

THE EMPIRICAL REALITY BEHIND HOBBS'S SCIENCE OF POLITICS

by

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## INTRODUCTION

In every time period for which we have records, there are two distinct ways of speaking about the criteria to make political decisions. The first is typically the focus of philosophical inquiries into politics. We could aptly label this the academic variety of political theorizing, because it is typically the domain of professors in the fields of philosophy, ethics, and political science. Certain traits or capacities universal to mankind (or sometimes to a specific group such as some of the classical Greek theorists) are developed within such writings until they form some sort of vision by which we can begin to either imagine or achieve a more just political unit. Considerable variation does exist between such theories, because the authors have differing definitions of important concepts or terms. The features of the political systems these concepts entail vary widely across time and space. This is the field of political theory that we see exemplified in the works of such illustrious names as Plato, Locke, Kant, and Rawls. The second variety of political thought is the type which is aimed at how to solve the problems that rulers must frequently overcome. These writings can be very specific, often to the point of being aimed at a single instance with no thought to later applicability or generality. One can easily find evidence of many such particularized political decision making processes in the public records of modern democracies or in the treatises and private papers left behind by statesmen from more aristocratic or monarchical epochs. However, more theoretical approaches to policy making have been written by producing abstractions of problems that political units have frequently faced. Due to the fact that certain varieties of conflicts seem to fairly consistently recur, writers in the tradition of Thucydides, Niccolo Machiavelli, or Henry Kissinger offer ideas which apply in many political contexts.

The major distinction between the two categories seems to result from how each aggregates human experience in order to shape its conceptions. Authors writing in the more philosophic school draw on ideas of human nature such as cognitive or moral capacity as their foundations. From these beginnings, they move on to abstractions which describe traits each political community should ideally embody or functions which it must perform. They frequently add observations from the real world of political affairs, but not as foundational assumptions. Such references are typically used as evidence that their view of human nature is adequate to political circumstances.

The other type of political thought typically begins by observing the actions of aggregated political units. More specifically, these authors focus on how political leaders make decisions which all too frequently lead to disastrous results for the community. These can occur in the form of rebellions, civil wars, dynastic struggles, invasions, territory seizures, loss of political autonomy, and (at the most extreme) even exterminations of nations. Writers focusing on such group conflicts typically identify features of human communal life that create an inclination for groups to fight each other or try to gain power within the group. Thus their advice aims to provide the reader with an understanding of how such tendencies arise, but more importantly how they can be stifled so that peace and security can best be maintained. Usually these observations are couched in terms of historical experience and illustrated through cause and effect leading to certain inferences about human nature. Thus these theories rely on inductive reasoning based on prior human experience to arrive at conclusions about how to shape human interaction.

In short, the difference is that this second school uses history and experience to derive a view of how destructive aspects of human nature should be shaped and constrained by political decisions or institutions while the other takes a view of human nature and derives institutions usually intended to develop or increase human potentialities. If historical experience plays a part in the latter, it is often used only in order to illustrate that the suggested institutions would have been adequate to solve the

problem in a given situation. A perfect example of a political philosopher who endorsed this use of history is John Locke. According to Barbara Arneil, Locke carefully selected how he would use historical observation, because he thought that morals should transcend empiricism. However, this did not mean that he thought moral theory was completely independent of human experience. For example, Locke castigated Robert Filmer for not using any references to empirical examples, saying this error led to a theory based purely on written argument which had no basis in reality. Yet Locke did not use history as his guide when formulating ideas about morals. Arneil records one of his journal entries: "One who hath well settled in his mind the principles of morality and knows how to make a judgement on the actions of men...may learn great and useful instructions from a study of history". Thus history only serves to confirm moral foundations. Locke was very selective in hand-picking (and occasionally misinterpreting) the evidence presented to make sure that the examples he used would support his moral theory. For instance, Locke quotes from Jose de Acosta's *Natural and Moral History of the Indies* claiming that Acosta portrays Indian societies in Mexico as developing into democratic forms of government. However, Acosta said exactly the opposite; Mexican societies in his view had been democratic bands that eventually developed into kingships. (Arneil 1996, 21-23) This progression did not fit with Locke's philosophical and moral theory, so he selectively quotes from books on the discovery and conquest of the Americas to support his ideas on morals and politics.

There are theorists who combine both types of analysis, including one of the canonical social contract authors, Thomas Hobbes. One of the most unique features of his political writings is his synthesis between the lessons of human conflict drawn from political history and a philosophical view of human nature. In a view that was fairly common amongst his intellectual contemporaries, Hobbes equates science with philosophy at the very time in which Enlightenment empiricism was taking off. The political implications which he draws from this view corresponds to the academic variety of political philosophy which starts with an abstract conception of human nature and works out political

concepts in accordance with that foundation. Not surprisingly, Hobbes's political theory is most frequently read in this manner by academics today, probably because Hobbes's efforts in this type of analysis are more directly comparable to their own methods of analysis and theory construction.

Yet there is another very compelling way to read Hobbes as a historically minded theorist who belongs with those who base political works on recurrent features of group conflict. In large measure, this feature of his theory seems to stem from his theory of politics as a science derived from empirics and intended for application. When developing a scientific theory, it would be intellectually dishonest to ignore obvious and recurring features of reality (as Locke suggests when criticizing Filmer above). Science purports to explain all observational data, not selectively choose instances which it can explain while ignoring other data as Locke did with his use of Acosta. Hobbes tries to reconcile the two viewpoints by creating a theoretical description of the human race which also explains their behavior as combative individuals or groups. There is a vast secondary literature focusing on this aspect of his philosophy. Yet Hobbes also seems to have tailored his theory to fit with contemporary and historical experience which added detail and coherence to his deductive theory. He also seems to have thought about the relationship between the two types of understanding politics and concluded that the experience of history can help bring about the more philosophical or scientific view of politics.

I intend to demonstrate how Hobbes incorporated the harsh realities of the contemporary and past world into his own version of a universal conception of human nature. The political structures which followed from his view of human nature seem to have been designed to include historical data on how groups of humans act and think within contexts of conflict. This synthesis allows Hobbes to reconcile the tension between a universalistic view of the human species which has to explain collective tendencies towards sociability on the one hand, and the historical fact of nearly ever-present struggles for power and survival on the other.

This essay will be presented in two successive parts, the second of which is further subdivided into three parts. First, I will address the central role that empirical observation played in Hobbes's philosophy generally, but with a particular concentration on what Hobbes has to say about his own political science. This section will also examine the particular influence of Francis Bacon on Hobbes, particularly the intellectual trend towards science as the culmination of philosophy as well as the need for political order as a precondition which allows the full development of science or philosophy. The second section will detail the data available to Hobbes which would empirically justify and confirm his theory of political science. I will focus on three particular sources: classical history, a particular intellectual tradition arising as both a reaction to and continuation of Machiavelli, and the historical rise of the state. I will conclude with a discussion of why recalling the empirical foundations of his theory enhances our understanding of Hobbes.

## **THE FOUNDATIONS OF HOBBS'S EMPIRICISM**

The first task in showing that Hobbes reconciled a universal view of man with the historical record of constant conflict is to describe Hobbes's conception of human capacities. Hobbes believed his conception to be scientific, which in his mind meant an explanation expressed in rules that describe the world and which were logically derived from demonstrable first principles. Thus his theoretical musings on human nature took on a form highly reminiscent of physics or other natural sciences. The sub-title which he gave his most famous work illustrates his application of concepts from the natural sciences to the field which he called "civil science": the leviathan which governs human passions is understood in terms of "The Matter, Forme, and Power of a Common-wealth". (Hobbes 1996) In other words, Hobbes explicitly draws a parallel with the science of physics. Furthermore, Hobbes claimed

for himself two great discoveries: civil science and optics. (Laird 1968, vi) Hobbes believed his deductive methods should be equally applicable to this civic science as they were to the fields of optics and geometry, and all human activities were ultimately to be explained by deduction from the first principles which describe the nature of the physical universe. Political and civil society as characteristic human activities must be explained within this paradigm.

### **Hobbes's Account of Sensation, Understanding, and Reason**

Hobbes sets out the purpose for his most famous book in the Introduction to *Leviathan*. The basic, but fundamental, explanation of how politics is possible and why it is necessary can be found in this short section. According to Hobbes, man possesses the art of constructing a commonwealth, and such an artificial body is always needed. The commonwealth can be understood as constructed of parts analogous to the human body's parts. However, people have difficulties living together because they do not fully understand the force and commonality of the passions each individual experiences. The passions are the ultimate source of human conflict. Most individuals are only able to recognize and understand the passions in a few others who they know very well. The rulers are the people most in need of knowledge of the passions in a more generalized sense. They rule over such a large number of men that they will never be able to know each one of their subjects' minds well enough to understand all individuals' passions. Hobbes claims that such knowledge of the passions is very hard to attain, but of course is happily available in his book! (Hobbes 1996, 9-11)

Hobbes provides an account of human understanding and reason which proceeds out of sensations caused by external bodies. According to Hobbes, thoughts proceed either singly or in a chain from representations which sensory objects cause in the brain. The sensory organs are impacted by pressures exerted by these external objects, and nerves then relay these pressures to the brain or heart. Scholastic contemporaries teaching in the universities incorrectly claim that objects emit



“intelligible species” which are the cause of understanding. Hobbes argues in a manner that allows for the senses to be fallible, because they are intimately linked to thought and understanding. According to Hobbes, objects which had previously been sensed but are no longer present leave an impression on the brain. Imagination is the mechanism by which objects formerly present still seem to be there. Memory and imagination are the same thing, because both relate to decaying senses of things formerly present; therefore if objects emitted intelligible species (as the Scholastics argued), these would presumably be exact copies of the object which would not decay. The memory of many diverse things is named experience. (Hobbes 1996, 13- 16) All mental fancies are relics of the motions within men caused by sense perceptions. The memory or imagination of one thing will often inadvertently bring to mind a sensation experienced at the same time or immediately after the first. Hobbes calls this an “Unguided” train of thought. A train of thought can also be guided if it is regulated by aiming at a desire or design. (20-22) Different voluntary trains of thought have different aims, so Hobbes details a list of faculties such as remembrance, prudence or conjecture as examples. (22-24) Up to this point, Hobbes's description of sense perception and thought could fit any animal. Humans are unique due to the level of their ability to understand other beings. The faculty of understanding involves imagination which arises in man due to voluntary signs (namely speech). An animal such as a dog can understand signals of its master's will, but humans can go beyond this limited ability to more subtly understand thoughts and conceptions reveal through symbols or speech. (19)

The Hobbesian individual relies on communication to improve his abilities and make life more comfortable. By far the most useful invention Hobbes's human has ever come across is speech. “Names or Appellations” arise from this communicative faculty. Such abstract symbols allow people to recall the past and make their thoughts and ideas known to each other. Hobbes emphasizes that speech was a human invention and not a product of divine revelation when he cites the Scriptural story of God commanding Adam to name the animals in the Garden of Eden. Hobbes conjectures that once

started on that task, Adam began to name other things as well. Eventually, the process of creating names extended to creating words for relationships and other abstract concepts.<sup>1</sup> Marks or writing help us to remember things which would have otherwise slipped our minds due to the slow decay of memory as described above. Hobbes outlines four general uses of speech: first, speech registers the causes of things, or in other words records the knowledge that becomes philosophy or the arts; second, it shares that knowledge with others; third, it makes our wills known to others in order to enlist their aid; and finally, it allows us to enjoy words and please ourselves with such pleasures as poetry. (Hobbes 1996, 24-25, 61)

Sensory perceptions and memory also play a vital role in Hobbes's taxonomy of sciences and philosophy. Hobbes divides knowledge into two branches. The first is knowledge of fact, which “is nothing else, but Sense and Memory, and this is *Absolute Knowledge*...And this is the Knowledge required in a Witness. The later [type of knowledge] is called *Science*; and is *Conditionall*...And this is the Knowledge required in a Philosopher; that is to say, of him that pretends to Reasoning.” (Hobbes 1996, 60) Relationships between things which cannot be observed with the senses are arrived at through logical inference. To further explain his point and show where specific types of learning fall into the broad category of science, Hobbes presents an intricate branching chart showing how branches of science are derived as consequences from observation. The top level of the chart is labeled “SCIENCE, that is knowledge of Consequences; which is also called PHILOSOPHY”. Hobbes then divides the entire area of knowledge created through reasoning and logical consequences into two areas: Natural and Civil philosophy. Civil philosophy involves knowledge of the consequence political bodies' qualities, which falls into two practical divisions. From the “Consequences of the *Institution of*

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<sup>1</sup> Lest we think that Adam had an exclusive right to, or faculty of, creating names, Hobbes implicitly suggests that this is a natural human faculty. After the tower of Babel, the human race fragmented into smaller groups and began the process of naming things all over again. Hobbes explicitly attributes this second period of language creation to a process undertaken by men of their own volition (Hobbes 1996, 25) rather than a divine fiat which imparted ready-made languages to different groups.

COMMON-WEALTH”, Hobbes derives the rights and duties of the Sovereign on the one hand and the duties and rights of the subjects on the other. (see Hobbes 1996, 61) The remaining four hundred pages of *Leviathan* are Hobbes's explanation of the properties of the body politic and the necessary consequences its formation entails upon individuals living in such a unit. Yet the picture is not complete without some knowledge from the other main branch of the sciences.

Despite the fact that civil and natural philosophy are distinct branches in his taxonomy of sciences, Hobbes relies heavily on what he classifies as natural science in the creation of his political philosophy. Natural sciences are reasoning about “Consequences from the Accidents of Bodies Naturall”, which includes a branch defined by “Accidents” (by which Hobbes seems to mean properties) common to all bodies such as quantity and motion. The final fruits of this type of knowledge are mathematics and practical applications of knowledge such as that of an architect or navigator. The second branch of natural philosophy is “PHYSICS, or Consequences from *Qualities*.” One path through the branches of natural sciences stemming from physics leads to knowledge of human beings. Hobbes's special invention, optics, is labeled as “Consequences from *Vision*”; but more importantly for his political philosophy, Hobbes locates “Ethiques” (as knowledge of the consequences of human passions) and speech in natural philosophy. (Hobbes 1996, 61) The connections between civil and natural philosophy come from these last two fields of knowledge which are vital in explaining the creation and functioning of the commonwealth. Passions are a part of human beings irrespective of whether they are living in a commonwealth or not, but the resulting ethics of natural human beings shows the need for a restraining power and is the ultimate justification for the creation of the commonwealth. The properties of a political body, and therefore the consequences to be derived in the civil sciences, are determined by Hobbes's vision of natural human motivations and ethics.

Another branch of natural science which strongly affects Hobbes's political philosophy is the human faculty of speech and its relationship to reasoning. The names which are given to things as well

as the relationships between those things are not predetermined. Thus abstract systems such as geometry and numbering work according to how angles and shapes are conceptualized or on how many numerals are used (consider the difference between Roman and Arabic numerals or degrees and radians in geometry). This insight has important consequences to human thought:

“*True* and *False* are attributes of Speech, not of things. And where Speech is not, there is neither *Truth* nor *Falsehood*. *Error* there may be, as when wee expect that which shall not be; or suspect what has not been: but in neither case can a man be charged of Untruth.” (Hobbes 1996, 27-28)

Confining the ideas of truth and falsehood to linguistic consistency radically modifies how a natural law based on reason would work. Committing an error of reasoning is still possible, but only because the only criteria which Hobbes believes we can use to evaluate claims are empirical claims to the way things are rather than an idealized universal human reason. Claims to truth based on manipulation of symbols are to be rejected if they do not match up with the best available information on empirical reality.<sup>2</sup> In some ways this passage seems to reflect the same complaint which Locke lodged against Filmer's completely verbal defense of patriarchal government, yet leaves room to lodge the same type of criticism against Locke as was laid out above.

Reason itself is defined in terms of language, and thus is subjected to questions of correct construction based on empirical consequences, which in turn has important political consequences. According to Hobbes, reason “is nothing but *Reckoning* (that is, Adding and Subtracting) of the Consequences of generall names agreed upon, for the *marking* and *signifying* of our thoughts”. Thus a supposedly reasoned conclusion accepted by a large number of men may nonetheless be an error. In the extreme case, men may unanimously accept a proposition that has been incorrectly derived. Yet

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<sup>2</sup> Given this kind of claim, it seems that Hobbes is an important interlocutor to postmodern claims about the use of language and reason. Hobbes works to construct the edifice that later theorists try to deconstruct. Presumably, theories should construct some sort of replacement to serve the same role as *Leviathan* does for Hobbes after completing the deconstructionist project. Such a project should also include the practical side of how to bring about a political solution in conditions of less than ideal reason and cooperation.

men hate to be accused of being wrong. There is only one solution to this problem: “when there is a controversy in an account, the parties must by their own accord, set up for Right reason, the reason of some Arbitrator, or Judge, to whose sentence they will both stand”. (Hobbes 1996, 31-33) Thus both reason and truth are social (even political) conventions for Hobbes. The adequacy of these conventions cannot be adjudicated from within their functioning, but must instead be confirmed by empirical reality in the form of an enforcing power. The problem arises from the fact that the only information humans have comes from their individual sensory perceptions. There is no guarantee that we all perceive or interpret things in the same way, thus conflicts arise over how to interpret reality and how to best interact with this external world. Ideally ideas and conclusions would be judged by their correctness, but political power can decide the issue in the situation where there is no agreement on the correct means of defining and relating symbols in a system of abstraction. This discussion from the first section of the book foreshadows one of Hobbes's main points throughout *Leviathan*: the Sovereign determines how subjects in a commonwealth should define and interpret the world when dealing with their fellow citizens.

### **The Uses of Science: Hobbes Relationship to Bacon**

Hobbes seems to have been influenced by Francis Bacon in adopting the goal of making science serve the political needs of man. A brief examination of how Bacon thought science would improve the lot of humanity will reveal the parallels between these two early English advocates of science. In his essay “Of the Interpretation of Nature”, Bacon recounts how men had been honored as the benefactors of mankind for discoveries in the past. He could think of nothing so useful as to increase man's knowledge of nature and thus to be “the propagator of man's empire over the universe, the champion of liberty, the conqueror and subduer of necessities.” (Bacon 1955, 151-152) Additionally,

there seems to be some agreement between the two on the preconditions necessary to build this “empire” or universal reign of knowledge.

Hobbes strongly resembles Bacon in that both believe peace is conducive to establishing knowledge and arts, and that religion is especially problematic for intellectual advancement. The assumption that ill effects follow from conflict (and especially religious division) appears in both Bacon and Hobbes. Bacon fears the development of the sciences may be inhibited due to conflicts between sects which encourage doctrinaire arguments that inhibit erudition rather than adding to knowledge. (Bacon 1955, 152) Religion was one of the most prevalent sources of conflict in the 16<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> centuries, thus its role in this time period was both suppressing intellectual integrity and preventing peaceful conditions conducive to building knowledge. The Hobbesian instance of this belief leads up to what has become probably the most famous phrase in all of Hobbes's prolific writings. Hobbes makes the general observation that conflict prevents the development of all the arts which in turn make life comfortable. Thus human life in the time of war is characterized by a lack of productivity and “continuall feare, and danger of violent death; And the life of man, solitary, poore, nasty, brutish, and short.” (Hobbes 1996, 89) Religious fanaticism and fighting between different sects was an important source of the conflict during his day (thus inhibiting the efforts man could devote to improving the arts of navigation, commerce, and so on). Hobbes would have surely felt Bacon correct in identifying religious doctrinairism as a problem preventing the further accumulation of knowledge, an attitude that seems to underlie his conflicts with the scholars he derisively calls the “university men”.

There do seem to be differences between the two, because Bacon does seem to be more optimistic about the possibilities for improving man through science. Bacon started a work entitled *The New Atlantis*, but did not finish it before he died. The myth-like story of a better society produced through peace and scientific investigation is presented in terms highly reminiscent of Thomas More's

*Utopia*. A ship and crew are bound across the Pacific from east to west. They run out of food at about the same time that they find an island, the inhabitants of which initially forbid them to land. The locals eventually send out a written message (they conveniently can write in multiple languages including Spanish, Greek and Latin) that promises the crew supplies and care for their sick, and the inhabitants turn out to be Christians. The lost voyagers are eventually allowed to come ashore where they are housed in a long disused special facility for strangers. A Christian minister comes to visit them, and the narrator asks him how and when the islanders received the Gospel. This minister tells them of a miraculous cloud, saying that God does not usually work miracles which violate the order of the natural laws which he himself created. However, in this case he did work against the order of nature. (Bacon 1955)

During the next meeting with this preacher the crew asks why it is that they have never heard of this island but the inhabitants of the island know about Europe, which in turn leads to explanation of the role of science and discovery and their relationship to good laws. The preacher explains that the art of navigation had actually been more advanced three thousand years before than it was in their day. About nineteen hundred years before these voyagers arrived on the island there had been a great king named Solamona who was the lawgiver for the nation. They were so comfortable with his laws that he decided they could not add benefits, and indeed would only lose something good if they were to allow strangers to enter and live in their land. In order to discourage people who stumble across the island from telling others about it, this king decreed that the state should pay to maintain any who would willingly stay. No one is forced to stay, but only thirteen sailors have decided to go back during the nineteen centuries after the institution of the law. The final, and most prestigious, achievement of this great king was to establish an order named Saloman's House which is also known as "The College of the Six Days Works". The purpose of this order was to arrive at "the knowledge of Causes and secret motions of things; and the enlarging of the bounds of human empire". This research body works to

discover the true nature of all things (as suggested by the second title). Every twelve years members of this body are dispatched on a voyage to survey events in the outside world and buy any useful new technologies. (Bacon 1955)

This lengthy digression helps to illustrate Bacon's attitudes towards scientific progress and the similarity of his views about the condition of peace with those held by Hobbes. Given an environment free from internal conflict and external threats, scientific progress is possible and improves the lives of all the members of society. The interesting thing is the order in which scientific and institutional innovations must be made. The most honored or wisest man (analogous to Leo Strauss's description of the classical legislator) must establish a political system that adequately deals with both internal and external threats before this level of academic achievement becomes possible. The fact that the residents of the island have better technology than the war prone Europeans illustrates that the sciences benefit from a durable peace.

There are important differences between science as understood by Hobbes and Bacon, which lead at least one commentator to effectively sever any link of intellectual heritage between the two. Yet this reaction seems too strong. According to Thomas Laird, most of what we know about Hobbes' relationship to Bacon is mediated through John Aubrey, although the source of Aubrey's recollections was probably Hobbes himself. In his writings, Hobbes explicitly refers to Bacon only twice and in reference to a particular problem involving the "circular motion of water". (Laird 1968, 44) Laird admits only a stylistic or rhetorical similarity, because Hobbes seems to have a literary style (particularly his frequent use of allegory) similar to the style used by Bacon later in life when Hobbes knew him. Laird doubts that Hobbes can really be described as a disciple or even a close student of Bacon due to differences in their scientific works. According to Laird, Bacon's suggestion of a society devoted to scientific experimentation became the inspiration for the Royal Society. Hobbes thought the Royal Society frivolous, but at least cheaper than fully implementing Bacon's vision of "Soloman's



House”. Furthermore, Hobbes credited Galileo's deductive and geometrical method, rather than Bacon's inductive experiments, with unlocking “the secrets of nature”. (Laird 1968, 45, 47) Despite these claims of incompatibility, Laird admits a few striking similarities. First, Bacon's and Hobbes's sciences may not have been completely irreconcilable given the attention the former paid to “Forms” which were also identified with definitions. Second, when Hobbes describes the divisions of science in *Leviathan* and *De Corpore*, he implicitly follows Bacon's example. (Laird 1968, 46)

Therefore, the major theoretical difference between the two 17<sup>th</sup> century Englishmen seems to lie in their scientific methods. Bacon preferred an inductive, experimental approach which Hobbes eschewed for his deductions from definitions. Transferring the problem into the realm of political thought, we arrive at a question of how to conceptualize the political world. Intuitively we would ask how we could arrive at the definitions needed for a deductive theory in the first place. Following this route, it seems that Hobbes could not apply deductive method to the social world of politics without relying on induction from a large background context of empirical observations. This conclusion also seems to follow from Hobbes's own account. As we have previously seen, the naming of things or relationships (and thus their definitions) develops from a human faculty related to understanding and ultimately sensory perception. The fact that the Sovereign may have to control such terms and doctrines suggests that there are no universal definitions such as could be applied in geometry. Thus the definitions which allow a science of politics in the Euclidean fashion presuppose inductive reasoning from observation.

Hobbes seems to have recognized at least part of this dilemma, and specifically its importance to his political thought. First, it is clear that Hobbes believed that the best form of political knowledge (whether theoretical or applied) had to be developed from a deductive philosophic perspective. According to Alan Ryan, Hobbes urged English readers to remember the difference in Latin between two terms both translated as “wisdom” in English. *Prudentia* is the knowledge of affairs that results

from experience and is thus essentially historical, *Sapientia* is knowledge derived out of general scientific, hypothetical rules. Hobbes intends his political science as an example of *Sapientia*. Thus Hobbes's theory is more akin to predictive economic theories than to practical experience. Both types of wisdom state what men should rationally do if they are to maximize their own well being, not what they actually will choose to do in any given situation. *Prudentia* and the study of history reveal the need for making men understand the importance of acting in this rational manner. (Ryan 1996, 212-213)

Yet Hobbes admits knowledge of political science is available through means other than scientific deduction. Tom Sorell gives a detailed explanation of the position of political thought in Hobbes's comprehensive vision of philosophy which reveals why politics differs from other sciences. Sorell argues that Hobbes was attempting to unite the branches of the new deductive sciences into a comprehensive system with his trilogy of works *The Elements of Philosophy*. According to Sorell, Hobbes did not claim credit for inventing all of them; in fact he was very specific in acknowledging his intellectual debts to figures like Euclid or Galileo. But Hobbes was egoistic enough that he wanted to put them together in such a way as to emphasize his own contribution to the development of science. In other words, the disjointed nature of the *Elements* may be due to his attempt to synthesize a wide body of literature. Sorell conjectures that this incoherence was due to the fact that Hobbes was trying to include branches of knowledge that had been derived with methods that may not have been in complete agreement with his own. Hobbes does curiously leave out some types of knowledge that would seem related to science—medicine in particular. (Sorell 1996, 58-60) Medicine is particularly problematic for his version of the scientific method, because it would be hard to imagine how one could arrive at knowledge about curing human bodies through deductive methods. In this case, an inductive approach based on what helps people survive seems most appropriate, and Hobbes's neglect of the matter suggests that he might have been aware of this problem.

Hobbes therefore seems to at least implicitly recognize that there might be an outer limit to what his deductive methodology can effectively do, which in turn allows the possibility that other methodologies may play a supporting role. According to Sorell, there is a point in *De Corpore* where Hobbes seems to admit civil science may be possible without moral science or physics. Moral philosophy or science is available to those who use the “synthetical method” which begins from his first philosophy and definitions, but civil science is also available to those who use an “analytical method” to consider how their own passions motivate them. Thus experience and the inductive analytical method can serve as a short cut to civic science. (Sorell 1996, 55) Hobbes would prefer his readers to attain knowledge of the civic sciences through a philosophical progression traversing all the sciences starting from first principles, but there is an alternative which may in fact be preferred for very pragmatic reasons.

Due to the fact that insufficient knowledge of civil science caused him to publish his *Elements of Philosophy* out of order, Hobbes seems to have been pragmatic enough to have realized that timeliness demanded a shorter route to the civil science which would allow the development of all the other arts and sciences. Sorell describes the difference as a distinction between full philosophy and a lesser science which allows an explanation of the most of the truths of civil science via a quicker route. In other words, the full truth to Hobbes is that there are certain motions particular to men's minds which must be conceived in terms of motion in order to be fully understood. But other men could understand the nature of those motions without understanding them as motions. (Sorell 1996, 56) In this case, practical knowledge averts civil war and was therefore more important than the full scientific explanation. As we have seen earlier, peace is necessary to develop the arts and philosophy to the point where such knowledge of the motions of men's minds could become more general.

Therefore, Hobbes echoes Bacon's basic attitudes on two counts. First, progress in science would improve the lot of humanity. Second, an improved political system must maintain peace long

enough for such a corpus of knowledge to arise. Like Bacon, Hobbes seems to take the view that peace must come before the full development of science and philosophy can be accomplished. Paradoxically, a deficient version of civil science based on history and experience must be applied in order to develop the fully deductive civil science.

## **THE ROLE OF EMPIRICAL OBSERVATIONS IN HOBBS'S POLITICAL THOUGHT**

In this section I will describe three different sources from which Hobbes drew when creating his theory of man and politics. First, Hobbes was an excellent classicist who was particularly attracted to the historical style of Thucydides. Therefore, his explanation of why he prefers Thucydides helps explain his attitude towards history. Second, the previous century had produced a pragmatic Italian theory of politics in the tradition of Machiavelli which was known in Italian as the *ragione di stato* (or “reason of state”) which focused on the interests of rulers and states. There have been recently discovered documents that suggest a stronger influence from this direction on Hobbes's early political ideas. Third, political and military conditions had already subtly changed to favor political organizations closer to the centralized Hobbesian state with sovereignty concentrated in one source over a feudal, decentralized kingdom. These sources provided important empirical observations that seems to have shaped the Hobbesian vision of self-interested states determined by insecurity to patterns of conflict. However, we must first demonstrate a link between Hobbes and classical history and the reason of state in order to show how he was influenced by them. Then the task becomes showing places where these theories seem to be the foundations upon which Hobbes is building.

### **Thucydides and Classical Historical Influences**

As we have seen above, historical analysis plays an important role in Hobbes's theory, because it allows the unphilosophic student to learn from collected experience how passions affect politics. Yet his attitude towards the past is slightly different from that of purely historical, experience-based wisdom. According to Luc Borot, history for Hobbes plays a role only in explaining how things went wrong. The passions are what cause human conflicts, and therefore history teaches us to evaluate how passions caused problems in particular situations. From his first published work (the translation of Thucydides) all the way up to *Behemoth*, Hobbes maintains that history can provide important lessons about when things go wrong with a political unit which fragments or dissolves. History can illustrate what happens in commonwealths where the foundations of authority are misunderstood, but cannot supply a complete understanding of those foundations on its own. (Borot 1996, 311-313) In some ways, this portrayal of Hobbes's attitude towards history resembles that held by Locke. If this interpretation of Hobbes's view of history is correct, both theorists believe that history can be invoked to illustrate that their philosophical solution to the problem is an appropriate response.

However, a carefully constructed view of the problem also begins to imply at least the broad outline, if not any specific features, of the solution. In keeping with his focus on demonstrable traits which can be ascribed to humanity, Hobbes's ideal history would need to present the human motivations which influence different decisions rather than a divine or progressive depiction of history. Hobbes identified Thucydides as the paradigmatic political historian, a position on which he felt so strongly that he devoted considerable time and effort to producing the first accurate English translation of Thucydides in 1628. Hobbes himself presents a brief digression into a historiographical analysis of sources for Thucydides. According to Hobbes, there had been a previous edition of Thucydides translated into English during the reign of Edward VI, but this was based on a French copy which was in turn based on a Latin copy. This Latin translation was in turn based on a Greek copy which Hobbes finds inferior to another Greek version. Thus Hobbes creates a direct translation from the Greek

version known as the “Aemilius Porta” edition which he believes better reflects Thucydides's thinking. (Hobbes 1975, 8) In defending the accuracy and usefulness of Thucydides's history, Hobbes points out Thucydides was independently wealthy and thus beholden to no power which would have coerced him into flattery. (17) Although he may have been economically independent, I find this assessment of Thucydides's objectivity highly suspect. Thucydides clearly displays a predilection towards the policies of the generation of Athenian politicians that arose in the wake of the victory at Salamis, most notably to Themistocles, Cimon, and Pericles. (see Thucydides 1996, especially Books I and II)

Before his translation of Thucydides's *History*, Hobbes explains why he chose to translate this particular history. His endorsement of Thucydides directly contradicts Borot's argument that Hobbes believed history could only teach how things went wrong and not how to improve upon existing conditions. Hobbes claims that Thucydides writes in a way that teaches men how to deliberate on great and weighty matters, and thus is an ideal teacher for the young son of his deceased patron. (Hobbes 1975, 4) In his note to the reader, Hobbes remarks that certain authors from classical antiquity remain unsurpassed in their respective arts. Thucydides fits this description and remains the pinnacle of historical analysis in Hobbes's mind. He briefly outlines the criteria by which he arrived at this judgment. According to Hobbes, “the principle and proper use of history” is to instruct men from examples of the past so that they “bear themselves prudently in the present and providently towards the future”. (6) In opposition to Borot's claim that history only reveals problems and not instruction for the future, Hobbes praises his favorite historian Thucydides for doing both. It also becomes clear that the lessons are to be learned from the empirical conditions (most notably the human passions) behind history rather than the words used by a historian to interpret events. Hobbes differentiates between teaching done by wise discourses inserted into gaps between historical narratives and teaching through history itself. According to Hobbes, Thucydides achieves his mastery by refraining from digressing into lectures and narrating only events and speeches. The reader becomes a member in the audience for

political deliberations, and thus he gains the experience that he would have learned from being present in the debate. (6-7) To Hobbes, words that pass away (such as speeches) must be easily understood. Presumably the digressions inserted by lesser historians fall into this category. However, words that are read and teach lessons must provoke serious thought and consideration. (26-27) Once again, these lessons are learned from records of events which serve as the kind of empirical descriptions of the world needed in science. By illustrating lasting lessons through relaying only the facts, Hobbes accepts that Thucydides has succeeded in leaving a possession for the future. (17, 22)

The lessons that are most important to Hobbes's later political project are the ways in which Thucydides relays "the characters of men's humours and manners" and how to apply them to "affairs of consequence". (Hobbes 1975, 25) Hobbes also praises Thucydides for not overreaching himself in an attempt to explain history in a far distant past for which he had no access to reliable sources. This is presumably meant to provide a contrast to Herodotus. (17, 20)<sup>3</sup> The manner in which each of these famous Greek historians treat religion illustrates how they use empirical sources. As opposed to Herodotus who frequently placed the human history of the Persian Wars into a divinely affected motif, Thucydides seems to have seen religion as a series of social practices. For instance, instead of seeing oracles as foretelling disasters, Thucydides at times suggests that humans bring calamities upon themselves by waiting too long for the correct auspices. (Thucydides 1996, xx) Instead of allowing his fellow Greeks to continue in their habit of uncritically accepting traditional stories, Thucydides proposes to recall what actually happened. He freely admits to fabricating a few speeches when the exact words are unavailable in order to show how decisions would have been reached. He claims to have chosen this unromantic method of telling history to provide knowledge of the past which can

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<sup>3</sup> This vision of how to properly use history reinforces the notion that Hobbesian state of nature is purely a thought experiment. (Hobbes 1996, 89-90) I find it highly doubtful that the ever meticulous Hobbes would have been willing to make grandiose claims about the historical fount of society without some sort of empirical evidence. Thus he relies on deductive reasoning about the state of nature to say that it had always existed between groups of peoples, but was never between all individuals. Thus the war of all against all has to be understood in terms of corporate persons created as commonwealths by acquisition or consent.

inform future decisions. (14-15) Thus the emphasis that both Thucydides and Hobbes place on history is in describing and learning from human motivations and decision making processes. History should be approached soberly so that the reader is constantly looking for important lessons; it should not be abused by approaching it as a spectacle similar to the Roman games or for the pleasure of the reader as Dionysius of Halicarnassius would have had it. (Hobbes 1975, 8, 21-22)

Apart from his preference for history written in Thucydides's style for teaching purposes, Hobbes also finds confirmation for his own views on seventeenth century English politics in Thucydides. Hobbes claims that Thucydides's Athenian history illustrates the problems of democracy. The politicians who prevail after the death of Pericles are those urging the populace to the most desperate, high-risk policies. Thus good advice only brings political ruin to the wise man, while demagogues continually have to outdo each other by empowering the mob in Athens to pursue these dangerous options. Otherwise moderate individuals go along with extreme policies, because they are ashamed to appear cowardly. Hobbes claims that Thucydides liked Athens best when it was governed by one strong man (i.e. Pericles) and was not subjected to the competing and dangerous schemes of such demagogues. (Hobbes 1975, 12-14) The notable thing about the lessons that he draws from Thucydides for English applications is that he uses the history to reveal what kinds of motivations drive decisions and how passions are restrained or enhanced by different regime types.

Hobbes's historical analysis of the English Civil War also implicitly follows assumptions borrowed from Thucydides, particularly regarding the dangers of factionalism and revolution illustrated by the history of the Peloponnesian War. Thucydides describes how parties to the dispute become bent on vengeance for past injuries and uninterested in actually creating a stable new government. According to Thucydides, anyone in such an environment who advocates a policy of moderation or even calls for public consideration of more than one option is ignored and portrayed as an unmanly coward. Honor is only given to those who advocate or lead the most daring and destructive policies,



but such extreme actions provoke similarly impassioned and irrational vengeance from the other party. The Peloponnesian War brought out this tendency throughout Greece and not just in Athenian democracy. This condition of extreme revolutionary policies in classical Greece was further inflamed by the conflict between Athens and Sparta, because the oligarchic or democratic faction in each city knew there was a powerful ally to whom they could appeal. (Thucydides 1996, 199-201) Such conflicts may also bring about moral decline as well. Thucydides describes the disintegration of Athenian morals during the plague. Athenians were dying from a seemingly unstoppable epidemic while under siege by the Spartans. So many people died that it became impossible to observe the proper burial rituals. In a situation where they observed that previously prosperous citizens died terrible deaths and remain unmourned, many Athenians gave up following traditional morality. With no prospect of reward or punishment in the future, people started to live for momentary passions without regard to future consequences. (Thucydides 1996, 121)

We can see Hobbes in action as a political historian during his description of the processes of factionalism during the English Civil War in *Behemoth* (also known as *The Long Parliament*). Hobbes and Thucydides are similar to each other as historians in that each tries to make men learn by explaining a great human tragedy, but a comparison of this work to Thucydides reveals some important differences. The first, and perhaps most telling, difference between the two is that *Behemoth* is written in the style of a dialog between two speakers simply named A and B. The dialog in *Behemoth* takes place well after the events under discussion, and may have been intended to be contemporaneous to the time of composition which was around 1668. (Goldsmith 1969, x) Speaker “B” is a young man who does not even remember how the political forces were aligned and turned against the king. Speaker “A” remembers all of this vital information quite clearly and is willing to impart the story to his young conversant, because “A” believes that a review of the time period of the civil war can create a mountain top vista which allows them to discern how the conflict occurred. The blame for the war is ascribed to

hypocrisy and self conceit. (Hobbes 1969, 1-3) Thus the dialog focuses mainly on the ways in which different ideological positions came to reject the authority of the king for various reasons. These include the Catholic Popes who claim authority over certain aspects of the secular commonwealth via Church canon law and Presbyterians who claim that they are acting in the cause of liberty. In contrast to Thucydides, Hobbes does not present these as positions taken by one side or the other in a debate. Instead, they are general positions which are presented by “A” and then immediately shredded by the critiques of “B”. Thus “B” often voices principles from Hobbes's earlier works of political philosophy, but Hobbes usually does not present in one place the different sides of the debate over a particular issue. (Hobbes 1969) Therefore the historical narrative is very different than the general mode used by Thucydides to portray different parties' motivations in contrast to each other. Despite Hobbes's use of dialogs, there is nothing like the policy discussion found in Thucydides's Melian Dialog presented in *Behemoth*.

Furthermore, “B” suggests that other histories have in some ways already filled the role of explaining the councils and actions decided upon. So “B” believes that “A” did not needlessly digress but is providing him with a valuable service by illustrating how to interpret the events and showing the cause of the problems. This declaration comes after “B” voices his opinion that religion is among the highest of virtues, but only if properly understood. (Hobbes 1969, 44-45) This statement needs to be contextualized through a close comparison with the opinions which Hobbes had voiced on the use and writing of history approximately forty years earlier. *Behemoth* presents discourses and plain explanations similar to the things that he praises Thucydides for avoiding. Instead of supplying pure, unadulterated facts which invite only the subtly minded to understand the lesson, Hobbes seems to be trying to make the lesson as blatant as he possibly can.

In some ways, this may be another manifestation of the same kind of consideration which forced Hobbes to publish *The Elements of Philosophy* out of order. The restored Stuart monarch

Charles II remained vulnerable to revivals of the same kinds of arguments which had brought down Charles I, thus Hobbes seems to have felt it was more important to make the lesson unequivocally clear to his contemporaries. His focus in the history of the English Civil War is clearly on elite opinion, because Hobbes portrays the common people such as laborers or soldiers as uninterested in ideology and attracted to one side or the other purely by the possibility of pay or plunder. (Hobbes 1969, 4) The motivations and positions of Catholic bishops, university educated gentlemen, Presbyterians ministers, and occasionally even the king's advisors fill the rest of the book. Given this view of the lower classes and lack of subtlety in his analysis, he seems to be exhorting elites to be better leaders by emphasizing duty to the king. This presentation of the English Civil War is not intended as a possession to be passed down throughout history, but it is a piece of almost demagogic speech with a purpose in demonstrating what not to do in current politics. Thus we could say that Hobbes intended it as a speech that in his terms would pass away. Such a transitory intention for the work might explain why he preferred that it never be published after Charles II refused to license the work. This deference to royal wishes may be an instance of Hobbes simply acting consistently with his own theory, but that he did not think it should be published after his death may also signify that it was unimportant in the theory he wanted to pass down to posterity (i.e. the civil science). Thus *Behemoth* may have had completely time bounded implications which meant abandoning the project was perfectly acceptable to Hobbes. Once again, the most plausible explanation for Hobbes's use of history is that he was attempting to establish peaceful circumstances in which the civil science could finally be realized.

### **Influences from 16<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> Century Political Thought**

The religious and territorial wars of the 16<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> century provide a background where a pragmatic approach to the politics became necessary, and this need manifested itself intellectually by spawning a school of political theory following in the tradition of Machiavelli. These theories seem to

have exerted some indirect influence on Hobbes. The Italian theorists of the *ragione di stato* (or “reason of state”) followed Machiavelli insofar as they maintained that states were occasionally justified in undertaking actions which were considered immoral for individuals, but could only do so if such actions were necessary to ensure their security. According to Quentin Skinner, the *ragione di stato* theorists tried to distance themselves from Machiavelli's reputation in varying degrees, but a few nonetheless remained very close to Machiavelli's views on morality. For instance, Francesco Guicciardini endorsed many of Machiavelli's principles and was among the first to use the term “reason of state”. Giovanni Botero offers advice on all of the same subjects as does Machiavelli and suggests rulers may have reasons for doing things which “cannot be considered in the light of ordinary reason”. Although Botero discusses the importance of justice, he quickly moves on to base government on the twin pillars of prudence and valor instead of justice or morality, because he believes that interest will always dominate every other argument when dealing with princes. (Skinner 1978, v I, 248-249)

Although they were ultimately related to Machiavelli, there were important limiting conditions which the early Italian reason of state authors added to the advice given by Machiavelli. According to Noel Malcolm, the ex-Jesuit Botero wrote the book *Della ragion di stato* (which became the most famous work of the reason of state literature) in 1589 as a reaction to the popularity of the genre. In the dedicatory, Botero voices disgust after visiting many courts across Europe and hearing courtiers say that actions against moral scruples were permissible by the “Reason of State”. Botero specifically mentions two names connected to this school of thought: Tacitus and Machiavelli. (Malcolm 2007, 92)<sup>4</sup> The term “ragione di stato” was at least partly descriptive of political practice in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, but the term was also used in more normative conversations where we might now use the term utility, profit, or interest. In fact, Botero would eventually define them together

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<sup>4</sup> Tacitus was used extensively because the experience of imperial Rome seemed to better fit the context of the larger European kingdoms (for instance Spain and France) than did Livy and Machiavelli's small Italian principalities and republics filled with actively involved citizens. (Malcolm 2007, 95-96)

saying that “reason of state is little else than reason of interest”, which is one of the earliest occurrences of the term “interest” in a political context. By way of comparison, Hobbes relies on a similar conception of self-interested action (such as defending the means to self-preservation) as something which occupies an intermediate position between the objectively good norms described as natural laws and the completely subjective passions. Skinner describes the reason of state theorists as occupying this same middle ground. (Skinner 1978, v I, 119-120) He also argues that the term “reason of state” allowed for discussion and evaluation of actions which were better rationalized than pure desire but impermissible under the theologically dominated idea of *bonum commune* or “public good”. (93-94) Thus Botero attempts to allow actions inconsistent with theological conceptions of politics while restraining courtiers from using the term to justify acting on their egoistic impulses. Botero seems to fear that Machiavelli and the other *ragione di stato* theorists had reached too wide an audience. Thus if we combine Skinner's and Malcolm's pictures of Botero, we get an author who acknowledges that rulers may need to engage in pragmatic actions that fall into the grey area of morality, but these actions should not be visible to the public or be widely discussed. The possible immorality of an action is not the problem. The problem seems to be that the people are watching and second guessing the actions of their rulers, which in turn probably decreases the rulers' chances of successfully pulling off their plans to protect the state.

Malcolm argues that the early authors of this school were influenced by Machiavelli only to the point where they shared his assumptions about human nature creating politics centered around conflict and power. These successors departed from Machiavelli in the realm of religion. According to Malcolm, Machiavelli and some of the classical Romans such as Lucretius or Tacitus had argued that religion was a mechanism that the rulers of a state created from a pack of lies and used to further their own interests. The *ragione di stato* authors follow Machiavelli in describing methods the prince could use to protect his state while adding the caveat that Christians could form strong states and make good

generals. This distinction allowed the theorists to explain a difference between using dishonest means to further an honorable goal (as may have been necessary in the service of “True Religion”) and using such means to amass more power. (Malcolm 2007, 97-99)

Skinner concurs regarding the role Machiavelli's reputation as an atheist had on the reason of state theories. The Catholic counter-reformation theorists attacked humanists who defended the ideas of reason of state. They particularly wanted to discredit the atheistic versions of these theories advanced in the tradition of Machiavelli. (Skinner 1978, v II, 143) Harro Höpfl repeatedly claims that the most challenging school of political theory for the early Jesuits was reason of state. (Höpfl 2004, 51, 84) According to Höpfl, the Jesuits opposed Machiavelli on the grounds that his doctrine held that the prince's primary concern is the preservation of his state. According to one rebuttal by Pedro de Ribadeneyra, the prince should attempt to keep the laws of God in order to avoid divine wrath. Ribadeneyra along with Francisco Suarez and Juan de Mariana argue that honesty will better serve the commonwealth than following Machiavelli's suggestions. They also took issue with the Machiavellian idea of a separate kind of morality that applied in the political realm. Their arguments centered on the theological grounds that men's minds had been endowed by the light of reason from God and therefore were capable of seeing their duties; however they were forced to acknowledge that Machiavellian political theories were widely held to be an alternative to their natural law theories. (171-173)

The reaction against Machiavelli and the reason of state literature was not confined solely to the Society of Jesus or to Italy. According to Skinner, the sixteenth century saw a revival of Thomism, especially in Paris and Spain starting with Pierre Crockaert, a Dominican studying in Paris and one of his pupils, Francisco de Vitoria, who brought the movement to Spain. This revived school of scholasticism set itself in opposition to humanists in general but Machiavelli in particular. (Skinner 1978, v II, 135-136) Although the movement started with the Dominican order, it was quickly adopted by other groups as well. The Jesuits, who were the Dominicans' main rivals, began to propagate

similar doctrines in Italy as well as Spain and France. One of the chief Jesuit authors of this school in the second half of the sixteenth century was Cardinal Robert Bellarmine. (137) Bellarmine insists that the true Church must be: united under the Pope; the heir to a tradition of apostolic succession which is a needed addition to Scripture; and world-wide in extent. Following these principles, Bellarmine argues that the Pope alone has control of doctrine for the entire world-wide Church. (144-145) Bellarmine is the chief theological authority who Hobbes sets himself in opposition against in the second half of *Leviathan*. (?????) In other words, Machiavelli inspired a religious attack on his doctrine of the state, and Hobbes later worked to refute the attack on Machiavelli in an attempt to reestablish the dominance of political authority over the claims of religion and morality.

Therefore, it seems important to provide some of the details of these counter-Reformation arguments in order to contrast them with the position the reason of state genre and positions that Hobbes would later take. According to Skinner, the counter-reformation Church returned to a Thomistic vision of “a universe governed by a hierarchy of laws”. They argued that God himself acts according to *lex aeterna* (eternal law). God founded the Church on a *lex divina* (divine law) which he revealed through Scripture. The *lex naturalis* (or law of nature) is implanted in men by God. Finally, commonwealths are governed by the *lex humana* or *lex civilis* (human and civil laws). The counter-reformation natural law theorists hold two common propositions. First, all human or civil law had to be in accordance with natural law. Second, there is a connection between the law of nature and the divine and eternal laws. (Skinner 1978, v II, 148-149) The arguments against Machiavelli can be seen to follow directly from the hierarchy of law the Catholic theorists describe.<sup>5</sup> First, if the divine law found in Scripture established the Church, there can be no moral law which does not follow the dictates

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<sup>5</sup> These political attacks were a part of a large counter-reformation project, because “[t]he early Jesuit theorists clearly recognised the pivotal point at which the political theories of Luther and Machiavelli may be said to converge: both of them were equally concerned, for their own very different reasons, to reject the idea of the law of nature as an appropriate moral basis for political life.” (Skinner 1978, v II, 143)

of the Pope and Christian morality. Thus Bellarmine subjects all doctrine and Church law to the Pope. Even natural law is below the law of the Church, although they should be consistent with each other. It seems that placing natural law below the ecclesiastical powers might have been necessary due to the fact that natural law is manifested only through reason and intuition. (Skinner 1978, v II, 151) All men (rather than only Christians) are able to use right reason and arrive at the conclusions of natural law. However, in concrete situations of application, the faculties of reason may be unable to resolve a conflict between even well-considered moral intuitions and calculation of self-interest. The Thomistic resolution to this possible conflict is to place divine revelation (which does not even permit interpretation by the laity in their view) as an arbitrator above the tensions within the individual trying to follow natural law.

The idea that all men were capable of knowing and following natural law led to important influences on what was to become known as the “social contract” tradition of political thought. According to Skinner, the Thomists wanted to oppose the suggestion that all societies were ordained by God. They claimed that societies were created by their members for “purely mundane ends”. To illustrate the mundane and nearly accidental nature of political society, they needed to describe the formation of such societies in apolitical terms and conditions. Thus Luis de Molina speaks of “*in statu naturae*” when describing the period between the Fall and the creation of political states. The Thomists generally picture this condition as characterized by freedom, equality, and independence; yet men in this condition are still governed by the natural dictates of reason. This leads them to a position against patriarchy. For instance, Suarez argues that Adam possessed domestic power, but not political power. (Skinner 1978, v II, 154-156) Although this description may make it seem that the counter-Reformation Thomists were John Locke's predecessors, they differed in important ways from what would later become the classic social contract conception. Skinner claims they attacked the stoic belief that natural man existed in a solitary condition. In direct opposition to the view Locke would later



espouse, they denied (in the words of Suarez) that “any power over a whole community of men assembled together must be derived from men as individuals” and instead insist that it is part of man's nature to want to live in a community. (157-158)

As with the theories that have classically been considered part of the social contract tradition, these Catholic theorists grappled with the problem of naturally free human beings subjected to political authority in the state. This problem was particularly recognized by Suarez who suggested that living without positive law in pre-political communities would have led to increasingly uncertain or unjust outcomes. Despite the fact that all men are capable of the reason necessary for natural justice, the fallen nature of humanity means that the natural law will not be consistently followed by all individuals. For Suarez in particular, people recognize that their lives are made better through a developed society that allows for “the offices and arts necessary for human life”. Human beings recognize the impossibility of maintaining justice without positive laws and rationally decide to create the mechanisms which enforce such law, although there is some dissension on this point. Francisco de Vitoria claims that political power can only arise through consent but that such consent is necessitated by human nature. Suarez contradicts him and argues that a choice is definitely involved, therefore his conception is closer to the idea of a contract. Suarez even suggests that a line of succession is only legitimate because the first in the line derived his power from the consent of the commonwealth. (Skinner 1978, v II, 159-163)

Despite this Scholastic trend, there were some humanists who adopted an increasingly pragmatic attitude as the 16<sup>th</sup> century progressed and wars proliferated. According to Skinner, Stephen Gardiner used practical examples from the history of Britain prior to 1066 to illustrate why the prince must appear to be virtuous. Gardiner concludes that the prince should do what he can to encourage men of good virtue, but he may not always be in the position to accomplish this goal. The adoption of amoral politics in the early part of the 17<sup>th</sup> century was even more pronounced in the Low Countries

and France which were in the midst of destructive religious wars. Essentially Machiavellian views entered Paris through the writings of Guillaume Du Vair and Michel de Montaigne. In the Low Countries Justus Lipsius advanced the reason of state theory closest to Machiavelli's view. To Lipsius, the prince must learn to act as the fox, the same animal that Machiavelli uses to exemplify cunning,<sup>6</sup> because law must conform to the reason of necessity. (Skinner 1978, v I, 250-254) According to Malcolm, Lipsius's less religious version of the reason of state theory arose from the Renaissance version of neo-Stoicism. In the view of many contemporaries, the counter-reformation version of reason of state from the pens of some humanists and Jesuits had sanitized the doctrine to the point where it was universal civil prudence rather than a justification for seemingly immoral or amoral actions. The focus in Lipsius's version of the theory was on how to correctly mix the use of fraud with virtue while under the assumption that at least some fraud would always be necessary to rule. (Malcolm 2007, 100-101)

Such Machiavellian views also appeared in England during Hobbes's lifespan. According to Malcolm, Bacon closely followed Lipsius in his essay "Of Simulation and Dissimulation" on the subject of the mixed prudence which a ruler must possess. (Malcolm 2007, 102) The common thread connecting Lipsius, Bacon and Machiavelli is their discussions of how a prince could justify using fraud to shape public perceptions. In this context, Bacon frequently used the terms "dissimulation", which means a concealment of one's true intentions, and "simulation" or pretending to have thoughts or feelings that one does not really have. The works of Lipsius and Bacon focused on traits a prince was to appear to have rather than the realities of his character (102-103), a subtle change which followed Machiavelli in moving away from the traditional mirror of princes genre.

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<sup>6</sup> See Machiavelli 1998, ch. XVIII. Machiavelli was most likely borrowing from a traditional depiction of the fox as a politically cunning animal started by Cicero. (see Skinner 1981)

Additionally, Hobbes would have been intimately familiar with these ideas due to his relationship with Bacon. Aubrey wrote that Hobbes had translated three of Bacon's *Essays* into Latin, and he specifically mentioned one of the translations was Bacon's essay "Of the Greatness of Kingdoms". A modern scholar analyzed the translations and argued that "Of Simulation and Dissimulation" was one of the other two. (Malcolm 2007, 9-10) In this case, Hobbes would have worked on translating a work by Bacon which directly followed from, and was part of, the *ragione di stato* tradition. Even if Hobbes did not actually do the work of translating a reason of state treatise, one of the chief intellectual influences on him definitely subscribed to the view. This familiarity can be shown from within his own work as well. Hobbes seems to have largely agreed with Lipsius, specifically with the use of history typical to the reason of state literature. Hobbes quotes Lipsius's preference for Thucydides above all other historians at the close of the "Letter to the Reader" preceding his own translation of Thucydides. In fact, Hobbes's thoughts on Thucydides echo those of Lipsius exactly. Lipsius saw Thucydides as the greatest historian due to the grave and thick elocution he used and hidden lessons which Thucydides manages to communicate. Lipsius places Polybius second in rank to Thucydides (Hobbes 1975, 27), despite the fact that Polybius was generally more popular to the rest of the reason of state literature.

We also know that a wide array of *ragione di stato* literature was available to Hobbes via his patrons' libraries. In fact, these books may have been purchased by Hobbes acting in the capacity of an agent for Devonshire.<sup>7</sup> Hobbes created a catalog of all the books in the Cavendish library which shows that most of the vernacular works by contemporary authors in this library were in Italian on the subject of political history. Given the extended stay by Hobbes and Devonshire in Italy while they were both

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<sup>7</sup> At various points in his life Hobbes worked for two cousins who were both named William Cavendish. To avoid confusion, I will refer to each by their title. Hobbes tutored, accompanied to Italy, and possibly even co-authored works with the first who eventually became the second Earl of Devonshire. The second William Cavendish employed Hobbes as a secretary later in life and will be referred to by his title Mansfield. (see Malcolm 1996)

relatively young and the continuing correspondence between Devonshire and Fulgenzio Micanzio, Malcolm postulates an extensive Italian influence on both men's political views. (Malcolm 2007, 4, 109-110) The correspondence between Devonshire and Micanzio (which Hobbes translated into English for dissemination on the island) would have provided an insightful window on Italian political affairs. Micanzio was the personal assistant of a Venetian friar named Paolo Sarpi who was an anti-Papist writer claiming the temporal ruler was the only source of jurisdiction in order to defend Venice against the claims of the pope. (Malcolm 1996, 19-20) Thus Hobbes's relationship with Devonshire would have created an intimate knowledge of both the theoretical writings and actual diplomatic practice of the Italian version of *ragione di stato*.

A recently discovered translation of a propaganda document from the Thirty Years' War suggests that Hobbes had yet another chance to directly observe the *ragione di stato* arts of simulation and dissimulation in practice. According to Malcolm, Hobbes translated a document entitled *Altera secretissima instructio* which was a pro-Hapsburg propaganda tract from 1627 purporting to be secret advice to the Protestant Elector Palatine. The tract was outlawed in England, because it suggested the overthrow of Charles I. (Malcolm 2007, 1) Although its title claims it is the “Second Secret Instructions”, it was actually the last of three tracts claiming to be secret advice to the Elector. The first in the series was published in 1620 and immediately became famous. A follow up was published in 1622 which was very similar in style and content to the first, but it did not receive as much attention. The pamphlet which Hobbes translated was the third text from July or August of 1626.<sup>8</sup> All three works share a basic strategy. They outline the Elector's hopeless position and suggested treacherous policies such as betraying allies or attacking neutrals. (31-45)

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<sup>8</sup> Malcolm argues that this work was probably not written by the same author as the second due to the fact that its title assumes only one predecessor. There is also an apparent difference in style. This third piece which Hobbes translated used a much more Tacitean style which strove for rhetorical effect, which may account for why the third pamphlet seemed to enjoy more success around Europe than did the second. (Malcolm 2007, 43-44)

The work itself seems to be a carefully orchestrated piece of state propaganda and could not be the work of a mere partisan. According to Malcolm, the author seems to have been privy (but not intimately familiar with) secret Hapsburg diplomatic dispatches, particularly those concerning events in Constantinople which would have been largely unknown almost anywhere in Europe outside of the Hapsburg diplomatic service. This access to rather sensitive information suggests that the pamphlet had to have been more or less sanctioned by the Imperial government. The level of information truthfully presented made it hard for opponents to refute. (Malcolm 2007, 51-58) The fact that it was written in Latin rather than a local vernacular seems to indicate that the intended effect was not simply to demoralize the Palatine forces. By publishing in a language that crossed political boundaries and which was the domain of the educated elite, the author could place doubts in the minds of influential people in states which were possible allies for the Elector. Given the transient nature of seventeenth century alliances, propaganda could sew distrust among the opposing side by showing allies that the Elector could better protect his interests if he betrayed them. This strategy seems to motivate the suggestion of overthrowing the King of England. Also, the judicious mixture of truth and lies used in the interests of the state seems to follow the principles of simulation and dissimulation directly out of the reason of state literature.

The translation of this document by Hobbes was probably commissioned by Mansfield, because the only known copy of the translation was written in Hobbes's hand and was found among Mansfield's papers. (Malcolm 2007, 16) Additional evidence that it was commissioned by Mansfield is that he read Latin only poorly (as opposed to his cousin Devonshire who was proficient), yet was interested in keeping up with academic developments. (13-14) Hobbes was known to be a very capable translator, so it is likely that Mansfield would turn to such an accomplished figure who was already connected to his family and may have even been in his employ at the time that the pamphlet first arrived in England. (4) Therefore, Hobbes probably did not choose to translate this work out of intellectual interest as he

did for Thucydides' *History of the Peloponnesian War*. Yet this evidence shows us that he must have been fairly knowledgeable about the conditions on the Continent and the on-going attempts to apply reason of state ideas in Continental conflicts. Thus we can make the inference that these contemporary events and historically based treatises on politics were available to serve as empirical observations for his science of politics.

We can see the influence of the reason of state on Hobbes's civil science in his discussions about the duties of the sovereign and description of the state of enmity that continues to exist between commonwealths. Hobbes defines the goal and purpose of the commonwealth in nearly identical terms to the reason of state authors. The commonwealth is established to preserve the lives of the citizens and create the conditions which allow them to live more comfortably. (Hobbes 1996, 117) Reason of state authors frequently cited the Machiavellian precept “let the safety of the people be the supreme law” to allow the sovereign to override typical normative considerations. Hobbes also indirectly suggests that the public safety is always the highest consideration. This is demonstrated by the one condition under which the citizens are absolved of their duty to obey the Sovereign. The only way subjects can get out of the covenant is if they are no longer adequately protected (153), therefore safety is the only consideration that can override the civil power and law.

Malcolm notes that Hobbes may have been willing to allow the Sovereign to go greater lengths for the safety of the people than most of the reason of state authors. (Malcolm 2007, 117-118) However, it seems that the reason of state theories ultimately end up in a position very similar to Hobbes's stance. In particular, religious objections about princely honesty are emphatically rejected. Bacon comments in the essay “Of Simulation and Dissimulation” on the necessity of secrecy in politics. According to Bacon, the most important political skill Augustus possessed was the ability to discern when to tell the truth and how to portray it. The use of deception is at times a political

necessity (Bacon 1955, 17-18), but Bacon cautions against using the tactic if it would cause the prince to lose the trust of others. (20)

The relationships between the theories of Hobbes and Machiavelli (along with his later followers such as Bacon or Lipsius) are complicated by the fact that they are trying to accomplish different goals after starting with different perspectives. Yet their positions do seem to have a remarkable amount in common, which leads to some ambiguity regarding the extent to which the theories are compatible. Some commentators claim that Hobbes and Bacon do not share all that much in common. For instance, John Laird claims that Hobbes was not a Machiavellian concerning ethics or politics while classifying Bacon as mainly Machiavellian in politics. (Laird 1968, 48) In his defense of the claim that Hobbes was not a Machiavellian, Laird juxtaposes the positions of the two infamous political theorists on morality, use of force, and especially on their method of analysis. He admits that there are similarities on the first two issues. Both see the world as an inherently conflicting space where morality and honesty may be inappropriate during a war. The main difference that Laird points out is the abstraction found in Hobbes contrasting with the particularity of Machiavelli's historicism. Hobbes's turn to abstract science or knowledge of politics supposedly differentiates him from Machiavelli's use of practical experience (whether his own or from classical authors). Due to the difference between abstract theory and observation from experience, Laird draws from the *Discourses* to postulate that Machiavelli believed seditions would always be a legitimate possibility against tyrants. This contradicts Hobbes who conceptually eliminates the possibility of oppression let alone legitimate dissent and rebellion. Laird acknowledges that Machiavelli described tyranny as better for legislating new laws, but claims Machiavelli is an enemy of tyranny who speaks approvingly of Xenophon's *De Tyrannide*. Laird provides some scant historical evidence that external political relations made England in Hobbes's era safer than Italy during Machiavelli's life based on an impressionistic reference to the defeat of the Spanish Armada. (Laird 1968, 78-80)

Two glaring weaknesses to this line of argument seem apparent. The first is that external relations remained highly dangerous in Hobbes's day (as shown in the content of the Hapsburg propaganda piece discussed above and the king's reaction to the pamphlet). The second problem is that it is not apparent that Machiavelli was so strongly against tyranny that he would have considered the Hobbesian Leviathan unacceptable. Tyranny was legitimate to Machiavelli when circumstances demanded it (consider Machiavelli's praise for Cesare Borgia's actions while subduing Romagna and making it peaceful in *The Prince* ch. VII and XVII). Machiavelli would have expected a man intimately connected to highly-placed political actors in both England and Italy to have a good sense of what was needed in the politics of his day. Tyranny might also have been necessary given changing political circumstances. One of the main political problems of Hobbes's day was how to deal with the religious sectarianism unleashed by the Reformation. In some respects, the situation demanded something like the reforms of a classical legislator as described in Machiavelli. Legislators such as Solon, Moses and Lycurgus ruled as benevolent tyrants while laying down the laws which allowed the members of their respective societies to co-exist. The Hobbesian sovereign is clearly intended for the same role in the atmosphere of Reformation-era "confessionalization". It is entirely plausible that Machiavelli and Hobbes would agree that a tyrant defining the boundaries of socially acceptable doctrine was the only way for anyone to work towards the ultimate goal that both agreed upon. In other words, the religious passions had run so high that something drastic had to be done if the safety of the people was to be ensured.

Like Machiavelli's prince, the Hobbesian Sovereign need not follow the guidelines of truthfulness which the more religiously minded thought constrained a ruler. Hobbes holds a position similar to Machiavelli and the reason of state theorists, because the Sovereign has no duty to tell the truth and may even have a duty to lie in certain circumstances. The Sovereign is the sole judge of what is conducive to the health of the commonwealth. The responsibility to preserve the peace against both



foreign and domestic disturbances gives the Sovereign the power to judge whether doctrines are conducive to peace. Truth or falsehood are not guidelines by which doctrines should be judged in a civil society. (Hobbes 1996, 124) This description effectively allows the Sovereign to act in the same way as princes in the Machiavellian school. Hobbes's sovereign and the prudential Machiavellian statesman share the same goal, and both become the judge of how best to achieve that goal. No doctrine (including the Christian doctrine calling for truthfulness) has the power of constraining the Hobbesian Sovereign, because he is the only judge of both policy and doctrine. The difference between the two is that Hobbes concentrates on providing the means to “certain knowledge” that would “demonstrate the necessity of government” and provide definitions and entailments which prove its function. He does not provide much of the particular detail which goes into creating prudence, although Malcolm argues that Hobbes does admit experience and prudence are very necessary for a good councilor. (Malcolm 2007, 118)

The reason of state theorists presuppose what Hobbes is trying to prove—that a state must exist to protect the people. This starting point allows them to go on to provide the details of how the sovereign can achieve this goal. It is not surprising that Hobbes would not take this route. By making this advice readily available, such doctrines encourage subjects to second guess their sovereign's actions and real motivations (which was precisely Botero's complaint). Such policy evaluations are one step removed from men acting upon their own evaluations which will be made according to their own passions; in other words, the *ragione di stato* represents solid advice to the sovereign which may unfortunately cause a return to the state of nature if too obviously followed. Therefore, the intended audience for each theorist matters in understanding the form in which we have received their theories. Hobbes was writing to influential subjects in order to provide them with knowledge of their own obligations to the commonwealth under the assumption that the effects of convincing the preachers and lawyers would trickle down to the lower levels of society. Machiavelli addresses himself to the ruler

assailed by the inopportune caprices of Fortuna under the assumption that the best way to overcome Fortuna is with the support of a well-armed and (if necessary) fearfully obedient populace.

With regards to foreign powers, Hobbes also ends up with a doctrine very similar to the reason of state theorists. Neither Hobbes or Machiavelli's followers directly advocate wars of conquest for the sake of glory. In "Of the True Greatness of Kingdoms and Estates", Bacon emphasizes that the reasons for going to war must be just and not simply to feed the vain desire to expand. However, he almost immediately explains how the Romans nearly always had an excuse to fight by making alliances and coming to their allies' rescue. To Bacon, such foreign wars may be necessary, because no body (the analogy obviously includes civic bodies) can be healthy without some exercise. Foreign war is compared to the heat of exercise, but a civil war is "like the heat of a fever" (Bacon 1955, 81-83). Bacon clearly makes the assumption that reasons to fight will always be available and that it is simply a matter of properly arranging such conflict so that the commonwealth can benefit rather than suffer from fighting.

In this case, Hobbes actually takes the more pacific position. According to Hobbes, commonwealths remain in the state of nature because there is no higher power over all of them to prevent fighting. This condition of external anarchy is not nearly as bad as the war of all against all between individuals. Peace between subjects allows them to develop the arts which make life comfortable. (Hobbes 1996, 90) Hobbes admits that the thing to be most avoided is civil war (128), but he never suggests that fighting a foreign power could be a method for avoiding civil war. The condition of war is made more dangerous by uncertainty whether for individuals or for commonwealths, because some are inclined to fight out of a desire for glory rather than any real threat to their security. However, this results in the paradox that a man or people may need to increase their power through acquisition in order to defend themselves. (88) In this case, aggression for the sake of

exercise would make a state less secure by triggering an arms race or provoking unnecessary fear in other commonwealths.

### **State Centralization and Sovereignty**

Both the reason of state theories and the work of Hobbes reflect the fact that conditions had changed to the point where the nation state as a self-contained, sovereign political unit came to predominate as a theoretical assumption. There are two practical historical reasons why the state as we know it came into being in this time period. First, military power became centralized within the state due largely to a combination of technological and economic forces. Second, extraterritorial political authorities such as the Holy Roman Emperor or the Papacy were unable to enforce their claims.

The medieval prince typically had to accept the fact that other individuals were going to use violence and he could not exert his authority to stop them. (Brunner 1992, 28) This forced acceptance of violence was caused by the military reality that monarchs had to defend large areas with a small number of men supplied by the income of their estates. The prince claimed to retain the right of sovereign authority over the fief, usually insisting he had only given the right of ownership to his vassal. In reality, the monarch would not have needed to give ownership of the land to the barons in the first place if he had possessed the power to defend it. Authority in the feudal social order became decentralized because vassals saw it as a personal possession. They believed that authority could be passed down to children, bought, sold, or used as a dowry like any other possession. (Opello and Rosow 1999, 29) The oaths of fealty the vassals took were very ambiguous, so the vassals claimed ownership gave them the right to rule their property without interference. In one oath, the vassal swore that as long as his lord “shall hold to me as I deserve” (Thatcher and McNeal 1905, 105), he would provide military service and look out for his lord’s interests. Vassals argued that the wording implied they had the right to decide whether they were being treated correctly.

The lack of an authoritative body with the means to enforce order meant violence was an accepted part of the society, especially in the form of the feud. There were socially defined differences between the acceptable feud and unacceptable brigandage. (Brunner 1992, 6; Halsall 1998, 9) The feud had to be declared before hostile actions occurred, fought for just reasons, and only could include certain properties or occasionally persons. (Brunner 1992, 14) In these regards, it resembled war (35), which was declared just by Aquinas and Augustine under specific circumstances very similar to those required to make the feud permissible. Even violence against the ruler was not necessarily illegitimate or considered high treason within the overall form of the feud. (9) As late as 1535, the Hapsburg Emperor Charles V's law code allowed the feud in certain circumstances. (30)

The chaotic system of self-help that had existed for centuries in Europe finally began to end in the fifteenth century with the consolidation of central power into the modern state. Urbanization, general population growth, increased commerce and trade, growth in capital markets, changes in legal institutions, and new technologies all helped make this change possible. (Porter 1995, 24) An urban population concentrated in certain locations was easier for the king to defend and tax, while administrative centralization allowed the king more control over the machinery of government, so he no longer had to rely on the nobles. Military technology evolved to favor infantrymen of the common estate using the pike, longbow, and firearm over mounted and armored knights. Small groups of knights raised by minor nobles could no longer fight royal infantry armies equipped with artillery to demolish fortifications. The expense of new weaponry for a mass army made the nobles unable to compete directly against the monarch whose finances finally gave him the military strength to enforce his laws. For instance, the Holy Roman Emperor was finally able to outlaw the feud in the law code of 1555 (Brunner 1992, 30), because military power was finally concentrated in the state which could enforce the monopoly on violence that princes had long claimed and sought.

Finally, the religious wars of the Reformation eliminated the control external authorities had possessed over states. This change is exemplified in the Peace of Augsburg, which was concluded in 1555. According to Hermann Tuchle, the original wording contained in the Peace of Augsburg was “*Ubi unus dominus, ibi una sit religio*” (where there is one ruler, there should be one religion).<sup>9</sup> A Lutheran book of canon law from 1599 changed the wording to the now more famous formulation of “*Cuius regio, eius et religio*” (he who rules the land decides the religion). “*Religio*” in this sense is meant as the public practice of religion rather than the actual confession of faith. (Tuchle 1971, 155) Hobbes warns that private judgment of conscience is among the problems most likely to topple the commonwealth. Contrary opinions about what is right are likely to cause conflicts which cannot be resolved except by an earthly authority whose commands become the public conscience. (Hobbes 1996, 223; Hobbes 1969) To this end, Hobbes subjects the public act of worship in a commonwealth to the command of the Sovereign. (Hobbes 1996, 253)<sup>10</sup> This seems to be a simple extension of the principle that the Sovereign has the power to regulate against what he sees as harmful doctrines in order to maintain the peace and protect the subjects.

Finally, Hobbes argues that the sovereign power must rule alone and cannot be split (Hobbes 1996, 225), thus eliminating the Pope or the Holy Roman Emperor as political powers. In fact, both had ceased to be imposing political powers nearly a century before he published *Leviathan*. Neither took part in the Peace of Augsburg which was essentially a political settlement based on the fact that neither the Catholic or Lutheran rulers in Germany could crush the other side. (Anderson 1998, 205) Charles V began abdicating his lands in October of 1555 and completed the process when the electors of the Holy Roman Empire accepted his abdication in February of 1558. His brother Ferdinand

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<sup>9</sup> The Lutherans originally agreed amongst themselves to demand that Catholic princes tolerate Lutherans, but Catholics in Protestant lands could be persecuted as idolaters. The Duke of Austria and Bishop of Mainz threatened to pull out of the negotiations and begin fighting again unless this provision was removed.

<sup>10</sup> In this case, Hobbes nearly mirrors the rhetoric of the treaty, because he specifically says that where the commonwealth is one artificial person (which would be ruled by one Sovereign) there should be one public religion. (Hobbes 1996, 253)

administered the Empire throughout this period. (132) Therefore it seems that the peace was concluded by an outgoing ruler who no longer had the will or resources to fight over religion in Germany after a series of costly wars with France. Ferdinand inherited the much poorer German lands which did not provide him with the resources to continue to fight the Lutheran princes at a later time. This agreement allowed him to retain symbolic authority while ending any real chance at wielding the political power of a Hobbesian sovereign.

Ferdinand took part in the Peace of Augsburg, but only from the very weak position of the presumed heir rather than Emperor in his own right. According to Tuchle, the spokesman for the Diet thanked King Ferdinand for his role in concluding the peace in the name of his brother the Emperor Charles V.<sup>11</sup> Charles would have preferred to have a religious settlement concluded by a church council and refused to attend or give direction to the Diet, but instead allowed Ferdinand to conduct the affairs of the Diet as he felt fit. However, Charles registered a protest in advance against anything which might be against the Catholic religion. (Tuchle 1971, 145-147) This suggests that Charles knew that a religious settlement with the Lutherans was inevitable as a practical necessity, but could not bring himself to publicly acknowledge the fact for reasons either of pride or faith. In addition to the diminished Imperial presence and influence, the Church withdrew as well. Initially Pope Marcellus II had dispatched a legate, Cardinal Morone, to the proceedings. However, Marcellus died, forcing Morone to return to Rome for a new papal election. The new pope, Paul IV, was very counter-Reformation minded and therefore declined to send Morone back to the Diet after his election. As a result, the parties in negotiating the settlement were the leaders of the various German communities. Most of these were more interested in increasing their own autonomy than reaching any type of genuine religious accommodation. (148-149) The leading ecclesiastical prince in Germany was the

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<sup>11</sup> The presumed successor to the Imperial throne was given the title King of the Romans. He still had to be confirmed by the electors, but Ferdinand's claim to succession in the Holy Roman Empire was secured by this title. (see Anderson 1998)

Elector Bishop of Mainz, but he was more worried about preventing the complete collapse of the Catholic Church as an institution in Germany than religious reunification. Likewise, the Lutheran princes and estates saw the negotiations as political opportunities to consolidate their control over church lands. This peace occurred after “every conceivable means of restoring religious unity had been exhaustively tried out over the preceding thirty-five years” (151-153), so their pragmatic pursuit of political objectives of peace and prosperity seem quite justified.

The lack of participation from the Pope and Emperor was yet another reflection of the changing distribution of power that favored the centralized, territorial state. These two parties admittedly removed themselves from the negotiations and were not forced out, but the fact that a settlement was possible without their involvement or direct consent marked an important change reflecting the reality that both these figures had been steadily losing prerogatives over the course of the 16<sup>th</sup> century. First, the Holy Roman Emperor was in a greatly weakened political position after being forced to make generations worth of concessions to the German princes in order to secure election. One of the chief ways that Lutheran princes were able to extract religious and political concessions from the Holy Roman Emperor was to withhold their military support, and this tactic was used extensively during the Ottoman invasion. During the invasion, Charles was more preoccupied with defending his territory in western Europe against Francis I of France. In order to raise forces without his brother Charles' assistance, Ferdinand was forced to make concessions to both the Lutheran and Catholic German princes which further reduced the power the Imperial court could exert over its supposed subject princes. (Anderson 1998, 107-108) In other words, secular political units in Germany were able to exert their power to eliminate extraterritorial claims to authority.

The Pope was also in a much weaker position than he had been during Machiavelli's day. By the 1560's, the Italian peninsula was effectively controlled by Spain after decades of beating off French attacks and maintaining large armies in the region. (Anderson 1998, 120-124) This was in effect only

the last in a string of events where monarchies gained power at the expense of the Holy See. According to Skinner, secular authorities resented the Church's power and independence, therefore both France and Spain forced the Popes into settlements on issues of taxation and awarding benefices within national churches. France was the first country to force such a settlement with the Pragmatic Sanction of Bourges in 1438 which restricted the Pope's authority to make nominations to vacant sees and to benefices. Control of most benefices was transferred to the French crown. An even more extensive series of Concordats were arranged between the Crown of Spain and the Church. Ferdinand and Isabella managed to wrest control of all major ecclesiastical appointments from the papacy in 1482. In later years they were able to geographically extend this unprecedented power to the conquered kingdom of Granada and their possessions in the New World. (Skinner 1978, v II, 59-60) These areas where the secular rulers managed to take some control from the Pope remained Catholic, while the Reformation was much more successful in areas such as England, Scandinavia, and Germany where conflict remained over the power of the Papacy to appoint offices and exact financial tributes. Skinner suggests that it was the presence of these conflicts which allowed Lutheranism to spread. The rulers were not interested in the ideas as theologically superior to Roman theology; they were much more inclined to see the new doctrines as possible ideological weapons with which to press their on-going grievances against the Church. (60-63)

This historical evidence suggests that something like what we now call the Weberian nation state with the territorial monopoly of violence had already effectively come into existence by the end of the 16<sup>th</sup> century. Therefore when Hobbes provides theoretical justifications for the sovereign's powers, he actually reflects observations on the realities of the European political environment in his day. The political theories penned by both Hobbes and the reason of state writers reflect this change in reality. All of these works take a pragmatic view of politics where the state is assumed to have the duty and power to protect its citizens. The need for security and absence of any other possible source for



protection give the state two claims. The state becomes the only legitimate political authority for the same reason that it can claim to legitimate violations of the prevailing moral order.

## CONCLUSION

In the final analysis, Hobbes's work presents a synthesis of pragmatic, historical means and universal philosophical ends for politics. His clear preference is for subjects in commonwealths to understand their duties through rigorous deduction, because the results of such a demonstration will make everyone fully understand the obligation of obedience to the commonwealth. A universal and fully developed version of the civil science will maintain peace within the commonwealth and prevent conflicting passions and quests for personal glory from developing into civil war (although this does not guarantee external peace). The massive amount of secondary literature available on Hobbes quite correctly explicates this portion of his political theory. The part that is missing from the current discussion is the attention which Hobbes paid to real world considerations of how to bring about conditions which could lead to the full development of this knowledge or science.

Hobbes endeavored to teach elites to obey and uphold political authority in an attempt to eliminate sources of domestic conflict. One could say that he uses history and contemporary experience in order to make individuals strongly suspect that obedience to political authority is the best road to peace, with the caveat that he intends to prove this is the case when peace has been firmly established. The initial method used to convince people to follow this all important injunction was based on empirical observation and experience. This use of history without a grounding in the first principles of philosophy was justifiably consistent with his idea of science, because the initial definitions and formal conclusions which form his civil science would have to be based upon empirical

references to the world of actual political experience and conflicts rather than idealized politics.

Additionally, science purports to be universal, therefore a science of politics has to explain both past and present. Thus history must be consistent with the conclusions he derives, but it also helps to establish his foundational assumptions of the natural pursuits of human appetites and the role of the commonwealth.

Once subjects understand both the need for and purpose of the Commonwealth, they will presumably be more obedient to the Sovereign and peace will hopefully ensue. It is during this time of peace that subjects would develop and learn the full philosophical treatment of politics, and thus would learn to comply with their duties towards the Sovereign under philosophical conviction. To Hobbes, a proper understanding of history is absolutely vital for demonstrating the need for his theory as well as an expedient which can pacify civil conflict and start illuminating a path which will eventually be fully lit by human reason and the spread of his science.

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