Although the capacity to reason gives us some understanding of the world, we must come grasp with the unknown in all aspects of life.

According to Hobbes, all knowledge starts with information received and processed by the senses that are proper to each animal (*Lev.* i, 4). Animal brains then process sensory information through subconscious and conscious processes that manifest it as imagination - mental pictures and thoughts, ranging from simple to highly complex constructs (*Lev.* ii, 1-3). This information is then stored in memory (which tends to 'degrade" overtime) (*Lev.* vii, 3). According to Hobbes, all animals have some ability to reason, that is, to notice patterns and identify causal chains within their respective horizons of significance – he sometimes refers to this as "prudence", which is a kind of instinctive wisdom developed with age and experience (*Lev.* xii, 4). However, because of their use of language and method enhances their natural reason, human beings engage in complex and abstract thought (xii, 1), especially when driven by curiosity and not just necessity (*Lev.* iii, 5).

Belief

Briefly, for an individual, to *believe* something, understood in opposition to "infallibly know[ing]", is to accept a claim after having verified it "from arguments not taken from the thing itself, or from the principles of natural reason" but from the opinion of another (*Lev.* vii, 7). Arguments from authority or custom therefore qualify, though I argue that civil law constitutes a

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[48] Note that mapped is not the same as understanding, but instead the activity of 'arranging' words, which can sometimes facilitate understanding (since, as Hobbes believes, man reasons visually).

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special case of knowledge and therefore cannot properly be called belief. On the other hand, to *know* is to accept a claim as a consequence of having verified it infallibly using reason.

Most beliefs take the form of conjectures about chains of events in the past or the future and therefore involve questions of possibility and probability (*Lev.* xii, 8, 19). This echoes Hobbes's understanding of the state of war as similar to something like a weather forecast. It is worth noting that, according to Hobbes, the validity of a forecast is independent of the actual outcome. For instance, the occurrence of the improbable does not change it status as "improbable". Therefore, the forecast does not *determine* what will happen but simply maps out what *could* conceivably happen, based on available data and method. It is crucial not to confuse forecasting with either determining or planning, as this could lead to a misunderstanding of fortune as predestination, which would (unfairly) suggest that Hobbes subscribes to Laplacean style scientific determinism[49].

For Hobbes, belief also seems to be a social, relational concept. To explain, whenever an individual decides to believe something, he enters into a relationship with the object of his inquiry. Because believing is a type of positioning whereby one claim is chosen over others, belief seems to be a two-way street: a belief makes implications about the subject as well as the object. First, belief reflects a subject's individuality – the unique combination of abilities, education, interests, dispositions, associations (with groups), predispositions, and experiences that result in a set of preferences. In other words, although belief is not objective, individuals also do not believe at random.

Second, belief also attempts to describe an object/ the world as distinct from oneself, and therefore also ultimately seeks objectivity in an ideal exchange. So when believing something, to

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[49] Hobbes somewhat disapproves of common understandings of fortune, which is why he tries to promote a more 'scientific' notion of uncertainty as distribution instead – the latter is at least useful as it allows individuals to engage in anticipation and planning.

what extent are we describing the object of the inquiry and to what extent are we describing ourselves? This is a difficult question since it requires that we become self-conscious observers and reflect on the way that we reflect. For example, scientific types of inquiry seeks to reduce the distance between subject and object, either by making the object more like the subject or by making the subject more like the object. Being a realist, Hobbes prefers the latter, which is to say that wherever necessity does not impose itself as a physical law, human beings should use their limited agency to choose to imitate nature (i.e., be modest rather than vainglorious).

Science

Before Hobbes, it was not common to think of politics as a science. The main reason for this opinion seems to have been the belief that the subject (and object) of politics, man, was inherently unpredictable. As a consequence, it was also believed that politics could not produce definite rules in the same way that a field like physics can. Instead, politics was generally associated with wisdom and the arts[50]. Like a great actor, musician, or sculptor, a great politician was understood as someone with a good deal of natural intuitive talent whose skills and abilities improved with practice. Basically, there was a certain mystique to politics that Hobbes seem to try his best to dispel. Where the ancients saw the human person, and by extension the gods, as essentially chaotic and unpredictable[51], Hobbes saw universal patterns of behaviour as tendencies described by the laws of nature. Contrary to a 'classical' view, Hobbes believed that politics, like physics, was ruled by: on one hand, features of human psychology and anthropology which were to be taken as givens and on the other hand by dependable chains of cause and effect.

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[50] It is useful to remember at this point that Hobbes actually argues that wisdom and science are more similar than different and therefore this distinction might not be very meaningful.

[51] The more dependent someone is, the more predictable he is. On one hand, the gods, being accountable to no one, were terrible; on the other hand, peasants, being dependent on a great many things, were predictable..

Hobbes thinks that "REASON […] is nothing but *reckoning* (that is, adding and subtracting)" of words (*Lev.* v, 2). Therefore, in opposition to 'belief' taken on the authority of another, science, according to Hobbes, is "the knowledge of consequences, and dependence of one fact upon another" or, more precisely, "a knowledge of all the consequences of names appertaining to the subject in hand" (*Lev.* v, 17). The latter phrasing emphasizes the role of language as a filter in science. As per Hobbes's epistemology, science does not (and cannot) describe the world-as-it-is but instead only the world as perceived by humanity, through the common lens that is commonly called "objectivity". Specifically, science produces objective knowledge because it is based on what is common and universal to all members of the species: emotions (as pertaining to similarities in human psychology), sensory data, reason, and language. Hobbes problematizes language in the following iteration of his definition : "[science is] when the discourse is put into speech, and begins with the definitions of words, and proceeds by connexion of the same into general affirmations, and of these again into syllogisms, the end or last sum is called the conclusion, and the thought of the mind by it signified is that conditional knowledge, or knowledge of the consequences of words, which is commonly called science." (*Lev.* vii, 4)

This last definition emphasizes the way that even the most objective of scientific findings is technically thrice filtered "reality": once through sense, twice through chains of reasoning, and thrice through language-games. In light of this, objectivity seems to actually be a partly ethical claim. To illustrate, Hobbes makes an interesting association between science and ethics by appealing to the universally shared nature of reason and the senses: "Sometimes a man desires to know the event of an action; and then he thinketh of some like action past, and the events thereof one after another, supposing like events will follow like actions. As he that foresees what will

become of a criminal re-cons what he has seen follow on the like crime before, having this order of thoughts: the crime, the officer, the prison, the judge, and the gallows. Which kind of thoughts is called *foresight,* and *prudence*, or *providence*, and sometimes *wisdom*, thought such conjecture, through the difficulty of observing all circumstances, be very fallacious[52]" (*Lev.* iii, 7).

<u>*A Priori* Science</u>

While rather obsolete in contemporary philosophy of science, the distinction between *a priori* and *a posteriori* sciences is important to Hobbes's contractarian conception of politics. Furthermore, the distinction seems to mirror Hobbes's distinction between *ex-ante* and *post-factum* analysis. According to Hobbes, the only true *a priori*[53] science is mathematics[54] (more specifically geometry, though his usage of the term seems to incorporate arithmetic and some early forms of calculus) (*Lev.* iv, 12). Because mathematics is independent from sensory experience, it is the only purely abstract science and the only field capable of certainty (i.e., perfect knowledge); as Hobbes puts it, mathematics (geometry) is "virtually the only precise science[55] that it hath pleased God hitherto to bestow on mankind" (*Lev.* iv, 12). To illustrate, a true mathematical statement is understood to have no mistakes in the operations so that an affirmation like 2+3=5 leaves no real room for belief, only demonstration[56]. However, such

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[52] Note that wisdom, which Hobbes typically associates with prudence, is of a practical and situational nature – different from science (!), which is abstract and general. Prudence is a character trait or a virtue of a person. Wisdom is the activity of prudence. Similar to the difference between concepts of 'science' and (a particular individual) 'being scientifically minded.'

[53] (Lat. "before"), *A priori* science uses deductive reasoning to reach conclusions starting from axioms and known general rules.

[54] In his usage of terms, Hobbes seems to actually regard mathematics as separate from other types of science. Science depends on the shared human features of senses, reason, and language, and mathematics technically doesn't depend on the senses (only insofar as it is practiced by human beings). However, mathematics counts as an example of something that is known together, which is how Hobbes seems to justify the practical as well as moral importance he accords to science.

[55] Variant from the Latin.

[56] Hobbes was writing around the time that Newton and Leibniz were inventing calculus and before statistics solidified as a field – any modern mathematics involving infinity would be a significant challenge to some of Hobbes's ideas. The mathematical concept of infinity gave Hobbes a lot of trouble, as seen in several mathematical

certainty is intangible because mathematics is concerned with numbers, which have no material existence apart from the things they count. Wittgenstein and Poincaré have famously argued that these kinds of mathematical proofs (whether they use numbers or words) are in a sense tautological reasoning. For example, 2+3=5, which can be rewritten as 5=5, does not say anything new about the world from a 'god's eye' point of view. However, for more intellectually limited human creatures investigating the world, the real utility of *a priori* science seems to be in its application in *a posteriori* science methodologies.

Briefly, in *a posteriori* science, equivalence tautology is useful in modelling and formulating hypotheses to isolate and investigate unknowns in the objective world of sense experience. Like solving for x in an arithmetic equation, a hypothesis tries to express what is unknown in terms of what is known. For instance, while 5=5 does not add anything new about the world in itself, 2+x=5 explains x (namely that x=3). In other words, hypotheses allow individuals to engage in modelling and to make testable informed guesses about causal patterns. Note the echoes of the Hobbesian notion of "anticipation" as applies to objective knowledge instead of social interactions.

The idea (of the possibility of) *a priori* science shapes Hobbes's idea of politics because the combinatorial potential of this kind of bounded reasoning allows the possibility of creating a self-consistent ontological bubble *within* nature; this is how I propose that Hobbes thinks of politics: as a subset of nature. As Charles Taylor (2016) consistently points out, despite its limitations, this kind of tautological combinatorial 'knowledge' allows a kind of bounded creativity much like a bin full of LEGO bricks – the bricks can be combined in infinitely many ways and can be used to model anything so long as none of the parts (bricks) are transformed or

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papers he attempted to write (he is not generally considered to be a good mathematician – I propose that one of the reasons for this is that he tries to make his mathematics consistent with his philosophy instad of the other way around).

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destroyed. There is some creative potential in *a priori* politics, as seen in the construction of the social contract. However, it is important to keep in mind that nothing in this new ontological bubble contradicts any natural laws, which hold true by necessity. Therefore, man's political power to construct society is more a case of rearranging matter that is pre-existent in imitation of nature.

Generally, how do we decide whether we know something objectively or merely believe it? As previously seen, the law of nature implies two major categories of psychological similarities between men: rational and emotional ("passions"). Since all humans participate in logic equally by nature, logic being part of the law of nature, the best way of determining what is not individual opinion but a more general truth is to see what tends to be 'known in common', Hobbes's understanding of objectivity is surprisingly democratic: ultimately, the criterion for objectivity is a combination of consensus and dialectics. For example, Hobbes writes that "whosoever persuadeth by reasoning from principles written maketh him to whom he speaketh judge, both of the meaning of those principles, and also of the force of his inferences upon them" […] And generally, in all cases of the world, he that pretendeth any proof maketh judge of his proof him to whom he addresseth his speech." (*Lev.* xlii, 32) Therefore, a community's consensus is the community's criteria of truth and objectivity.

As previously mentioned, there is a similarity of passions between all men but not between the particular objects of said passions (*Lev.* intro, 3). Interestingly, Hobbes basically (re)defines "conscience" to denote 'knowledge that is shared', which refers to Hobbesian standards for objective truth[57]: "When two or more men know of one and the same fact, they are said to be CONSCIOUS of it one to another, which is as much as to know together." (vii, 4). Furthermore, in the same passage, Hobbes claims that it is evil "for any man to speak against this

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[57] He bases this on the etymology of the word, from the Latin *con-* (together) and *-scire* (to know).

conscience," thereby merging (collective-based) objectivity and morality; this echoes Hobbes's insistence that while in the state of nature the law of nature cannot be called "moral" or "just", there is an inherent "rightness" to it that partially rests upon its universality which in turn relates to God's self-revelation through Adam's creation in the *imago Dei* and through Christ. This rhetorical move is effective but somewhat dubious as Hobbes conveniently blurs the distinction between his 'objective/scientific' re-definition of conscience and qualities of the common usage definition which conscience make moral and legal implications.

Chapter 6: <u>Limits of Knowledge</u>

Once the things that are known are accounted for, the things are *not* known are perhaps even more important according to a Hobbesian epistemology. To explain, at the extremes of uncertainty, Hobbesian epistemology is often apophatic, which is to say that knowledge that is absent can be more significant that knowledge that is present. For instance, think of how the modest individuals' lack of knowledge about their interlocutor determines their demeanor and even personality, thus leading to a state of war; despite the various similarities that allow individuals knowledge of others (through analogy with oneself), it is that one fundamental uncertainty – the absence of knowledge about whether or not one's interlocutor is modest of vainglorious – that is the determining factor which makes the state a nature a state of war.

According to Hobbes, some things that are unknown are potentially *knowable,* whether completely or partially, but other are fundamentally *unintelligible*. Having lost the benefit of God's insight (through the loss of obedience after the Fall), as a consequence of their embodied creaturely nature, humans and animals perceive the world only through sense experience, which is like looking through a glass darkly[58]. This in an important insight as it suggests that even the most objective of scientific knowledge is only an *interpretation* of material reality[59], which emphasizes the fact the humans only access *some* parts of all that exists. For instance, God's true nature is fundamentally mysterious, beyond what God chooses to reveal through nature and revelation (though Hobbes disputes the pertinence of the latter) (xii, 25; xxxii, 3). To illustrate, Hobbes writes on the implausibility of the beatific vision: "there is no such thing as perpetual

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[58] See 1 Cor. 13 – I would actually make an argument that Hobbes's apophatic approach is consistent with several aspects of Pauline philosophy.

[59] ex. See vii, 3: "No man can know by discourse that this or that is, has been, or will be, which is to know absolutely, but only that if this be, that is, if this bad been, that has been, if this shall be, that shall be, which is to know conditionally and that not that consequence of one thing to another, but of one name of a thing to another name of the same thing." (vii, 3).

tranquility of mind because life itself is but motion, and can never be without desire, nor without fear, no more than without sense. What kind of felicity God hath ordained to them that devoutly honour Him, a man shall no sooner know than enjoy, being joys that now are as incomprehensible as the word of school-men *beatifical vision* is unintelligible" (*Lev.* vi, 58). This passage indicates a firm rejection of the possibility of ever fully knowing God.

Finally, sensory perception is also prone to 'technical' errors (as distinct from epistemological limits) and therefore is not always reliable; for example, think of optical illusions – this is something that Hobbes spent a lot of time thinking about. In the end, as Hobbes puts it, "And thought at some certain distance the real and very object seem invested with the fancy it begets in us, yet still the object is one thing, the image or fancy is another" (*Lev.* i, 4). Therefore, at best, even when objectively true human understanding of the word is possible in theory, it is limited in practice by (the imperfection of) creaturely senses. In the end, some parts of reality remain essentially mysterious, because all objective knowledge remains essentially *human* knowledge, as distinct from the *divine* knowledge whose benefit was lost after the Fall.

Mystery

Briefly, based on my study of Hobbes, I propose that he makes a distinction between two main types of mystery– the unknown and the unknowable. The unknown is essentially accessible –but potentially *knowable;* it can be problematized, estimated, and even found out. An example is the aforementioned idea of sympathetic wisdom according to which one can understand an interlocutor through analogy with oneself. In contrast, Hobbes believes that some things are fundamentally inaccessible to God's creatures. The *unknowable* denotes that which is completely beyond the potential horizon of scientific knowledge in general. The unknowable is a hard epistemological limit for Hobbes – it not only marks the limits of scientific knowledge but also

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maintains the absolute distinction between God and his creatures and further emphasizes the political need for God (which is partly addressed by the Leviathan as a stand-in for the divine omnipotence and omniscience). To sum up, on one hand, the accessible unknown is forever at the edges of human expanding horizons of knowledge and therefore, with the help of scientific inquiry, potentially knowable in the future; on the other hand, the (inaccessible) unknowable is on another plane entirely and therefore beyond understanding. I will argue that the unknowable transcends science (or politics) as Hobbes conceives it and can only be addressed by a theological vocabulary.

Science, despite being pretty good at engaging with the accessible unknown, lacks the tools to engage with the unknowable. Hobbes's work, specifically his thoughts on the fundamentally unknowable/mysterious, suggests the possibility of an apophatic epistemology[60]. The human endeavour to systematically engage the unknowable, the seeds of which are notably present in Plato and Philo, finds its culmination in apophatic theology. According to Vladimir Lossky, apophatic theology, or "the negative way of the knowledge of God is an ascendant undertaking of the mind that progressively eliminates all positive attributes of the object it wishes to attain, in order to culminate finally in a kind of apprehension by supreme ignorance of hum who cannot be an object of knowledge" (1985, 13). In this sense, apophatic theology is a negative science; where science seeks the intellectual experience of understanding, apophatic theology seeks the "intellectual experience of the mind's failure" to understand (Lossky 1985, 13). I think that apophatic theology should be applied to interpret Hobbes because it engages directly the ontological space where Hobbes seems to think the religious experience takes place – at the hard epistemological limits; Lossky describes the exact same space as the locus of

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[60] I should note that while I am focusing on Christian traditions, all major religions have some form of apophatic theology.

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apophatic theology: a space of consciousness of "the radical lack of correspondence between our mind and the reality it wishes to attain" (1985, 13). Apophatic theology is equipped for analysis of the paradox that often perplexes many of Hobbes's more scientifically-bent commentators.

To explain, because the limits of epistemology are in a sense synonymous with the distinction between man and God, I believe that the problem of excess meaning can only be fully engaged in this theological dimension that problematizes extreme uncertainty (unknowability) by "expressing above all the deficiency of language and the failure of the mind before the mystery of the personal God who reveals himself as transcending every relation with the created" (Lossky 1985, 16). Phrased differently, theology is the only system that can engage with the hard epistemological limit that is the fundamentally unknowable by problematizing it as the nature of God, whom Clement of Alexandria described as "the abyss of the Father"; and Gregory of Nazianzus rephrased as "the ocean of undefined and undetermined essence" (in Lossky, 1985, 21). Therefore, theology is the principal locus of both what Taylor calls excess meaning and what I referred to as the unknowable.

<u>Metaphor</u>

I believe that it is possible that Taylor's (2016) critique of Hobbes's of theory of language mischaracterises it as overly literal is that Taylor does not account for the importance of uncertainty in Hobbes's thought. For example, Taylor argues that Hobbes disapproves of "excess meaning" which culminates in metaphorical language. One reason why I believe that Taylor's characterization of Hobbesian language as averse to the kind of "excess meaning" found in metaphorical expression is wrong is: *if* language could be strictly literal, individuals could not engage with the uncertainty at the limits of epistemology; then people could not expand their horizons to learn, grow, and change. Hobbes does not hold with these notions.

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Furthermore, strictly literal interpretations would deny the ontological principle of continuous motion/change, and, finally, would deny the concept of *poiesis* that is so important to Hobbes's concept of community (see Khan 2014). Like everything else that exists, language also must be in a constant state of change. Also, more importantly, Hobbes cannot be so set against metaphorical language because he makes ample use of it himself. Instead, I would qualify Taylor's critique as follows: Hobbes disapproves of metaphorical language when used in inappropriate contexts, such as science. After all, no one expects to encounter flowery language in a scientific report.

More specifically, the body metaphor is a locus of meeting between all of Hobbes's key axioms, definitions, and beliefs. Hobbes describes the state both as a monstrous human body and as a giant mechanism. Charles Taylor argues that "contract theories of political societies" are alternatives to ideal of microcosm-macrocosm correspondence where political order reflects a divine cosmic order" in which "the [cosmic] order is demystified" (2016, 110). However, this does not seem to apply to Hobbes. Hobbes's use of the body metaphor to describe the civil state confirms that the commonwealth and its civil law is not made in opposition of nature but in imitation of it and as such stands firmly within the macrocosm-microcosm correspondence model. In fact, the purpose of science is ultimately control the environment through imitation of divine creation: "because when we see how anything comes about, upon what causes, and by what manner, when the like causes come into our power, we see how to make it produce the like effects" (v, 17). If this passage makes science seem to instrumental and therefore not sufficiently spiritual, consider Hobbes's understanding of nature: "Nature (the art whereby God hath made and governs the world) is by the *art* of man […] imitated, that it can make an artificial animal"

(*Lev.* i, 1). Therefore, man's creation of the state can be seen as the prime example of *imitatio Dei.*

The Mechanical Man

Hobbes had an interesting insight about disciplinary boundaries that is hinted at throughout his work – mechanics, physics, biology, politics, economics are not so different. I think that Hobbes's mechanistic tropes are often misunderstood to be in opposition to nature and biological organisms. However, I would argue that the truth is precisely the opposite. Briefly, mechanistic is misunderstood to mean inert, but, in fact, Hobbes's use of the term suggests a definition closer to an orderly system of self-sustained motion. Nature is always the supreme model of perfection for Hobbes, both because, as embodied creatures, humans are inevitably and irrevocably part and subject to it, and also because of nature's resilience and efficiency. In other words, Hobbes doesn't seem to conceive of an aspect of human culture as *outside* or even *against* nature, but instead as a part of nature, modelled on nature.

Throughout his *corpus,* Hobbes uses mechanistic analogies just like organic ones – to emphasize the unifying causal relationality that brings individuals together into a whole that is mysteriously greater than the sum of its parts. This is quite a common idea, not unlike Foucault's later conception of power as the thing that puts everything in relation to everything else. Another common variant of this idea is enshrined is one of Barry Commoner's four rules of ecology: "you can never just do one thing" a.k.a. everything is connected to everything else.

Generally, I find that Hobbes uses mechanistic imagery to emphasize the possibility of human agency within nature by proposing that a machine (which humans build) is like a living body (which God "builds") in all the ways that matter. Hobbes's use of the body metaphor illustrates that Hobbes uses mechanistic and organic imagery so as to argues for an equivalence

between the two. Briefly, much like Baruch Spinoza in *The Theologico-Political Treatise,* Hobbes argues in *Leviathan* that all ways of knowing are ultimately pathways to better understanding of God; furthermore, understanding always increases in engagement with the uncertainty that lies at the limits of human horizons of knowledge.

Conclusion

In this thesis, I have argued that 'uncertainty' is an axiomatic concept in Hobbes's *Leviathan*. Human behaviour and interaction is centered around two fundamental concepts: the laws of nature and 'uncertainty'; in other words, the dynamic between what is fundamentally known and what is fundamentally not known. In a way, 'uncertainty' can be conceived of as a gap or an absence of knowledge or control, while the laws of nature signify a solid presence of knowledge and being. However, uncertainty can also be thought of as possibility and opportunity for creation and engagement, which casts the laws of nature in a constrictive and deterministic light. If this dynamic between the laws of nature and uncertainty sounds like Augustinian theodicy, that is because the two discussions are actually very similar, both leading back to questions about evil, goodness, and free will.

To end by returning to the questions of knowledge and religion of the preceding chapter – as previously argued, Hobbes believes that, in the absence of understanding, fortune can effectively cause religion when it is mistaken for either the particular *agent* or the *process* that causes the observed effect (see *Lev.* xii, 6). Therefore, according to Hobbes, fortune is in a sense the reification (and sometimes deification) of man's ignorance of causes. To illustrate, he writes that:

> men "invoked […] their own wit, by the name of *Muses*; their own ignorance, by the name of *Fortune*; their own lust, by the name of *Cupid*; their own rage, by the name *Furies* […] insomuch as there was nothing which a poet could introduce as a person in his poem, which they did not make either a *god* or a *devil*" (*Lev.* xii, 16).

Interestingly, as seen in the passage above, Hobbes recognizes an internal dimension of uncertainty within the human subject, as opposed to the uncertainty that I have discussed so far which mainly pertained to 'who the other is' and therefore can be labeled as external. However,

this passage makes it clear that the unknown is both without (asking 'who is the other?') and, in a sense, within (asking 'who am I?') Therefore, in their lack of understanding of causality, people do not only reify external events but also their own agency and power thereby, ironically, mistaking themselves for gods in their ignorance. In other words, when individuals do not understand themselves they can come to fear their own potential. This is an example of how uncertainty can also apply to processes that are technically within the grasp of human understanding and therefore potentially within our power to control. In the end, the internal unknown can be formulated as a problem of identity and self-knowledge. Like everything else in nature, man also is constantly being made, destroyed, and re-made in various ways. In other words, as Hobbes would put it, as a particular kind of matter in motion, humans are also constantly changing physically, intellectually, and emotionally. In a moment of insight, Hobbes calls these continuous changes in man "mutations" (*Lev.* vi, 6). Therefore, Hobbes recognizes that identity is not static – virtues, skills, and behaviours change over time depending on one's lived experience. For example, as per Hobbes's ontology and epistemologies, interactions with objects necessarily cause change (movement) in the subject. Therefore, to be able to engage with their world, humans must adjust to limits and changes in their environments as well as in themselves. For Hobbes, citizenship is an example of such a "mutation," as man becomes quite significantly transformed through participation in political society (as opposed to a hypothetical state of nature).

As such, the emergence of civil law creates a pocket of human 'in-between space' that allows for reciprocity to dominate social relations. This space essentially mediates between the various tensions that exist in state of nature, restricting the passions that lead to war so as to permit the fulfillment of the desire for peace. This space also negotiates between the known and

the unknown, or between predestination and agency. Hobbes describes this constructed human

space in the following way which (in)famously puts a social contract at the heart of it:

> "For the laws of nature […] (in sum) *doing to others as we would be done to* […] of themselves, without the terror of some power to cause them to be observed, are contrary to [some of] our natural passions, that cause us to partiality, pride, revenge, and the like. And covenants without the sword are but words, and of no strength to secure a man at all. Therefore notwithstanding the laws of nature (which every one hath then kept, when he has the will to keep them, when he can do it safely), if there be no power erected, or not great enough for our security, every man will, and may lawfully rely on his own strength and art, for caution against all other men" (*Lev.* xvii, 2).

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