

University of Lodz
Polish Geographical Society
Lodz, 11-12 September, 2004
RELIGION AT THE TIME OF CHANGES

ON REASON AND RELIGION IN TH.HOBBS'S LEVIATHAN

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"If one prophet deceive another, what certainty is there of knowing the will of God, by other way than that of reason?"
Leviathan, Chapter 32

Abstrakt

O rozumie i religii w Lewiatanie Thomasa Hobbes'a

Prezentowany artykuł jest próbą przedstawienia bardzo szczególnej części rozważań Hobbes'a, tj. rozważań dotyczących roli religii w życiu politycznym i myśli politycznej. Rozważania te odnajdujemy w drugiej części „Lewiatana”, która poświęcona jest wyłącznie Biblii.

Hobbes skupia się w swej książce na Biblii zdając sobie sprawę z konfliktu między prawami naturalnymi i biblijnymi objawieniami. Wie także jak ogromne znaczenie ma złagodzenie tego konfliktu. Hobbes proponuje taką interpretację Biblii, dzięki której możliwe jest uwzględnienie wolności jednostki wynikającej z praw naturalnych. Ma to osłabić napięcie między chrześcijaństwem a naukami głoszonymi przez myśliciela. Współcześni Hobbes'a byli przerażeni tą egzegezą Pisma Św., pod którą każdy anglikanin czy purytanin mógł z łatwością odkryć ateizm.

Nie jest prostą oceną dorobku Thomasa Hobbes'a. Wynika to z różnorodności form i stylów, jakimi się posługiwał, a także już ugruntowanej pozycji, jaką zajmuje w naukach politycznych. Mimo polemik „Lewiatana” należy uznać za prawdopodobnie największe arcydzieło myśli politycznej napisane w języku angielskim. Stanowi ono sumę przemyśleń autora dotyczących polityki, prawa i teologii. To właśnie ostatniej z wymienionych dyscyplin poświęcony jest artykuł.

Any attempt at examining and evaluating Hobbes's work represents no simple task, not only because of the variety and density of form and style, but also of the special place held by Hobbes and the hobbesian experience in the modern political thought. In spite of any controversy and transformation, Hobbes's masterpiece - the *Leviathan* - is regarded as being the greatest, perhaps the only masterpiece of political philosophy written in the English language, for *Leviathan* still stands as the crowning achievement of his political science. It sums up entirely Hobbes's political thought regarding his philosophical, juridical and theological principles. It is this latter aspect of his work that we shall turn to in our study.

Hobbes's philosophy is mainly a philosophy of power, more precisely because philosophy means reasoning; reason means elucidating the mechanism and the mechanism is essentially the combination, transfer and resolution of forces. The XVII-th century brings again

to the forefront the great metaphysical and scientific problems with regard to man, which stirs the interest in the political, juridical, philosophical, literary and religious field, illustrative for the statute of the individual viewed in his particular entity as well as in his role of social personage.

Man is a real complex of powers: thus desire represents the desire for power; pride - the illusion about power; honor - the opinion of power; life - the constant exercise of power and finally death - the absolute loss of power.

Hobbes's philosophy reveals the reader a series of problems that confront mankind up to this day. There are metaphysical and epistemological problems, moral and juridical ones, social and political. The way in which these problems are solved has been outdated in several respects, by the progress of the speculative thinking and of the positive sciences. For all that, his system remains astounding and projecting some of his ideas in nowadays world proves the all-encompassing view of Hobbes. Hobbes remains a multilateral thinker; in spite of his somehow dogmatic way he expresses himself in writing. He leaves room for understanding that between the ways of knowledge and reality, science has to resume itself to the construction of our own spirit.

Within our present study, in order to explain the significance of the title chosen, we shall specify that the two notions characteristic to Hobbes's work have been aimed at: reason and revelation. In what the previous is concerned, reason, it is worth mentioning that to Hobbes, philosophy identifies itself with reason (the capacity of reasoning). For a better understanding of Hobbes's identification with reason, we have to take into account the three main contrasts to be found in his writings, i.e. the contrast between philosophy-theology (reason-faith); philosophy-science (reason-empiricism) and philosophy-experience (reason-sense). As for the latter notion, we talk about revelation not in the old meaning, pre-eminently mystical, but as a notion attributed to the process within which nature reveals its essence, its inner substance, in the diversity of the phenomenal world (natural revelation). It reflects a dialectical understanding of the relationship between essence and phenomena.

Reason sorts out the conflict of human nature; it is the way of joining between naturalness and civility. The civil state cannot be otherwise conceived but starting from the state of nature by means of reason. By the triumph of the calculus of interests which reason has ushered in, people substitute the state of nature, leaving room for the civil state. This is the principle Hobbes demonstrates in *Leviathan*.

We have tried to trace within our study, the stages of constituting the hobbesian State, starting from Hobbes's philosophical project and his idea of political philosophy, insisting upon

the insufficiency of the state of nature (by paying special attention to the social contract theory) and further on, the passage to the creation of the civil State, as well as upon the relationship between the baroque thinking and the illusory perfection of the *Leviathan*, and last but not least upon the idea of utopia and transposing the *Leviathan* in this idea.

Taking into account the great variety of interpretation of Hobbes, by the writings both in England and in other parts of the world, there is an essential point to be made: we talk about a perennial fascination of his work.

Understanding Hobbes is essential to understanding modernity. The modern political theory starts with Hobbes. Nevertheless, the tradition of starting from Hobbes has something to be said for it. The English Civil Wars were events of European significance¹ for political theory and *Leviathan* was its most vigorous growth. The new approaches to physical science, moral, religious and epistemological skepticism, the vocabulary of subjective rights, state of nature and social contract; the tension between demands for order at virtually any cost and the desire for civil and religious liberty, all of these can be seen in Hobbes's philosophy. Perhaps the most distinctive sense in which Hobbes represents a starting point is his thoroughgoing attempt, not only to subordinate the church to the state, but also to subordinate the epistemological claims² of religion and faith to those of 'natural knowledge'. Neither Marsilio of Padua, nor Machiavelli, each of whom had articulated a purely account of the state and government, had been able to locate it within a fully developed, secular, moral psychology. It attempted for the first time since antiquity to give an account of politics within a detailed and unified secular worldview.

With the exception of Locke, no subsequent thinker was able to rest his arguments on essentially theological premises, and even in Locke's case, his philosophical psychology is not in accordance with the political assumption of a theology grounded law of nature. Instead, thinkers increasingly argued on Hobbes's assumptions, namely, that both moral standards and the possibility of constructing the motives needed to adhere to them must be discovered in the psychology of human beings and the structure of their society. Moreover, social circumstances were increasingly seen to shape psychology, making an understanding of historical processes a vital part of any respectable political theory.

Hobbes thus is the first and foremost of the modern political theorists, concerned with the problems of man, laws of nature and the state.

Starting from this variety of interpreting Hobbes, we have emphasized two fundamental

¹ I. Hampshire-Monk, *A History of Modern Political Thought. Major Thinkers from Hobbes to Marx*, Blackwell, U.K., 2000, p.xii.

² *Ibidem*

concepts - **Nature** and **State** - based on which Hobbes has built, subtly and thoroughly, a series of both natural and institutional relationships, which have been and remain basic grounds of his unrivalled and very well-conceived system of the *Leviathan*.

The *Leviathan* brings forth several changes with regard to Hobbes's previous works. The great principles of Hobbes's masterpiece are: the individual, the natural equality of men and the transition from the state of nature to the civil state.

The individual is to Hobbes, in his quality of natural reality, the first great principle based on which man has to be studied according to the nature and dynamics of its passions; in his view, necessity governing the world of things and people.

The natural equality for people is twofold, first in a positive way of the natural right, source of equality. In fact, all people by their very nature, have the right upon all things, that is, "in the state of nature, everyone has the right to do everything he likes"¹. This equality actually grounds the right of human nature to self-governance and this enables man to subdue and govern his peer, of opposing and even fighting him. In a negative way, man is not recognized this inborn equality of inclination towards war, expressed by exercising the natural right of everyone upon all people and upon everything. Thus, the state of war takes place in such a way that the very nature is destroyed and people kill themselves amongst each other.

The passage from the state of nature to the civil state is inevitable. This third principle is parallel to the passage from war to peace by means of reason. The passage from the state of nature to the civil state is actually legitimate.

Finally, the social contract theory lays the grounds of civil society and materializes the principle according to which the State institution unites the people among themselves by a voted covenant [convention] which grounds and consolidates for good their civil obligation. The two recognized sources that lie at the very base of the social contract are the submission and its voluntary institution. There from, the particular consequences devolving from the social contract occur. Thus, there are no differences between the civil society and state and the sovereign is no part of the contract by which the individuals commit themselves in view of transferring their rights and powers over to a third party, in the presence of the sovereign.

These characteristics of Hobbes's thought we have evoked so far constitute the materialization of motivations and the process of passage from the state of nature to the civil state. Thus, the present study is an attempt at illustrating two successive states, of which the first one generates, whereas the second one finalizes the problem of man's transformation, to the extent to which it can be conceived by man's confrontation with his wishes, his reason, passion

¹ De Cive, cap.10, p. 85

and will, with what he suffers and constructs.

A particular role in the study on Hobbes is attributed to his grand philosophical project.

Which is the content of Hobbes's political philosophy? In order to understand it, it should be resituated within the general background of his philosophy. The working out of it is situated at the crossing point of a project and of a crisis. The project is considerable and to a certain extent comparable to that of some of his great contemporaries. Hobbes had in mind to conceive a rational construction of the whole human knowledge with the aim of introducing order, certitude and truth.

The crisis is of another order than the project, though as considerable as that one. Reference is made here to the beginnings of the English Civil War, the history of which Hobbes was to write himself later in a work entitled *Behemoth*.

The idea of founding on a new basis the political knowledge belonged to his philosophy; that knowledge was to enlighten the people upon the need for founding the state and its internal structure, with the purpose of avoiding feud, conflict and war. The civil philosophy, therefore, had to build a theoretical knowledge, the function of which was practical. Hobbes had to underline in *Leviathan* this very practical utility of the civil philosophy, opposing it to the vain creators of utopias¹.

We have mentioned before that working out the philosophy was placed at the crossing point of a project and of a crisis; but the project changes the sense of crisis in order to yield a new ethical and political knowledge.

In the Introduction to *Leviathan*, Th. Hobbes presents his readers an image of man and nature which was as bold in its implications for man and society as it was instructive and illustrating. Hobbes boldly and firmly claims that there is an analogy between the creation of the community by man and the creation of the world by God. "Nature, the art by which God created the world and governs it, is imitated by the art of man, in that he can create an artificial animal"². Man has somehow imitated the divine. Those who have interpreted him, as being the revising of his entire philosophical system righteously so, have evoked the description of this act by God. The terminology Hobbes uses in order to explain the creation of this artificial animal - the Commonwealth or the State - has been preeminently mechanical. Those interpreting Hobbes did not overlook this aspect. The world he seems to describe is an absolutely mechanical place, over-crowded with other beings (humans) absolutely mechanical,

¹ Yves Charles Zarka, *Hobbes et la pensée politique moderne*, PUF/Quadrige, 2001

² *Leviathan*, Introduction, in *The English Works of Thomas Hobbes*, Sir William Molesworth ed. (London, 1839, John Bohn, 1966 reprint).

who are busy with creating other mechanical entities (the communities) which are not different from themselves. The surprises await the reader who carefully distinguishes the analogy intended by Hobbes and if this does not set apart the implications, these would serve as a key to understanding the theory anticipated by the analogy. According to this analogy, Nature is God's work of art. This seems implicitly to suggest that we must not take nature (God's art) for the word (the product of God's art). Nature is both at the genesis of that complex of springs, arches and wheels which, according to Hobbes, make up the world, and the principle that governs it.

We then find more about the nature of God's creating art and of His relationship to the world He created, by our focusing on the implications the second part of Hobbes's analogy have as compared to the first one. Imitating the Divine art by man proves to be an imitation of man by himself, i.e. "that rational and extraordinary craft of nature"¹. The *Leviathan* was created by man after his own image. Should this analogy apply here, it implies the fact that the world of strings, arches and small wheels that God created (and whose integrant part man is) is at the same time the imitation of God!

Given this analogy, man is, accordingly not only the creator of the *Leviathan*, but also its matter. The image is astounding. It tacitly instructs us upon the fact that God, the creator of the world, is at the same time undistinguished from the world. Its formal difference from the world, i.e. as its creator seems only to identify him with the principles of mathematical physics, into the image of which there could not be created but a world of strings, arches and tiny wheels. Naturally, God has to be something more than the mathematical ordering of the world. According to Hobbes, He is at the same time its genesis, his Author. As long as his mechanical principles do not set themselves into motion, God's mere identification with the principle of mathematical physics is no longer justifiable. However, there is not much room for the personal involvement of a biblical God. The apparent atheistic implications of the analogy made by Hobbes were not lost amongst his devoted contemporaries. They were sufficient to cause his denigration. Not before long, hobbesism was to be regarded as a virtual synonym for atheism, while Hobbes himself a real disciple of the devil. The Introduction to *Leviathan* comprises the disparate components of a theory that is highly different from the mechanical theory for which he was granted credit, philosophically. Hobbes's philosophy is more dynamic than analogous. At the level of his philosophy and politics, especially, it is not that much mechanical as it is dialectical.

The lack of continuity in Hobbes's philosophy is at time dramatized, noticing the existent disproportion among his intention of generating a philosophical system, and the non-

¹ *Leviathan*, Introduction

systematic order he published the separate Elements of his three-party system. Hobbes had first published the third part and the final part of his system, *De Cive*, at 1642, having published the basis of his system, *De Corpore*, the last, at 1655. What might be regarded as being the initial version of the second part of his system, Human Nature, was published at 1650, as a first part of the Elements of Law. In other words Hobbes reverted the systematic order of his philosophical Elements, as their publishing is concerned. This was regarded by some as a proof of the fact that his philosophy and theory on human nature do not depend on his natural philosophy; the way Hobbes would have like us to believe.

Hobbes's *Leviathan* is a work of great beneficence and of hope for mankind. But Hobbes's hopes for mankind are associated with the idea that human beings are burdened and troubled with inclinations out of which they forge the instruments of their own destruction and unhappiness. In this pairing of hope and full awareness of burden, Hobbes seems to assume a biblical dimension, for like Scripture, he finds a way to build something good out of the most discordant matter, and as with Scripture, the building is done on nothing but the profoundest acceptance of human limitations¹.

The second half of *Leviathan* may be understood as Hobbes's teaching and warning of religion is that great thing needed to guarantee the success of the project he inaugurates in the first half of *Leviathan*. In Hobbes's *Leviathan*, the study of the Bible and Christianity considers the importance of religion to Hobbes's science for making the world safe for human beings as they are. Religion for Hobbes is a tool; it is not fundamental to his thought.

Understanding Hobbes with regard to human beings and religion is important because the nowadays society - a liberal one, one might say - is founded on ideas on rights and the purposes of governments that were first established by Hobbes. A question arises on what kind of religion did Hobbes associate to the project of his science of natural justice? The religion that Hobbes teaches is not Christianity and his theology aims at something else. If a growing number of contemporary Hobbes scholars believe that Hobbes was a Christian, and even an Orthodox one, and that *Leviathan* reflects this, this view is rejected by others.

In the second half of *Leviathan*, Hobbes turns to the subject of God, religion, Christianity and the Bible. Thus the teachings of Christianity is the main subject of this part.

In our study we aim at observing Hobbes's treatment of religion, specifically his treatment of the Bible in *Leviathan*, wherein he makes a reinterpretation of it. He implicitly no

¹ Paul D. Cooke, xi, *Hobbes and Christianity. Reassessing the Bible in Leviathan*, Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, Inc. Lanham, Boulder, New York, London, 1996.

longer regards God and the Bible as being the supreme authority. In Hobbes's view the foundation for thinking about the human situation and civil association resides in the natural rights and not in responsibility to God. He thus reveals the true character of his teaching about man and his rights, i.e. his work, is in tension with revealed religion.

According to Hobbes, civil associations are to be ruled by natural reason that discovers natural laws. Th. Hobbes equals these with the word of God. Man's actions are taken by natural reason; each human individual has the right to preserve himself above all. Examining Hobbes's laws of nature and the natural rights principle they serve, there can be traced the tension with the biblical view, according to which there are higher principles than self-preservation and the right to (one) self. The right to oneself, according to the Christian faith, is the principal thing a person must give up in order to serve Christianity. True faith means the capacity to waive one's own rights. The life of faith ends up in the annihilation of the right to oneself "if any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow me. For whosoever will save his life shall lose it; but whosoever will lose his life for my sake, the same shall save it" (Luke 9:23-24) In Hobbes's hands, the Bible seems to be transformed. By means of his explanation of the Bible, Hobbes emphasizes the meaning of self-preservation, which is central to human rights. He places rights at the center of what God does for man. Hobbes confers these principles a sense of the glory that once was reserved for the biblical kingdom of God alone. Hobbes bases man's political life in the fear of violent death at the hands of men and the passion for safety and self-preservation has the effect of calling attention more to the instincts than to the more elevated human characteristics. Hobbes understood that building on this low but solid foundation was not enough either to mitigate the fears of the individual facing natural death or to entirely safeguard against the behavior that leads to violent, unnatural death. For this, religion was needed. Hobbes supplies that religion - a new understanding of God, nature's God, to bless a new view of man¹.

How and by what knowledge could Hobbes have come to the conclusion that man is alone in the universe? Hobbes study of human psychology teaches him and reveals to us that by reason human beings know nothing of God and that religion and God are the inventions of human anxiety². In a few words, the essence of Hobbes's humanism resides in the idea that without God, man is alone and free. This freedom in the hobbesian state of nature means a natural freedom of the human passions duties to any higher authority than the self-interest of the individual. This implies not only a natural freedom for self-defense, but also the freedom to

¹ Paul D. Cooke, xi.

² *Leviathan* Chpt. 11,12 on God and religion as the invention of human anxiety.

attack and subdue others. The word freedom, therefore, may finally have only little importance for Hobbes's thought. One may be bound by the passions that drive us, but one is left free to find the best way to their satisfaction. No authority, natural or divine, limits our choices.

Hobbes beings are left alone, without a master, to confront nature. Thus, they no longer are mainly interested to know God, whereas formerly, the fear of God was the beginning of wisdom, which suggests the mastery of self for the purpose of pleasing God¹. Now, the fear of death at the hands of men and the understanding of this by human beings suggest that wisdom is not mastery of self, but a kind of necessary egoism that is satisfied only by mastering other men. The 'end' of wisdom for such beings is no longer knowledge of the wholly; it is rather knowledge of how to triumph over others, of find safety for them. In the biblical view, the great end of knowledge is love. But Hobbes teaches that love can no longer be part of the equation, for knowledge is no longer ruled by a duty to love, but by the need for human beings to remain secure in their masterlessness. Thus the end of knowledge is mastery of the self for the sake of wisdom, a wisdom that begins with "the fear of the Lord". The essence of Hobbes's humanism may be said to be that the knowledge of the state of nature and not of the holy, is the beginning of wisdom².

On the state of nature in Hobbes's writings. We might say that with Hobbes, Nature corresponds to the instinct of preservation led by reason and therefore organized in such a way as to be the common object towards which all individuals tend, and which are to sacrifice their own rights, that is their own identity and autonomy in order to attain it. Nature is, therefore, the state in which the people are born, in opposition with civilization; it is the reflection of everything that is artificial and intentional. People live in the state of nature, i.e. in the hypothetical state of man prior to the social organization; more precisely, if this has been constituted, it becomes the mythical expression of everything the social state could have been, if people (the way they are now) had no education, nor would they be governed by laws and a government. We shall retain that the state of nature cannot be conceived but in opposition to the civil state. It is a more hypothetical state of humanity, rather than a historical one, without any social organization, in which the individuals would be reduced to their individual forces, which they might, nevertheless exercise without constraint.

The problem of the state of nature acquires its real dimension, as well as its real function within the whole of the hobbesian philosophical system, once with the English text of the

¹ Paul D. Cooke, xi.

² Ibidem, page 6

Leviathan, at 1651.

The state of nature implies an instable balance since the people persist in remaining free individuals among all others. The state of equilibrium (i.e, the civil state) is constructed in a precarious way in the midst of the great disorder of forces, equal but isolated and constantly opposed. It is a state of continuous danger. Hobbes rather speaks of the natural condition of mankind rather than of the life in the state of nature. This natural condition means lack of trust in the others and war. It brings into light the tragic significance of the natural condition of mankind. He considers that in the absence of the civil society, society does not exist at all, but for a plurality of individuals confronting each other, since the real solitude is absolutely unacceptable. We must note, as well, for a better comprehension of our presentation, that Hobbes offers a highly pessimistic view on the natural condition of mankind, maybe influenced by the Lutheran view on human nature, insisting on man's wickedness and ill-will (the terrestrial world being the world of sin; the society being nothing but chaotic and anarchic). Thus the state of nature is characterized by three main ideas: 1) man is not evil by nature: Hobbes is of opinion that not the nature, but the conditions of existence in the state of nature are those who make man evil; 2) fear governs the state of nature - fear being a dominant passion of the state of nature. Fear, the cause of disorder in the state of nature, becomes by reason, the cause of order in the civil state, especially by the fear of the sovereign and the World to come; 3) man's absolute power.

Conclusively, it seems that no matter how tragic it would be, the state of nature is in no way an end in itself, but a beginning. At the same time, an an-historic beginning as a starting point of a deep philosophical reflection upon the universal destiny of people, and a historical beginning as a justification and an active determining factor of constituting an assembly of people no matter what it would be like, whose final goals would be the protection and preservation of mankind. At the same time, the most remarkable of the states characterizing man is the equality of people. "Nature has given everything to all people"¹. This equality actually grounds the people's natural right to self-governance, which enables one of subduing the other, while the other rightfully resisting.

An inseparable part of the human condition is everyone's right upon all things. War arises from the fact that people want to express everyone's right upon all things. And this right of everyone to everything stems from the natural equality of people, of wishing to own and to dominate each one for each other the same things.

¹ *Leviathan*, Part I, cap. XIII, p. 121.

Reason, alike, shall make man aware of the interest he might have, that of transforming his individual fear into a collective fear; this fear appearing as a shape of the solution to be materialized. Therefore, the main problem man is confronted with, is that of avoiding war, since the avoidance of war means the avoidance of death. Man's goal is thus turning his individual fear into a collective one. Hence the need for a collective structure able to assume him. Man shall free himself from this fear, transferring it to the collective structure and translating it, according to the great XVII-th century tradition, from the inner, domestic order, to the inter-state order. Thus man shall make sure, by means of reason, that everybody, (that is all people) fear one single and identical definite thing, namely death. He shall also make sure that the idea of the State, collective structure, has the conscience that this death lies in wait for each of his component individual's destiny, that are his reason of being. Finally by instituting a superior power to the individual power of each and every man, and by its essence, unequal as compared to each one's individual power, man makes possible the perspective of peace.

On Religion in Hobbes's work. An aspect worth mentioning in Hobbes's writings is constituted by the way this thinker approaches the religious phenomenon. Hobbes gives an interesting explanation on the religious phenomenon, anticipating the modern conception on the antropomorphical character of ideas, by which religion is explained. Religion bears itself - according to Hobbes - out of a preoccupation for the future. Searching the causes of things, people get to wonder what the cause of causes is. In *Leviathan* Hobbes states that it is impossible to make a deep search upon the natural causes without inclining, by this, to think that there is an Eternal God, though there is no idea about Him in spirit, which to respond to His nature". And those who are ignorant and do not search the natural causes are inclined the same, out of the fear nature inspires, to believe in the existence of certain invisible powers, which are but creations of their own imagination [...] This fear of invisible things is the natural seed of what each one calls Religion, and those who adore or fear this power, the way he himself fears, is called Superstition."... but the acknowledging of one God Eternall, Infinite and Omnipotent, may more easily be derived, from the desire men have to know the causes of naturall bodies, and their severall vertues, and operations; than from the fear of what was to befall them in time to come. For he that from any effect hee seeth come to passe, should reason to the next and immediate cause thereof, and from thence to the cause of that cause, and plunge himselfe profoundly in the pursuit of causes; shall at least come to this, that there must be (as even the Heathen Philosophers confessed) one First Mover; that is a first, and Eternall cause of all things; which is that which men mean by the name of God: And all this without thought of their

fortune; the solicitude whereof, both enclines to fear, and hinders them from the search of the causes of other things; and thereby gives occasion of feigning of as many Gods, as there be men that feigne them"¹.

Therefore, the natural cause of Religion lies in anxiety the man feels for the future. Each individual is tormented by the fear of death and by the thought that some dreadful thing might happen to him. Hence the perpetual fear, joining people in their ignorance and the need for attributing their faith, good or bad, "to a Power or Invisible Agent" forged by their own imagination. It is obvious that such creations have no correspondent in reality, they are mere contradictory fancies. There are people, however, who reaching by their own meditation, to acknowledge the existence of "one God eternal, infinite and omnipotent", who confess that it is incomprehensible and beyond their understanding, instead of defining their nature by words such as "Spirit Incorporeall". "And in these four things, Opinion, Ghosts, Ignorance of second causes, Devotion towards what men fear, and Taking of things Casuall for Prognostiques, consisteth the natural seed of Religion which by reason of the different fancies, judgments and passions of severall men, hath grown up into ceremonies so different, that those which are used by one man, are for the most part ridiculous to another."²

Religion remains in essence a human institution, meant to serve, first of all, the peace of the political organization or the State. Making the people believe that the misfortunes and problems are caused by certain negligence in practicing the ceremonies or their own non-obeyance of the laws, the heads and leaders of the political communities manage to impose their will more easily. Then, by fast and public games instituted to the honor of gods, the people is kept subdued and thus estranged from the thought of a revolt.

The real religion, however, means the same thing with the laws of the Divine Kingdom. Such a religion, established by supra-natural revelation institute a particular kingdom, in which politics and the civil laws are an integrant part. In this case there is no difference between the temporary domination (rule) and the spiritual one. God is the king of the entire Earth and at the same time the king of a particular nation.

The credulity of the people is, however, maintained by the ignorance of the physical causes³. The more the people would cultivate themselves, the more the superstitions would disappear. Hobbes is, as a matter of fact, a precursor of deists and free-thinkers and a pioneer in the fight against obscurantism. His influence in this respect is exercised especially in the XVIII-

¹ Lev. Part I, Chpt.12, page 170.

² Ibid., page 172-3.

³ *De Homine*, Cap. 12 #5.

th century.

Hobbes was regarded, because of his attitude towards the Church representatives, an atheist. He rejected such a claim maintaining that he was not only a 'deist', but even a good Christian and a member of the Anglican church. We thus notice in what meaning he renders religion. The notion of "God" is to him something involving "eternity, incomprehensibility and omnipotence", without corresponding to a reality, however. Such attributes are the product of our incapacity of knowing everything we want, or a feeling of reverence for the divine being, who we suppose must exist out of the necessity of our own incapacity of thinking the infinite or the eternal. We could infer out of the existence of the world created, the existence of a creator. This seems to be the only argument for the existence of God. But when invoking it, Hobbes is of opinion, we transcend the field of experience. We can also admit that the whole series of causes and effects by which the reality is revealed to us, is finally the result of a super-natural work. But who can trace the chain of the whole causality in nature in order to reach a "final" cause or a "beginning" of the world? The absurdity of such a claim is to Hobbes self-evident. For all this, he prudently adds, conforming himself, that he is contented with the things stated in the Bible and consolidated by the custom and the laws of his country. To Hobbes religion is a "State matter".

Hobbes consolidates the great system of his political thought building on the foundation of the state of nature (Chapter 13). Over the next eighteen chapters he shows how, beginning from natural rights, government is generated from human freedom and fear, partly by means of passion and partly by means of reason. In the part entitled "*Of a Christian Commonwealth*" he offers a treatment of the Bible and Christianity that continues his very lengthy study of the Bible, thus joining it to human freedom, human rights and the generation of human government. Hobbes connected a reinterpretation of the Bible (*Leviathan*, parts III, IV) to his teaching about human rights (*Leviathan*, parts I, II), so that religion may be wisely governed and human beings may clearly know where their duties lie. He considers man to possess an incorrigibly religious nature; for him, no political association can afford to ignore or discount the need for an account of religion, i.e. the whole.

Hobbes concern with reinterpreting the Bible may be said to reflect his conviction that political association must be properly connected to the religious needs of human beings, but above all, these teachings must be made consistent with his teaching about the human situation illustrated in the state of nature with the human rights there into. Thus, Hobbes's *Leviathan* is based on an awareness of a fundamental tension between biblical religion and natural rights while the great purpose of his reinterpretation of the Bible in the second half of the *Leviathan* is

to veil the tension for the sake of the political project he hoped to inaugurate.

Many professional religious men of both Anglican and Puritan churches were appalled by Hobbes's exegesis of Scripture and they thought it barely disguised atheism. Paul D. Cooke in his study on Hobbes's religion suggests that at least some of his most philosophically inclined contemporaries may have appreciated Hobbes's treatment of the Bible in two ways: as a demonstration, though ambiguous and effective of the biblical faith, as it was widely understood by most Christians (men and women), and as an implicit declaration of new liberty from the strictures of Christianity. Thus, two types of readers, the sincerely religious and the philosophical "enlightened", saw more deeply into Hobbes's work and detected further meanings disguised by a surface argument (cf. Lange 1881, I:253-68, in Paul D. Cooke). But for others, (neither the philosophers who favored Hobbes, nor the theologians who opposed him), Hobbes's treatment of the Bible actually seemed to be of a different nature. Hobbes's intention in treating the Bible was to sustain the form of Christianity while changing its actual substance for such readers. His work mainly addresses a broader audience, including those who were looking into ways to reconcile Christian hope with the new findings of science.

To the fulfillment of Hobbes's aims, it was of highest importance to address himself to an educated audience, though these readers did not understand him as did his most vehement critics among the Christian ones. The latter ones understood Hobbes well and saw his teachings as 'darkness' and not as the 'light' the followers of the new philosophers perceived to be. He actually wanted to change the world by guiding a wider, more traditional and religiously inclined audience. The quotation given in 'Review and Conclusion' at the end of *Leviathan* is illustrative in this respect, wherein Hobbes advises that the work be adopted by the universities of England so that the gentry and clergy who were trained there might benefit from its teaching and then, in turn, employ it in teaching the broader populace their civic duties. (EW III, 712-13 [728]).

He wanted to communicate knowledge of the true foundations of civil life to those he believed able to receive his teaching and most of all he desired to establish those foundations as the basis of civil association. Philosophy was thus, for Hobbes, about establishing political power on the surest foundation, the new foundation of political science, which was based on the discovery of the state of nature and the natural rights human beings possess. Thus, [...] the leaders of the people themselves have to be led away from principles founded upon "the venom of heathen politicians" (and particularly the teachings of men like Aristotle and Cicero), and from "the incantation of deceiving spirits" - those whose Christianity leads other men and women away from loyalty to the kingdom of this world, which kingdom Hobbes teaches should

be founded on the rational principles of a "science of natural justice" (EW III, 712-13 [728], 357 [407]).

To make the rights based civil association safe, Hobbes did not intend to make the contrast between natural freedom (i.e. natural rights) and revealed religion explicit. His work thus required him to employ a certain degree of ambiguity in diverging from traditional biblical interpretations of the old faith, which only he and his greatest allies and foes perceived. He was fully persuaded that religion based on revelation would always have an unmanageable hold on enough people to dangerously destabilize society if they were sufficiently aroused against civil authority. It was thus of utmost importance that the fundamental antagonism between his discovery of a new world of human freedom and equality - his natural rights teaching - and biblical religion be kept hidden, at least from the vast audience and potential readership.

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