Strauss and Watkins on Hobbes's Political Philosophy: A Review

The Political Philosophy of Hobbes: Its Basis and Its Genesis. By Leo Strauss (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1963).

Hobbes's System of Ideas. By J.W.N. Watkins (New York: Barnes and Noble, 1965).

Strauss wishes to establish two main points. First, any adequate periodization of the history of political philosophy must recognize that Hobbes marked the end of the classical-medieval tradition and the beginning of modernity. Second, Hobbes's thought was independent of both tradition and natural science, i.e., Hobbes was a humanist. These are both issues of the significance of Hobbes but depend on certain constructions of Hobbes's meaning. Strauss presents his arguments as summarized below.

Summary of the argument

Hobbes's philosophy is incoherent and his importance is inexplicable if his writings are construed as the political philosophy of methodological mechanical materialism.

Strauss begins by insisting on the universal importance of Hobbes's philosophy. Strauss asks why this should be so, and reviews the usual answers. Hobbes's answer was that he applied Galileo's new resolutive-compositive method with a mathematical rigor to the problem of civil philosophy. Strauss finds this answer unsatisfying, since Hobbes's method can only have raised the question of content and cannot have answered it. Strauss also finds it unsatisfactory to ground Hobbes's achievement in his mechanistic and egoistic psychology or in his use of traditional philosophical materials. The former is not the only possible foundation for Hobbes's characteristic content and the latter became altogether untraditional in Hobbes. But if Hobbes did not give the correct answer, we must ask the question again: Why *is* Hobbes important? Strauss's answer is that Hobbes contributed a "moral attitude" which "is the deepest stratum of the modern mind." Moreover, Hobbes gave this attitude

"its fullest and sincerest expression" in the fertile and decisive moment "when the classical and theological tradition was already shaken, and a tradition of modern science not yet formed and established." (5; cf. 108; page numbers hereafter refer to Strauss's book until otherwise indicated) Thus, Hobbes could and did lay the foundations for the philosophy of the entire age to come—an age in which we live. This is why Hobbes is important. †

Hobbes taught a moral view of man.

But what is the foundation of the philosophy of this age? What is Hobbes's moral basis? Strauss's second chapter sets out his answer to these questions. Strauss denies that Hobbes wished to work out political philosophy within the thought forms of natural science. He says Hobbes was even opposed to this because of the "fundamental differences between the two disciplines in material and method" (6). Therefore, Hobbes divided all knowledge into two realms—natural science and political philosophy. The latter is based on commonsensical knowledge of one's self. Or, to state it differently, Hobbes's political philosophy was: (a) based on self-knowledge gained by introspection; and (b) conceived in humanistic—not naturalistic—categories. The former science is based on the character of things as they are by nature. The latter is based on the character of man's activity to change things and himself from what they are by nature into something other.

Thus, Hobbes found the character of man marked by the same dualism—man as he is by nature and man as he is human, free, creative. In addition, man is moved by two great passions: natural appetite and natural reason. However, the antithesis of nature/free man does not correlate with appetite/reason. Instead, the antithesis of nature/free man fuels a dialectic within the passions of appetite and reason.

Appetite is based in the animal nature of man with its finite sensory impressions and desires, but it is also spontaneous and infinite (11). So the natural appetite is boundless, unbidden, unending, while the (unnatural?) human appetite is bounded by reason, called by need, and quiet when satisfied. The fulfillment of this boundless and unbidden natural appetite would give man pleasure in contemplating his power. This pleasure is vanity. However, man does not take pleasure in contemplating his own power only in the real world. Vanity also creates and enjoys a dream world wherein a man

may enjoy the contemplation of his superiority. Thus, vanity blinds man. On this account, natural appetite is the infinite desire of ignorant men who believe themselves wise. Of this, only vanity can be the cause. Yet Hobbes was unwilling to state this because it would require the admission that man is evil (13) and therefore guilty (23). So Hobbes reasserted the amoral animality of man—a logical device to avoid the conclusion that man is evil. Based on this analysis of Hobbes's arguments, Strauss concludes that Hobbes's view of human passions vacillated, according to Hobbes's rhetorical purposes, between infinite spontaneity and finite mechanism.

The second great passion of man is natural reason. Natural reason is another result of the furious working of the dialectic between natural and free man. Fear is awakened in a man who steps beyond his vain dreams into the unforeseen resistance of the real world. Thus, man's unreasoning fear of violent death is the motive power which activates reason in men thereby ending man's blindness.

Strauss says this emphasis on passion and reason (or vanity and fear) is correlated with Hobbes's view of evil and good. Vanity is the root of evil; fear is the root of good. This means Hobbes really did have a morality! Moreover, this morality holds in the condition of nature prior to the contract and creation of society. It is a morality with two chief characteristics: (a) it takes its direction from the passion to avoid death; and (b) it judges both intentions and actions by the requirement that they stem from the fear of death. Because any action may come from fear of death, every action may be permitted. However, even in the condition of nature, *not* every intention may come from fear of death.

Conscience is the fear of death (25, 26). This view of conscience permitted Hobbes to distinguish systematically between moral and immoral motives and acts. This morality is not a mere inconsistency in Hobbes or vestige left over from an earlier state of his mind. Instead, it is the heart of Hobbes—"the essential basis" (28). If he had not singled out just fear of death as the source of good and the only passion capable of overcoming unjust pride, Hobbes would have been forced to license all man's passions. However, Hobbes did not accept all human passions, but chose to license only one—fear of death. Thus, without inconsistency, Hobbes was able to erect the structure of the characteristic views for which he has become known. Hobbes himself denied his theory was based on any metaphysics or science. It was always plain that he did not build on any traditional metaphysics or science. Now we can see he did not

build on any modern one either! Instead, Hobbes took for his foundation his own knowledge of the passions (which were assumed to be like those of all other men), gained through introspection. Humanistic knowledge—rather than metaphysical scientific knowledge—is the foundation of Hobbes in Strauss's analysis.

This is the essential structure of the Hobbes whom Strauss explains in *The Political Philosophy of Hobbes*. Chapters III through V are devoted to showing the origins and development of Hobbes's thought from tradition into modernity. Chapters VI and VII show the revolutionary character of Hobbes's early thought. The final chapter evaluates the effect of Hobbes's science and mathematics on his political philosophy.

Hobbes taught a dualistic world view.

Chapter III, "Aristotelianism", is the first of three chapters showing that Hobbes's humanist views biographically predated his naturalistic, mathematical, and psychological interests. In this chapter, Strauss sketches the periods of influence in Hobbes's life: 1596-1603, classical studies at home; 1603-1608, Oxford scholasticism and readings in classics on his own; 1608- ?, no study or reading; ? -1629, classical studies culminating in Thucydides. Strauss finds four main influences on Hobbes: (1) humanism; (2) scholasticism; (3) Puritanism; and (4) the aristocracy. Strauss argues humanism was the most important influence on Hobbes's attitudes and thoughts. This ended when Hobbes began to be interested in mathematics and science. Strauss thus thinks there are two significant periods in Hobbes's intellectual life: (1) the humanistic period before 1629; and (2) the scientific and mathematical period after 1629.

While Hobbes was under humanistic influences he accepted Aristotle as the foremost authority. However, Hobbes did not accept the scholastic Aristotle of the physics and metaphysics, but the humanist Aristotle of the ethics and politics. Accordingly, Hobbes did not seek for the right order of man's life by understanding the excellence of the universe but sought it in man himself as "the most excellent work of nature" (35). Therefore, Hobbes studied the practice of human life and society—rather than teleology in nature or knowledge of the universe—as the proper subject matter to give man a guide to the right ordering of his life. In this sense, Strauss says, Hobbes was a humanist all his life. Strauss derives a dualism in the

later Hobbes from this earlier dualism.

In Chapter IV, "Aristocratic Virtue," Strauss sets out to show us more exactly the nature of Hobbes's humanistic studies and stance. According to Strauss, Hobbes was interested in aristocratic virtue as honor displayed in history. However, there were two different conceptions of aristocratic virtue in Hobbes's time: (1) the philosopher-aristocrat; and (2) the warrior-aristocrat. Strauss says Hobbes's original view of virtue was that of the latter warrior-aristocrat. As Hobbes developed his "peculiarly bourgeois morality" (50, 113) this "warrior-aristocrat" conception of heroic virtue weakened. As a result of Hobbes's intellectual development he sublimated and spiritualized the virtue of honor. When Strauss says this he means that the virtue of honor no longer denoted a quality of the heroic individual's actions but a quality of the heroic individual's actions *when he is conscious* of superiority. Once again, Hobbes traced the virtues from the consciousness.

However, Strauss urges that this version of self-conscious honor was dispensable for Hobbes. Hobbes dispensed with this conception of honor as he developed his own thought, so that it appeared only in *Leviathan* where it contradicted the main thrust of Hobbes's argument. This raises the question of why Hobbes wrote it into *Leviathan* at all. Strauss answers that the literary source is Descartes. Descartes had provided a plausible answer and Hobbes accepted it because he "had wrestled all his life in vain to find a clear formulation of his own deeper answer to the moral problem . . ." (56). According to Strauss, Hobbes was attracted to this view because it originated in self-consciousness (127). For Hobbes, the problem with this view was that, on his own "deeper" analysis, self-consciousness of superiority is evil, while only self-consciousness of fear of violent death could be good. So Hobbes finally rejected aristocratic virtue—even in its spiritualized form—and the Cartesian answer as well.

Hobbes's moral attitude caused his other views to develop as they did.

In Chapter V, "The State and Religion," Strauss considers Hobbes's views on these two subjects. He argues that Hobbes effected the union of two hitherto rival theories of the origin of legitimate government: the monarchist and the democratic. The former claimed that only patrimonial monarchy was a legitimate

and natural form of State. The latter claimed that only the consent of the will of the people could legitimate a State. The union of these two was not without its costs, however, for Hobbes developed his conceptions in a direction which led directly to the contradiction of that which he wished to effect.

Hobbes did not achieve this union of theories at a single stroke. Hobbes had to make several attempts and develop the conception of institutional (artificial) monarchy in order to unite the monarchist and democratic theories of the State. Strauss traces the stages. The primary instrument of Hobbes's unification was his progressively elaborated distinction between the artificial and natural states. In particular, as the idea of artificial monarchy became clearer, it so illuminated artificiality as to eclipse distinctions of other sorts. Artificial monarchy became progressively as impersonal for Hobbes as aristocracy and democracy. At the beginning of his thinking, Hobbes thought natural states were coeval to patrimonial monarchies based on the child's intrinsic obligation to obey the father's intrinsic authority. Artificial states were based on the intrinsic obligation of the child to the father who had granted paternal power to the sovereign out of fear. All other states were illegitimate, including despotic rule. Natural states were thus involuntary and based on the order of nature. Artificial states were voluntary creations. At the last stage of Hobbes's thought, deeds done out of fear became voluntary and the conception of artificially instituted states was predominant. Hobbes could equate despotic and patrimonial rule and find that both were voluntary. Individuals established the artificial state—not fathers. Hobbes even found that both natural and artificial states are grounded in fear. There are no illegitimate states. Nor is there any principled difference between monarchy, aristocracy, and democracy. Moreover, the limited sovereign in Hobbes's early thought was replaced by the unlimited and unobligated sovereign in Hobbes's late thought.

As to Hobbes's religious views, Strauss says they went through a course of development not unlike his others—from traditional to very untraditional ideas. At all times Hobbes subordinated religion to the uses of the state. But as for religious claims to truth (i.e., revealed and natural theology), Strauss says Hobbes moved from an initial permissive acceptance toward increasing hostility. In accord with his instrumental view of religion, Hobbes used the Bible for his own arguments when he could and ignored it more and more as his own argument was decreasingly related to it. In accord with his in-

creasing hostility toward religion, Hobbes kept increasing the space he devoted to criticizing religion and the doctrines of the Bible. Finally, Hobbes inverted the traditional arguments and based submission to the Scriptures on the authority of the sovereign. He departed from tradition concerning the immortality of the soul and resurrection of the body, and finally denied martyrdom to the ordinary Christian (lest he disobey the sovereign) leaving martyrdom only to those specially called to preach. He made the Kingdom of God a purely earthly kingdom, eliminated the sovereign's duty to establish religion, and moved from the Anglican episcopal to a specifically dis-establishment view of the church. Hobbes camouflaged his true colors with Biblicism in order to direct progressively heavier fire on natural religion and theology. Strauss concludes that Hobbes originally accepted a kind of natural theology (the method and contents of which did not overlap with those of revealed religion) which he rejected early (77).

Chapter VI is the fourth and final chapter devoted to tracing the origins and development of Hobbes's thought. In this chapter Strauss discusses Hobbes's view of history. Strauss argues that Hobbes's earliest recorded thoughts about history were "revolutionary" (79). Strauss argues that Hobbes initially accepted both history and Aristotelian philosophy without seeing any incompatibility between them. History and philosophy were *different*, nonetheless, and—as early as his translation of Thucydides—Hobbes found history an effective teacher of the precepts which the philosopher discovers (79-80). Moreover, Hobbes denied the effectiveness of philosophical precepts altogether, whereas Aristotle—whom Hobbes still accepted as chief authority in ethics and politics—denied the effectiveness for *most* men of teaching philosophical precepts. Hobbes might have concluded that—since it can be the most effective subject matter for *teaching* right conduct (because of the impact of example, the simplicity of concepts, the ease of use)—history must also be the most useful subject matter for *discovering* right conduct (79-81, 98, 101). Thus, history could replace philosophy as the primary subject matter from which to derive right guidance (95). Strauss argues that Hobbes followed the example of a century of predecessors in drawing that inference, at least for a moment. That moment came when Hobbes broke with Aristotle (95, 108).

This moment in which Hobbes accepted the primacy of history was succeeded immediately, however, by a decline of the impor-

tance of history as Hobbes developed his own political philosophy to replace history. Hobbes built so as to replace both traditional philosophy *and* traditional history. But his reason for doing so was, again, his desire to be practical. This interest in applicability explains, for Strauss, the fact that Hobbes was interested in the humanist version of Aristotle and not in the scholastic version—in history and not in philosophy. (108) It also explains why Hobbes developed his thought in the direction he did. He aimed to "draw up a political philosophy which [would] from the outset be in harmony with the passions." (101) The interest in applicability led Hobbes to found his theory on the fear of death; fear of death combined with equality leads to the conflict of all.

Strauss then sketches the importance which Hobbes's applicable political philosophy permits history to retain. First, history is insignificant. Second, history is absorbed and reformulated by philosophy into 'typical history.' Third, it is imperative for man to reimmerse him in real history in order to transform it in imitation of the philosophic reformulation. (102-8)

Chapter VII is entitled "The New Morality." Having established Hobbes's revolutionary view of history and its relation to the problem of application, Strauss now traces this to its origins in a particular view as to the proper subject matter for political inquiry. "A thorough knowledge of the passions is the indispensable condition for the answering of the question as to the right ordering of social life, and particularly as to the best form of State" (110). This was Hobbes's new moral attitude. Early and late, Hobbes takes his views from that which is in tune with the passions (112). Strauss defends this assertion by tracing Hobbes's arguments for monarchy against democracy, (110-111) the growth of fear from "chief" to "exclusive" right motive, (113-114) and the decline of aristocratic virtue (114-115). Strauss summarizes Hobbes as having derived all morality and virtue from this fear for "the security of body and soul" (121). That is, Hobbes answered all moral questions based on the consideration of avoiding painful death. Hobbes would not answer such questions by reference to achieving greatness, doing good, glorifying God, developing the self, contemplating truth, etc. Strauss then summarizes the implications of this view for Hobbes's theology (no creation, no providential care, no gratitude, only hard work by which man seeks a living from thorny nature), the rejection of aristocratic virtue, and the similarity of Hobbes's virtue and aristocratic virtue as moralities of consciousness.

Hobbes's moral attitude and worldview were constant throughout his adult life.

In his last chapter, "The New Political Science," Strauss evaluates the effect of Hobbes's scientific interests on his humanistic political intention. Strauss summarizes his preceding chapters as showing a set of movements in Hobbes's thought, states that these movements are all united by Hobbes's single and singular moral attitude, and proceeds to the conclusion that this attitude is both logically and biographically prior to Hobbes's scientific interests. He then raises the subject of: "how Hobbes's mathematical and scientific studies furthered or hindered his political philosophy." In my view, Strauss's treatment of this subject is this volume's major contribution to Hobbes criticism.

Strauss presents another genetic analysis, concentrating this time on Hobbes's moral attitude and worldview. Strauss's conclusions may be summarized as follows: early "humanist" Hobbes was convinced of the usefulness of history for teaching men to apply precept. Hobbes's study of history convinced him that vanity and fear were the strongest passions moving mankind. Thus, even as early as his humanist period, Hobbes analyzed the passions differently than did the tradition. That is, Hobbes picked out deception for special condemnation, regarded public display of a passion as a sign of its evil character, and regretted good fortune because of the pleasant delusion it brings. Strauss makes a special comparison of Hobbes and Aristotle with respect to their differences as regards "pleasant things" (134-5). Aristotle's conception involved enjoyment of a state or condition of fulfillment and ease. However, Hobbes equated the pleasant with "successful striving and desiring" (134). On this basis:

> the pleasant is not so much what is naturally pleasant, as the 'pleasant' movement from one pleasant thing to another pleasant thing, to a pleasanter thing, the consciousness which accompanies this movement, more accurately, self-consciousness (134-135).

However, this pleasure is not mere self-consciousness. Pleasure exists only in self-conscious comparison with others.

For these reasons Strauss concludes: insofar as his attitudes and philosophic requirements were concerned, Hobbes had already broken with the content of tradition during his humanist period

prior to 1629. However, Hobbes had not yet broken self-consciously with the tradition and still spoke of the primacy of Aristotle. So the first effect of Hobbes's turn to natural science and mathematics was to make him cognizant of the extent to which his own thoughts entailed rebellion against and rejection of the tradition (136-139). Hobbes perceived clearly a need for a new political philosophy built according to a proper method. Rational political philosophy would replace passion-confused opinion with unclouded reasoned truth, which would also be perfectly harmonious with the passions. According to Strauss, Hobbes derived the former from Plato; the latter represents Hobbes's insistence on applicability in opposition to Plato (150).

Strauss says Hobbes's insistence on applicability accounts for his use of Galileo's resolutive-compositive method and pursuit of Euclid (151; for an explanation of Galileo's method, see Watkins, 52-65). However, the resolutive-compositive method also indicates Hobbes's desire for dispassionate truth and reason because the method makes political philosophy a type of analytical technique suitable for enhancing state regulation. Strauss criticizes Hobbes for using this method since it assumes answers to questions of good and evil which—so Strauss thinks—ought to be questioned and tested. Not only so, but Strauss thinks Hobbes should have rejected this method for Hobbes's own reasons. That is, while Hobbes needed to be able to characterize motives as right or wrong, no resolutive analysis could possibly entail "right" and "wrong." Specifically, Hobbes needed to be able to characterize fear-of-violent-death-as-greatest-evil as good natural reason. However, Hobbes's method forced him to do so implicitly, by injecting this characterization into his analysis after resolution but before composition. Hobbes's characterization really serves to justify an absolute subjective claim to do whatever is necessary to save one's life (viii, ix, 155). This absolute subjective claim is: (a) what Hobbes needed to justify; and (b) the principle which modern thought has taken as its starting point. This is of great importance. But of nearly equal significance was Hobbes's full seizure of the idea of sovereignty. In turn, both of these spring from Hobbes's dismissal of rationalism (160) which Strauss has already shown (80-81).

Strauss then asks why Hobbes rejected rationalism—with its natural standards—in order to embrace Euclid, the resolutive-compositive method and apparent materialism. He answers in brief and compact suggestions that humanist interests were always at the

root of Hobbes's interest in science, and that there are probably two conceptions of "nature" present in Hobbes's writings, i.e., the explicit monism and the presupposed dualism. Strauss concludes that the influence of mathematics and science was to clarify the logic but obscure the motives of Hobbes—the later stages of Hobbes's thought worked out most clearly the concepts but thereby concealed most fully Hobbes's motives. *Ergo*, one should read *Leviathan* for teachings, but read the "Introduction" to Thucydides and the *Elements* for motives.

An Evaluation of Strauss's "The Political Philosophy of Hobbes"

Strauss's purpose.

This book does not explicate the texts or explain the relationships between one idea and another in *Leviathan* or *De Cive*. Nor does this book provide a philosophical evaluation of Hobbes's success in achieving his oft professed objective of building scientific civil philosophy on the basis of mechanical science.

Instead, Strauss assumes that the reader is acquainted with both the Hobbesian texts and the inconsistencies which appear when Hobbes is understood as giving moral content to natural and civil "right" and "obligation." Thereupon, Strauss carries out a kind of intellectual archeology by which he digs down through the last layers of Hobbes's writings past the earliest layers to reconstruct the original foundations. Indeed, Hobbes's logical differences and inconsistencies are the clues by which he uncovers the origins of Hobbes's philosophy in a distinctive stance—called Hobbes's "philosophy"—which Hobbes nowhere states explicitly. Shortly after publishing this book on Hobbes, Strauss wrote:

> . . . scholars of the last century were inclined to solve literary problems by having recourse to the genesis of the author's work, or even of his thought. Contradictions or divergencies within one book, or between two books by the same author, were supposed to prove that his thought had changed.[1]

This is exactly what Strauss does in *The Political Philosophy of Hobbes*. Precisely because Strauss is seeking for the basis and the genesis of Hobbes's thought, Strauss's book will not be useful to most

1. Leo Strauss, *Persecution and the Art of Writing* (Glencoe, IL: The Free Press, 1952), 30-31 (Hereafter referred to as *PAW*).

undergraduates. Instead, this is a demanding book for graduate level work where the development of Hobbes's political philosophy is central and where the focus is on the seed rather than the flower, and on the motives rather than the expressions, of Hobbes's thought.

Nor should *The Political Philosophy of Hobbes* be taken as Leo Strauss's most mature statement on Hobbes. Allan Bloom, a student of Strauss, has indicated that it was—of all his works—"the book he liked the least."[2] Thus, Strauss's later writings present Hobbes in a somewhat different light. Students who are interested in Strauss's mature thought on Hobbes should consult these works[3] in addition to the chapter on Hobbes which Strauss chose to include in the political philosophy textbook he co-edited.[4]

Strauss's theory of the relation between Hobbes's texts and philosophy.

On Strauss's interpretation of Hobbes's writings, beginning with *Elements of the Law*, Hobbes's writings express two world views. The first is dualistic humanism, while the second is the monistic mechanism of natural science. Thus, Hobbes *did* and *did not* base his political philosophy on natural science.

> . . . Hobbes tried to base his political philosophy on modern natural science. . . the real basis of his political philosophy is not modern science (ix).
>
> According to his own statements, his achievement in political philosophy was made possible by the application of a new method, the method by which Galileo raised physics to the rank of a science. . . .
>
> The universal importance of Hobbes's political philosophy cannot but remain unrecognized so long as, in accordance with Hobbes's own statements, the method is considered to be the decisive feature of his politics (2).
>
> . . . this political philosophy is based in method and material on natural science.

2. Allan Bloom, "Leo Strauss," *Political Theory*, II, No. 4 (November 1974), 372-399). Bloom also distinguished between Strauss's early work—including this work—as "pre-Straussean" in distinction to the later work which followed Strauss's discovery of "persecution and the art of writing."

3. Leo Strauss, "On the Basis of Hobbes's Political Philosophy," *What is Political Philosophy?* (Glencoe, IL: The Free Press, 1959), 170-196 and *Natural Right and History* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1953).

4. Leo Strauss and Joseph Cropsey, *History of Political Philosophy* (Chicago: Rand McNally, 1963).

> . . . his conviction that political philosophy is essentially independent of natural science (6).

These incompatible world views are expressed as contradictions and divergent emphases in the text.

> It is true that every reader of Hobbes is struck by the clarity, rigour, and decision of his thought. But every student of Hobbes is also amazed by his numerous contradictions which occur in his writings. There are but few of his most important and most characteristic assertions which are not contradicted, either directly or by the denial of their obvious consequences, somewhere in his works (x).

> The basic difference between Hobbes's original view of human life on the one hand, and the conceptions provided by tradition or modern science on the other, explains all the contradictions of any consequence which occur in his works (xi).

In the simplest terms, Hobbes's writings consist of massively "inconsistent naturalism" (170). On one hand, Hobbes's early writings state most clearly his intent to create exact and applicable political philosophy. On the other hand, Hobbes's later writings state "the presuppositions and conclusions of the fundamental moral attitude. . ." (170) that vanity is unjust and fear of violent death is just (27). Strauss proposed that everything in the text of Hobbes's mature political writings could be read as expressing either Hobbes's humanist political philosophy or the Procrustean bed of mechanical naturalism on which he tried to make it rest.

The significance of Strauss's 1936 interpretation.

The value to the reader of this work depends on two factors: (1) which of the Hobbeses the reader thinks is "real" and is interested in understanding; and (2) the validity of Strauss's *prima facie* construction of Hobbes's meaning.

First, there are two Hobbeses. The first or deep Hobbes is the one whose "original view is independent of both tradition and modern science" (xi) and displays "rigour and unity" (x). The second or surface Hobbes is the one who appropriated the methods of natural philosophy as the basis for his political philosophy (x-xi). Strauss believes the former Hobbes is the "real" Hobbes. Those readers who are interested in Hobbes at the level of his motivations and early thought will find Strauss speaking to them. However, most readers are interested in the ideas of *Leviathan*, i.e., the surface of the later

or mature Hobbes. They will be disappointed to find that Strauss deals with Hobbes's texts only where he finds contradictions giving clues to the deep structures of Hobbes's thought. Moreover, Strauss assumes that the contradictions in Hobbes's texts are as obvious to others as they are to him. Strauss gives little guidance to the *prima facie* meaning of the texts.

Second, Strauss's work rests on an assumption that Hobbes's political philosophy teaches—at least in part—a moral content of:

> . . . natural 'right', i.e. . . . an absolutely justified subjective claim . . . [not] purely natural inclinations or appetites . . . midway between strictly moral principles (such as those of the traditional natural law) on the one hand, and purely natural principles (such as pleasure, appetite or even utility) on the other. 'Right', we may say, is a specifically juridical conception (viii).

The contradictions which Strauss finds in Hobbes's writings are based on the presence of these moral elements (viii-xi).

If one is interested in the motives of Hobbes, it is unnecessary to embrace Strauss's *prima facie* interpretation of Hobbes's later texts, since Strauss may have divined accurately the desires which impelled Hobbes to choose this particular set of mechanical naturalistic ideas.

As Strauss said in another context:

> The truly exact historian will reconcile himself to the fact that there is a difference between winning an argument, or proving to practically everyone that he is right, and understanding the thought of the great writers of the past.[5]

If, however, it should turn out that Hobbes's conception of "right" is compatible with mechanical natural philosophy and is reducible to the categories of purely natural principles, then much of Strauss's presupposed interpretation is erroneous and the evidence for Strauss's judgments about the significance of Hobbes evaporates. Similarly, if the contradictions in Hobbes's writings are explicable as rhetorical appeals or as difficulties intrinsic to any attempt at the political philosophy of mechanical naturalism, or as devices to "code" his meaning, a different view of Hobbes will be required. In this connection it is important to notice that the largest body of recent scholarly literature on Hobbes has pursued a line of interpretation Strauss rejected, i.e., relatively consistent utilitarian

5. Strauss, *PAW*, 30.

naturalism.[6] Even more important, most of these authors have gone beyond proposing an interpretation of Hobbes in order to work out the relations between their version of Hobbes's philosophy and some other subject. This sort of development—when the particular interpretive hypothesis leads to fruitful and interesting but hitherto unsuspected lines of research for unrelated scholars—may count as circumstantial evidence that the interpretive proposal has validity as an accurate historical reconstruction of a significant intellectual

6. E.g., Richard S. Peters, *Hobbes*, Peregrine Books, 2nd ed., (Baltimore: Peregrine Books, 1967). See also his "Hobbes," *Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, ed. by Paul Edwards (New York: Macmillan Publishing Co. and The Free Press, 1967), IV, 30-46, and "Introduction" in Thomas Hobbes, *Body, Man, and Citizen*, ed. by Richard S. Peters, Collier Classics in the History of Thought (New York: Collier Books, 1962), 5-18.

7. C.B. Macpherson has been interested in Hobbes's identification of bourgeois men with men *qua* man. See *The Political Theory of Possessive Individualism: Hobbes to Locke* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1962); and "Introduction" in Thomas Hobbes, *Leviathan*, ed. by C.B. Macpherson, Pelican Classics (Baltimore: Pelican Books, 1968), 9-63. M.M. Goldsmith has explored the plausibility of the mechanical aspect of Hobbes's theory in his *Hobbes's Science of Politics* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1966). See also his "Hobbes: A Case of Identity," in *Politics and Experience*, ed. by Preston King and B.C. Parekh (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1968), 65-91; "Introduction," in Thomas Hobbes, *Behemoth: or the Long Parliament*, ed. by Ferdinand Tonnies, 2nd ed. (New York: Barnes and Noble, 1969); "Introduction" in Thomas Hobbes, *The Elements of Law*, ed. by Ferdinand Tonnies, 2nd ed. (New York: Barnes and Noble, 1969); and "Introduction" in Bernard Mandeville, *An Enquiry Into the Origin of Honour and the Usefulness of Christianity in War*, reprint of 1st edition (London: Cass, 1971). David Gauthier analyzed closely the logic of Hobbes's self-preserving hypothetical imperatives in *The Logic of Leviathan: The Moral and Political Theory of Thomas Hobbes* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1969). Quentin Skinner has connected Hobbes's mechanical science and *de factoism* to those of his contemporaries in "Hobbes's *Leviathan*," *Historical Journal*, VII (1964), 321-333; "Thomas Hobbes and His Disciples in France and England," *Comparative Studies in Society and History*, VIII (1965-1966), 153-167; "Hobbes on Sovereignty: An Unknown Discussion," *Political Studies*, XIII (1965), 213-218; "The Ideological Context of Hobbes's Theory of Political Obligation," *Historical Journal*, IX, No. 3 (1966), 286-317 appearing in an altered and abbreviated version in *Hobbes and Rousseau*, ed. by Maurice Cranston and Richard S. Peters, Anchor Books (Garden City: Doubleday Co., 1972), 109-142; "Thomas Hobbes and the Nature of the Early Royal Society," *Historical Journal* XII, No. 2 (1969), 217-239; "Conquest and Consent: Thomas Hobbes and the Engagement Controversy," in G.E. Aylmer (ed.) *The Interregnum: The Quest for Settlement, 1646-1660* (Hamden, CT: Shoestring Press, 1972), 79-98. See also the symposium on Skinner's work with Skinner's response in *Political Theory*, II, No. 3 (August 1974), 251-303. Thomas A. Spragens, Jr. examined Hobbes's substitution of mechanistic cosmology for Aristotelian cosmology as a paradigm shift in his *The Politics of Motion: The World of Thomas Hobbes* (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 1973). For the contribution of J.W.N. Watkins, see below.

achievement. To date, Strauss's proposal has not gained such widespread acceptance.

* * * * *

Watkins's strategic objective is to demonstrate the possibility of reasoned discussion and criticism of ethical and political ideas. His tactical objective is to demonstrate that: (a) Hobbes's ethical and political ideas are part of a reasonably coherent philosophical system; and (b) Hobbes's ethics and politics may be evaluated by reasonable critical standards.

Summary of the argument

Watkins intends his study of Hobbes's philosophy as an illustration of the possibility of reasoned political discussion. More specifically, Watkins explains his thesis regarding Hobbes in question and answer form:

> This book is about Hobbes's ideas and certain logical connections between them. It is not biographical. The question it answers is, How much of Hobbes's *political* theory is implied by his *philosophical* ideas? The conclusion it reaches is that the essentials of his political theory are so implied (9; page numbers hereafter refer to Watkins's book except as otherwise indicated).

Watkins says his own interpretations "of the individual pieces of the Hobbesian jigsaw are fairly orthodox."

> [Hobbes] was attempting to transform [the] God-supervised, man-oriented, law-bound and comfortably articulated cosmos [of his contemporaries] into something quite alien: into a material expanse within which lonely individuals are driven by terror to manufacture a Leviathan whose definitions will create an artificial morality for them, and whose sword will impose an artificial unity on them (9-10).

The remainder of Watkins's first chapter lays the foundation for his demonstration of the logical connection between Hobbes's philosophy and politics.

First, Watkins argues that Hobbes wrote with three objectives in mind: (1) his argument must be a demonstrative proof; (2) the argument must prove the need for an undivided and unrestricted

political authority—a sovereign—to whom each citizen would owe a duty—supreme over all others—of strict obedience; (3) the argument must also prove that a duty is a duty because it had been commanded by such a sovereign.

Second, Watkins identifies the types of ideas which count as evidence in his own argument. Watkins declares that he is going to count as "philosophical": (a) Hobbes's epistemological ideas; and (b) several of Hobbes's cosmological ideas.

Third, Watkins explains the concepts of an "idea," a "system of ideas," and "thinking." He insists that these distinctions are important because a philosopher's ideas have an infinite number of possible implications and relations of which the philosopher can only have thought a few.

Having established this logical point, Watkins observes that many of Hobbes's philosophical ideas have a second-order importance which derives from their application to whole classes of other statements rather than from their own content. Watkins suggests that several Hobbes scholars have: (a) assumed that the relation between natural and civil philosophy would be a "simple linear connection" of logical deduction; (b) identified Hobbes's philosophy with his scientific materialism; and (c) construed Hobbes as saying his civil philosophy was unrelated to the other portions of his philosophy. Watkins says these are common mistakes, declares his intention to approach the first two problems from a different direction, and offers his proof that the third is a misunderstanding.

Hobbes's mature political theory did not perpetuate humanistic views formed prior to his discovery of mechanical philosophy.

Chapter Two, "Early Political and Scientific Thinking" is devoted to disproving George Croom Robertson's discontinuity thesis that:

> In truth, however, the whole of his political doctrine . . . has little appearance of having been thought out from the fundamental principles of his philosophy. . . . It doubtless had its main lines fixed when he was still a mere observer of men and manners, and not yet a mechanical philosopher (27).

Watkins surveys the central ideas of Hobbes's civil philosophy, noting that Hobbes's earliest published views are set forth in three places: (1) the 1629 translation of the Thucydides *History of the Peloponessian War* ("Thucydides"); (2) the 1630 "Short Tract On First Principles" ("Tract"); and (3) *The Elements of Law* (1640;

"Elements"). Watkins's refutation of the discontinuity thesis consists of a proof of the following proposition:

> Of the two main political ideas of his *Thucydides*, one—the inductivist approach commended there—was soon repudiated by Hobbes, while the other—monarchism—came to occupy a subordinate position in his system; whereas all but one of the main ideas of the *Tract* came to occupy pretty central positions. Moreover, these philosophical ideas have some interesting political implications which became apparent in *The Elements of Law*. In other words, Hobbes was a mechanical philosopher before the main lines of his political doctrine were fixed, and his early philosophizing spilt over into his political theorizing (29).

Watkins sets out to refute Leo Strauss's 1936 version of the thesis that Hobbes's thought was logically discontinuous. Watkins criticizes Strauss's theory on two grounds. First Watkins says, if Strauss is right, Hobbes should have concluded that his philosophy had *proved* or demonstrated the superiority of monarchy or democracy. Yet while he did claim to have proved certain parts of his political philosophy, Hobbes explicitly confessed that he had only shown monarchy was *probably* superior. Second, on Strauss's interpretation, the evil vanity-good fear antithesis has its corollary in evil sight-good touch. Thus, on Strauss's construction, Hobbes *prefers* fear/touch to vanity/sight. (33; citing Strauss, 166) However, Watkins argues that Hobbes specifically commended the study of optics because it concerns, in Hobbes's words, "the noblest of the senses, vision" and Hobbes apparently "preferred sight to touch" (34).

Watkins stages a second attack on the discontinuity thesis by tracing the importance of one of the prominent ideas of Hobbes's early period—the inductive method. Watkins cites Hobbes's "Introduction" to Thucydides, "Tract" and "Elements" to prove that Hobbes's mature philosophy turned him squarely against inductivism and away from certainty of the superiority of monarchy (34-40).

Finally, Watkins argues that Hobbes's 1630 "Tract" sets forth for the first time numerous ideas—mechanistic ontological reductionism, sensationalist psychology, and ethical naturalism—which were at the center of Hobbes's later ideas as a political philosopher. On this basis, Watkins concludes that Strauss was wrong to dismiss the "Tract" (Strauss, xii) as insignificant (40-46).

Hobbes's theory of the origins of government and the laws of nature was implied by his scientific methodology.

In Chapter III, "Scientific Tradition," Watkins explains Hobbes's relation to contemporary intellectual developments. Watkins says the leading thinkers of the day (a) agreed that true science was just then beginning; and (b) made radical claims for the newness of their methods for discovering the truth. Watkins argues that Hobbes, by contrast, believed Gilbert, Copernicus, Kepler, Galileo, and Harvey had made genuine scientific achievements. Thus, Watkins argues, Hobbes did not claim to have discovered the true scientific method but claimed credit for extending and applying it to politics. After this foundation, Watkins argues that Hobbes was deeply indebted to the School of Padua for the substance of his scientific method.

Watkins relies on J.H. Randall's *The School of Padua* to explain the method developed at the University in Padua immediately before Hobbes's time. Watkins explains that the Paduans taught a twofold procedure of resolution and composition. Resolution begins with "the medium-sized complexes exhibiting surface regularities, with which we are acquainted in a rough, empirical way" which the scientist resolves—or analyzes—into their component parts or ultimate causes. Composition begins with these analyzed components and puts them back together again according to the principles of the whole until the "medium-sized complexes" are—so to speak—reassembled. Watkins argues that the Paduans regarded their method as leading to *hypotheses*, rather than conclusions, about the causes of effects. Watkins emphasizes the extent to which the Paduans distinguished between effects and their causes, the hypothetical nature of theories about causes, and suggests that the resolutive-compositive method is even more applicable in the social realm than in the physical sciences.

> In the physical domain it is usually medium-sized wholes which are, in Aristotle's phrase, 'more knowable and obvious to us,' and their elements, and the principles which govern these, which are remote from ordinary experience. But in the social domain it is the elements (i.e. people) that are more knowable and obvious, and the 'wholes' (i.e. social institutions) that are more or less theoretical. Thus the methodological prescription 'Resolve wholes into their elements' has a more definite purport for the political philosopher than it has for the natural philosopher, whose hardest problem is usually to guess *what* the elements are (55).

Watkins tells how Galileo and Harvey applied the Paduan method in physics and anatomy. "The methodological maxim of this scientific achievement is: resolve, idealize, recompose! Hobbes's civil philosophy also exemplifies this maxim" (56). Watkins suggests

Galileo taught explicitly that scientific first principles—such as those underlying Copernican astronomy—were true but unverifiable. He argues that Galileo went even further in his last works to embrace the view that scientific hypotheses are "necessary truths whose truth may come to be seen intuitively" (61). Thus, for Galileo, "the first principles of science are necessary rather than contingent, and . . . knowledge of them is inborn rather than acquired, so that it may be awakened but cannot be instilled" (62). All of this is important to Watkins's argument because Hobbes "did regard the principles and theorems of his *civil* philosophy in rather the same way that Galileo, if my account is right, regarded those of his natural philosophy" (63).

According to Watkins, Harvey was the source of two ideas. First, whereas Galileo's resolution stopped at abstractions, Harvey's "resolution" was dissection of a physical thing into its physical parts. Thus, Hobbes's conception of political "principles" refers to the motions of the mind which may be known to the individual who observes them in himself. These motions lead to the motions of the parts of the whole body. Second, "with Harvey we get the idea (which goes back to Aristotle) that in piecing together a biological whole from a knowledge of its elements and principles one may recapitulate its history, indicate how it came to be what it is" (65). And so, Watkins says: "The compositive method turns into a genetic method" (65).

In Chapter IV, "Method and Politics," Watkins ties Hobbes to the Paduan resolutive-compositive school by quoting several of Hobbes's statements self-consciously identifying himself with that tradition. Watkins notes the discussions of whether composition or resolution provides a better manner of explication, and points out that Hobbes—imitating *Euclid's Elements*—enthusiastically embraced the former approach. Watkins explains how, because Hobbes's method proceeds compositively from the causes to the effects along the path of generation, Hobbes is forced to conclude that philosophy excludes theology from the realm of knowledge because there can be no knowledge of ungenerated things, i.e. God.

Watkins explains the three branches of Hobbes's philosophy as corresponding to the three categories of generated things. Watkins notes that Hobbes thought the first—geometry—and last—civil philosophy—of these sciences concern human creations. Thus, Hobbes concludes that both geometry and civil philosophy are demonstrable with certitude rather than conjectural and

hypothetical like natural philosophy.

Watkins now draws his conclusions. He argues that Hobbes began his civil philosophy by imagining individual men disassociated from one another because his scientific method and his form of exposition required him to begin from the parts or principles of the whole. Similarly, Watkins concludes that Hobbes's scientific method required an examination of the collective condition of men when political society had been resolved into its dissociated parts. Moreover, Hobbes's account of the origin of government was democratic as a logically necessary consequence of the resolutive-compositive method since: (a) there is no natural moral order when society has been resolved into its parts; and (b) government can arise only by action of the parts. For the remainder of the chapter Watkins shows how Hobbes did not infer moral conclusions from non-moral premises since Hobbes's conclusions (the laws of nature) are analogous to the prescriptions of a doctor treating himself whose one actual aim is to get well and who is convinced that only by acting in a particular way will he do so. Watkins concludes the chapter by remarking that Hobbes's method and his psychological principles led to a congruence of his view of knowledge with Plato's. For both Hobbes and Plato—but for very different reasons—the effect of philosophy is not to give new information but to open our eyes and "remind" us of what we "know" already.

In Chapter V, "Laws of Nature," Watkins defends his claim that Hobbes's laws of nature are derived from his secular materialist scientific philosophy against a contradictory thesis offered by A. E. Taylor and Howard Warrender.[8] First, Watkins attacks the Taylor/Warrender assertion that Hobbes's laws of nature constitute a deontology of moral obligations. Watkins uses Kant's classification of imperatives to distinguish: (a) hypothetical from categorical im-

8. A.E. Taylor, "The Ethical Doctrine of Hobbes," *Philosophy* XIII, No. 52 (October 1938), 406-424, reprinted in *Hobbes's Leviathan: Interpretation and Criticism*, ed. by Bernard Baumrin (Belmont, CA: Wadsworth, 1969), 35-48; and also "Apology for Mr. Hobbes," in *Seventeenth Century Studies Presented to Sir Herbert Grierson* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1938), 129-147. Howard Warrender, *The Political Philosophy of Hobbes: His Theory of Obligation* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1957), See also his "Hobbes's Conception of Morality," *Revista Critica di Storia della Filosofia*, Anno. XVII, Fasc. IV (October-December 1962), 434-439, reprinted in *Hobbes's Leviathan: Interpretation and Criticism*, ed. by Bernard Baumrin (Belmont CA: Wadsworth, 1969), 67-82.

peratives; and (b) assertoric from problematic hypothetical imperatives. Watkins argues:

> . . . that Hobbes's laws of nature are assertoric hypothetical imperatives in Kant's sense; and since the fixed end for which they prescribe practically necessary means—namely, self-preservation or the avoidance of wounds and destruction—is an egocentric end dictated by a man's biological-cum-psychological make-up, this implies that Hobbes's laws of nature do not have a distinctively moral character (83).

Watkins admits that Hobbes *says* the laws of nature are moral but emphasizes that Hobbes's reductionist program gives the word "moral" a meaning derived entirely from psychological desires, i.e. that which preserves one's life. Thus, the sole effect of Warrender's theory of validating conditions is to make an ethical system *sound* moral but any moral content is removed from Hobbes's system because sufficient-motive-to-obey is one of the validating conditions and motive is always egocentric.

Second, Watkins turns to Warrender's theory that Hobbes's theory of motives forms one self-sufficient whole while his theory of obligations is a distinct and independent whole. Watkins argues that the two allegedly distinct theories are congruent in their results, and have the same basis. He objects that a separation between the two would result in a redundant theoretical structure, and require a second—theological—way of knowing such dictates were from God.

Watkins argues that the natural laws had no independent status because Hobbes held that nature—and not the laws—were the object of God's direct creation. Thus, Hobbes could properly say that the laws of nature came from God's command, since they were inferred from nature which existed at the command of God. As a result, Watkins argues, obligation based on divine command is a superfluous second layer rather than an independent basis of obligation. Watkins goes on to argue that the Warrender-Taylor thesis of a motive-obligations duality is contrary to Hobbes's every attempt to construct a single integral system to help men cease—in Hobbes's words—to *"see double*, and mistake their lawful sovereign" (96). Moreover, if—as Warrender says—the laws of nature are obligatory because commanded by God, Hobbes should have admitted he failed to give every man a reason to submit to the sovereign since the atheist would have no reason to obey. Watkins says that, on his—but not on the Taylor/Warrender—interpretation, the atheist

in society will have the same reasons to obey as a believer and the sovereign will be unable to punish his unbelief. Watkins argues that Hobbes drew both these inferences in *Leviathan*. Watkins draws the chapter to a close by concluding that the Taylor/Warrender thesis errs because Hobbes's theory of motives and natural law obligation are consecutive stages in the same theoretical structure.

Hobbes's theory of the motivations underlying the state was implied by his theory of human nature.

In Chapter VI, "Human Nature," Watkins sets out to show that Hobbes's theory of human nature combined two basic components: (1) a set of "truisms" derived from observation of the self or others; and (2) psychological principles derived from Hobbes's materialistic metaphysics combined with some of Harvey's biological principles.

Watkins begins with an explanation of the logical tests Hobbes's theory of human nature had to pass in order to provide a solid footing for civil philosophy. First, Hobbes needed to be able to infer how men *would* behave when dissociated from one another. This was, of course, a necessity and a problem for Hobbes since he had no actual evidence of how men would behave under such circumstances, and since he stressed the privacy of motives and thoughts. Watkins says Hobbes dealt with these problems by means of a psychological *theory* of human nature. Second, Hobbes needed to be able to deduce from human nature a state of nature bad enough that all men would leave it for life under settled authority, but he also needed to stop short of making men incapable of living under authority.

Having set forth the problem, Watkins argues that Hobbes surmounted it by theorizing that "*the mind is body-dependent and the body is heart-centered*" (103). Watkins argues that this view of human nature supported principles of uniformity and egocentricity. These principles are—in Watkins's terminology—"metaphysical" but yield certain predictions. These predictions create both the need and possibility of leaving the state of nature to live under authority.

The uniformity of men is based on the fact that all human bodies are fundamentally similar to one another and to engines (104). Moreover, the uniformity principle occupies "a privileged, regulative status" (106) so that data which appear to contradict the principle must be conformed to the principle, rather than the other

way around. Watkins notes that Hobbes laid down the principle of uniformity at the very beginning of *Leviathan* and promptly distinguished between the uniformity of motions or "passions"—which he affirmed—and of the objects of the passions—which he denied.

The egocentricity of men is based on the fact that the heart controls the whole person. However, for Hobbes, the important point about the heart is that all perceptions are fluid mechanical motions perpetuating pressures transmitted to the organism from the outside. By the same logic, the desires are directed toward those objects or activities which sustain and guide the motions of the heart. Watkins completes his discussion of egocentricity by discussing its unfalsifiable—and therefore "metaphysical"—character. Watkins insists that Hobbes was making a factual explanation of how other-directed feelings are actually self-directed feelings without exposing himself to any danger of refutation.

Next, Watkins focuses on those predictions which might be inferred logically from Hobbes's theory of human nature. From Hobbes's theory that *changes* in mechanical motion are the foundation of sensation, it may be inferred—and Hobbes did—that the slowing of motion is pain, the quickening of motion is pleasure, and unchanged motion is the absence of sensation. Death—the cessation of motion—is the greatest evil. This implies that one would *always* avoid death even in preference to motion enhanced—for a short time or pain-filled life. However, since there is no definite limit to either the degree and duration of movement or the objects which will increase motion, there are many "goods." On the other hand, the uniformity principle permits the inference that men always seek to avoid death and so are more uniform in what they avoid than in what they seek. Watkins adds Hobbes's premise that all men are so nearly equal that even the weakest may kill the strongest. If all men act according to their natural impulses in a situation of equality and close proximity when they have no common bond of authority and law the result will be: (a) a situation of maximum conflict in which each individual faces the overwhelming likelihood of being killed; and then (b) human motivation sufficiently powerful to induce men to leave the state of nature for life in a composed and ordered civil society. Thus, Watkins says, Hobbes's mind-body-heart theory of human nature yields implications on which a philosophy of politics may be constructed without depending on unobservable human thoughts and motives.

Hobbes's theory of liberty and punishment was implied by his theory of mechanical metaphysics

In Chapter VII, "Liberty," Watkins argues that Hobbes's ideas of political liberty and punishment are based on a concept of "endeavour" derived from his mechanistic and deterministic metaphysics and that he used the idea of "endeavour" to overcome the duality of body-mind. Watkins sets out to demonstrate that "endeavour" is an important philosophical concept. To do so, Watkins surveys Hobbes's explanations of endeavour and asserts: "it becomes clear that by 'endeavour' he meant, not instantaneous speed, but instantaneous velocity in his sense—the pressure or motive force behind the movement, rather than the movement itself" (124). Watkins points out that any actual movement may be the result of one or many "endeavours."

> . . . the idea that [a body's actual] motion may be the resultant of various endeavours prepared the way for a 'haunted-universe' doctrine whereby the physical world is filled by an invisible system of endeavours, powers, pressures, or forces. Even the most dead-seeming chunk of inert matter is, one might almost say, brought to life by this idea, transformed into something humming silently with incipient motion (124).

Watkins sets up quotations—similar in both thought and phraseology—from both Hobbes and Leibniz to show that Leibniz adopted and developed Hobbes's concept of "endeavour" renaming it "conatus"; and that he derived from Hobbes the idea that endeavours continue to infinity. Watkins also argues, however, that Leibniz inverted Hobbes's use of endeavour: "Leibniz integrated matter from psycho-physical intensities, whereas Hobbes differentiated motion into psycho-physical intensities" (131-132).

Having argued the philosophical significance of the idea of endeavour, Watkins now turns to the political implications Hobbes drew from the concept. Watkins explains that Hobbes's concept of liberty is unimpeded endeavour. Watkins urges that Hobbes's distinction between voluntary and involuntary motion corresponds to the difference between those internal endeavours which result in a body moving itself and those external endeavours acting on a body from the outside. Only the former is "free" movement in Hobbes's theory, but the conceptual distinction rests on a legitimate logical inference from the idea of "endeavour." Moreover, both "voluntary" and "involuntary" motion are consistent with Hobbes's

determinism. Watkins turns immediately to politics and draws the inference—drawn by Hobbes—that a person who cannot move his body in accord with internal endeavour is *not* free. A person who—out of consideration for something external—has a different endeavour than he would otherwise have *is* free. Thus, the person who obeys a command for fear of what will happen if he does not, does so freely.

Watkins looks at the implications for the theory of punishment which may be drawn from Hobbes's mechanical conception of liberty (135-137). First, Watkins notes approvingly Hobbes's answer to the charge that a purely utilitarian theory of punishment justifies "framing" and "punishing" publicly an innocent party as a warning to others. Such would not be punishment *by definition* because "punishment" is only for those who have broken the law and not for the innocent. Second, Watkins notes Hobbes's answer to the charge that, in establishing a sovereign authority men have acted contrary to their natures by giving to the sovereign the authority to kill them. Watkins says the subject has not given away the right of self-defense nor has the sovereign received any right to bear arms against his subjects. Each subject still possesses his own original right to preserve himself although he has renounced the right to assist others in self-defense against the sovereign and has agreed to aid the sovereign in the exercise of the sovereign's natural right against transgressors of the sovereign's law (136).

Hobbes's theory of justice was implied by his theory of language.

Chapter VIII, "Language," is the last of the sections where Watkins attempts to show the systematic coherence of Hobbes's ideas. Watkins argues that Hobbes created a "nominalist theory of the state." He proposes that, on Hobbes's theory, the aggregation of men moves from the moral vacuum of the resolved state of nature of composed political/moral order only when: (a) each man gives the use of his *name* to the sovereign; (b) the sovereign creates "good" and "evil" by giving those names to things and acts; and (c) the sovereign causes men to obey his commands for fear of his punishment. Watkins explains Hobbes's complex theory of mark-sign-name-thing semantic relations and calls Hobbes's theory of the meaning of words a "Humpty Dumpty" theory (144). Watkins asks if Hobbes's theory of the truth of propositions is also a Humpty

Dumpty—or "super-nominalist"—theory. He describes his argument as follows:

> In this section I shall argue as follows: had Hobbes consistently abided by his nominalist ontology (that there is nothing universal in the world but names, every thing named being individual and singular), Leibniz would have been right [that Hobbes was a super-nominalist]; moreover, Hobbes often appears to endorse the 'super-nominalist' view that the truth or falsity of all propositions is automatically determined by nothing but verbal conventions or stipulations; however, Hobbes did not consistently abide by his nominalist ontology: he sometimes allowed that a common name may stand for something which is *not* individual and singular[~~—for a characteristic individual and singular~~]—for a characteristic or a property or (as he called it) an *accident* which may be shared by many individual things; and the admission of accidents into his ontology enabled him to avoid a Humpty-Dumpty theory of truth, at least in connection with factual propositions. In the section after this I shall argue that, since he did not admit any moral accidents (or non-natural qualities, as G.E. Moore called them), Hobbes did perforce take a Humpty-Dumpty view of moral utterances, the role of Humpty-Dumpty being given to the sovereign (144-145). ‡

Thus, Watkins sets the stage to refute Warrender's assertion that the sovereign does not create justice and injustice: Hobbes's nominalist ontology is compromised only with respect to natural philosophy. Hobbes admits that natural objects may share natural traits or "accidents." However, there are no non-natural "accidents"—such as "justice" and "injustice"—and no such names in civil society until the sovereign creates those names. Hobbes's view of the nature of language, combined with his materialist ontology, leads to the consequence that in the state of nature there are as many meanings of "justice" as there are people naming "justice." Only under the authority of a sovereign is there only one who gives names and only one use of the name "justice." Thus, Hobbes has escaped from what he thought was the problem of differing opinions. Since what the sovereign names as "just" is so *because* he says so, it is *absurd* to "disagree" with the sovereign. Similarly, it is impossible for a law or command of the sovereign to be anything other than just. For these reasons also, the sovereign must prescribe how God—who has no natural accidents—is to be addressed in public worship.

In the last section of this chapter, Watkins seeks to break new ground with his theory of "How the sovereign is made." Watkins says the sovereign is made, not by the transfer of men's right or power or will, but by renunciation of their power and rights and the transfer of their *names*. Watkins argues that this interpretation of

the passages concerning the making of the sovereign explains how Hobbes could say both that the sovereign dictates the subject's morality and that the subjects themselves still rule. Watkins makes heavy use of the power of attorney as authorized use of a name.

Hobbes's political theory may be evaluated and criticized by rational standards.

In Chapter IX, Watkins collects the political implications which may be drawn from Hobbes's non-political philosophical ideas, evaluates Hobbes's theory by its openness to criticism, and suggests portions of that theory which might be revised profitably.

Watkins's list of political implications runs on for two pages, at the end of which he says that Hobbes's civil philosophy satisfies two of Hobbes's three requirements, i.e., that he demonstrate: (1) the need for a sovereign; and (2) "that what *makes* anything a duty is its being commanded by a sovereign authority" (16). In the second section of this concluding chapter, Watkins turns to the third requirement: that Hobbes's conclusions be *known* to be *true*. He notes that one of Hobbes's central principles—"that men have an overriding fear of violent death" (166)—implies no sane man would knowingly behave in a way leading to certain death. Watkins cites evidence refuting this key principle of Hobbes's theory and asks if this implies that Hobbes failed in his political theory. Watkins argues that Hobbes failed to achieve what he set out to do because it was impossible to succeed. In any event:

> What Hobbes provided, notwithstanding his tone of confident finality, was not a frozen block of political theory, but an immensely rich, criticizable system, open to revision and development at many points (170).

Thus, according to Watkins, it is praiseworthy that Hobbes's theory has so much content that it yields a large number of inferences some of which may be tested and found to be false. To do otherwise might have saved Hobbes from contradiction but only at the cost of reducing the usefulness of his theory.

The final portion of this final chapter is entitled "Taming Leviathan." In this section, Watkins criticizes three of Hobbes's important political ideas. First, Watkins argues that civil war is only one of two possible domestic political disasters: totalitarianism is the other. The sovereignty of a periodically elected parliament may be

possible and preferable to the Hobbesian one. Second, Hobbes's concept of liberty as the absence of external impediment implies that behavior induced by psychological manipulations would be "free." Similarly, Hobbes recognizes no inner "freedom" for the one who is physically captive. Watkins finds these inferences unsatisfactory. Third, contradictory inferences result if whatever the sovereign commands *is just* merely because he commands it. Moreover, Hobbes's ethical skepticism—which leads to the sovereign's creation of justice by naming—also removes the basis for "recommending" the sovereign's justice as "good." Finally, Watkins suggests that moral and scientific theories stand on equal footing in that their ultimate principles are unprovable, though their inferences may be criticized and repaired or replaced. With this justification of the reasonableness of moral discourse, Watkins puts forth his personal view that the solution for political instability may not be a political mechanism but a social institution:

> If men are potentially much better and much worse than wolves, what they need is not some heavily repressive political apparatus which will clamp down indiscriminately on their ambivalent natures. For one thing, it is within authoritarian political regimes that some of men's worst tendencies come out. They need civilizing traditions and institutions, a settled way of living and a social atmosphere which, while helping to train their ambivalent dispositions into decent habits of behavior, will allow them to indulge their peculiarly human capacities for curiosity, invention and criticism, for conversation and laughter (180).

An Evaluation of Watkins's "Hobbes's System of Ideas"

Watkins's purpose.

Watkins's book will be valuable for two audiences. First, those students of philosophy who believe philosophical concepts can have no logical impact on ethics and politics will find the book directed at them. Thus, Watkins argues that epistemological ideas can bear fruit in areas other than epistemology, even one so distantly related as political theory. Watkins seeks to establish this by showing that Hobbes intended—and properly claimed—to have a logical system in which certain fundamental ideas required him to draw certain inferences rather than others and that these inferences are part of the substance of Hobbes's political doctrine. In this way, Watkins defends both the possibility and the propriety of giving ideas such

extended application. Watkins's arguments are clear, well-constructed and convincing to this reviewer.

Second, those students of Hobbes who are examining the philosophical and systematic coherence of Hobbes's thought will also find Watkins's book directed at them. On this point also this reviewer finds Watkins convincing. Watkins holds that there is a logical and systematic integrity within Hobbes's ideas which extends from metaphysics to politics. And it is precisely here that Watkins makes his specific clarifying modification of the traditional naturalistic interpretation of Hobbes. Watkins demonstrates that Hobbes did not *deduce* his physics of politics—he *explained* it. Similarly, Hobbes did not act either as a detached theorist or as a simple unbiased observer of man's morals: he interpreted human morality in terms of mechanical naturalism. As Watkins says:

> . . . My claim will be that a set of metaphysical ideas about human nature and a set of empirical generalizations about human behavior both play indispensable roles in his psychological theory, but that it is not derivable from either set alone. Rather, it consists of those empirical generalizations systematically interpreted (or processed or distorted) by those metaphysical ideas (111).

Hobbes may have intended the deduction of politics from physics. In fact, his achievement was to *interpret* human behaviour in terms of physics, and to draw logically proper political inferences from this interpretive theory of human behavior.

It was Watkins's intent to explain to the reader how Hobbes's theory of politics hangs together *as this kind of system*. For this purpose, Watkins's book will be valuable to undergraduates and mature scholars alike.

Watkins's theory of the relation between Hobbes's texts and philosophy.

On Watkins's interpretation of Hobbes, beginning with Hobbes's 1630 "Tract", Hobbes expresses and works out the logical problems of a single world view: monistic mechanical natural science. Thus, Hobbes really did base his political philosophy on the world—including human behavior—as interpreted in terms of mechanical physics. Or, to compare him more closely with Strauss, for Watkins the writings of Hobbes consist of marginally inconsistent naturalism. The inconsistencies are not those of an intellectual humanist who tried to fit humanistic premises and political conclu-

sions into the contemporary thought forms of mechanical naturalism. Instead, the inconsistencies are those of an intellectual mechanical naturalist—whose personal political preferences were monarchist—who tried to fit observable human experience into the categories of his own intellectual system and found he was logically required to settle for only part of his preferences, i.e., obedience to *de facto* governments.

Watkins's critique of previous scholars.

Watkins's demonstration of dramatic changes in Hobbes's political writings is convincing evidence that George Croom Robertson erred by asserting Hobbes's views were constant throughout his adult life. However, Watkins's argument against Leo Strauss fails to disprove Strauss's thesis insofar as Strauss refers to Hobbes's motives—Hobbes's "thinking" rather than his "thoughts." Indeed, Watkins's counterargument—that Hobbes was a monarchist prior to 1630 but later confessed that his mature philosophy was unable to demonstrate with certainty that monarchy was preferable to democracy—*could* be taken as evidence for Strauss's statements that:

> . . . with the progressive elaboration of his political philosophy Hobbes drew farther and farther away from his original recognition of aristocratic virtue. The *Leviathan* belongs to a very advanced stage of this development (Strauss, 55).

> . . . for the study of Hobbes's political philosophy ... the most mature presentation of that philosophy, that is the *Leviathan*, is by no means an adequate source for an understanding of Hobbes's moral and political ideas. It is true that the presuppositions and conclusions of the fundamental moral attitude are more clearly manifest in the *Leviathan* than in the earlier presentations, but, on the other hand, in the earlier presentations the original motives of Hobbes's political philosophy are generally more clearly shown (170).

The difference between the two scholars is that Strauss is interested in the origin of Hobbes's motivations while Watkins is interested in the fruition of Hobbes's ideas.

Finally, Watkins's demonstration that Hobbes's natural laws are reducible to self-regarding utility is a comprehensive and convincing refutation of the Taylor-Warrender thesis. It seems overwhelmingly probable that—as a matter of logic—the laws of nature cannot be valid as more than statements of self-serving utility, and that—as a

matter of authorial intent—Hobbes so intended them. However, the same cannot be said with regard to civil authority, laws and obligation. Nor did Watkins say that such was the case. Indeed, Watkins's theory of Hobbesian authorization (to be dealt with below) seems to imply that the obligation to obey civil authority *cannot* be reduced to utility.

The significance of Watkins's 1965 interpretation.

The importance of Watkins's work does not depend on the originality of Watkins's interpretation of Hobbes's thought. As Watkins said, his interpretation is—with an exception I shall note in a moment—"fairly orthodox" (9). However, in my view, Watkins is highly successful at attaining both his long-range and his short-range objectives. First, Watkins succeeds in showing the systematic integrity of Hobbes's ideas. In this respect, Watkins also vindicates the basic outlines of the "naturalist" interpretation of Hobbes's thought. Indeed, quite apart from his purely interpretive proposals, Watkins also points out previously unsuspected or unexplored intellectual connections between Hobbes's ideas and those of his predecessors and contemporaries. As mentioned above, this is the kind of usefulness which suggests that the interpretation of Hobbes within which Watkins operates has historical validity as a rethinking of Hobbes's thoughts after him.

Second, Watkins succeeds in showing the *possibility* of reasoned discussion and criticism of political and ethical ideas. Indeed, so stringent are Watkins's criticisms of Hobbes's thought that he even asks:

> . . . Does this mean that Hobbes failed? Judged by the aim he set himself, the answer is, Yes. He failed to do what he set out to do, which was to found a demonstrable science of political duties. . . . But then, anyone who sets out to do this is bound to fail (168).

Watkins's last comment on the structure of Hobbes's thought is that

> What Hobbes provided, not withstanding his tone of confident finality, was not a frozen block of political theory, but an immensely rich, criticizable system, open to revision and development at many points. Someone should do with Hobbes something like what Mach did with Newton (170).

Thus, Watkins suggests that it is important for a theorist to offer arguments which are available for reasoned criticism rather than to immunize those arguments against such criticism. Watkins also commends Hobbes for offering a system of ideas rather than an unrelated set of propositions. Watkins's suggestions are not novel, but they are worth taking, even in a day when all values are regarded as mere *ad hoc* rationalizations of desires.

Finally, I want to point out two areas where I think Watkins has not vindicated Hobbes. First, in his discussion of Hobbes's theory of punishment, Watkins attempts to exonerate Hobbes's purely utilitarian theory of the charge that it could be used to justify "framing" and "punishing" an innocent party as a public warning to others. Watkins succeeds in showing that Hobbes's *definition of punishment* could not be extended to cover such an act. However, Watkins does not succeed in showing that Hobbes's *theory of utility* could not be extended to call for such an act.

Second, in his discussion of authorization, Watkins suggests that, for Hobbes, authorization has occurred when the subjects have transferred their names to the sovereign. Instead of the *rights* of the subjects, the sovereign receives their *names*.

> One of Hobbes's favorite ways of characterizing sovereign[ty is to say that *the sovereign*] *bears the person of* his subjects. What, given his thorough-going nominalism, could Hobbes have meant by this? The answer which readily suggests itself is this: His subjects have given him, not their persons but tokens of their persons, viz. their *names*. And this is, in fact, what Hobbes meant. Each subject authorizes his sovereign to represent him '*or act in his name*' (160). *

This is an interesting suggestion and perhaps this is how Hobbes *should* have authorized the sovereign. However, I think the attractiveness of Watkins's suggestion plays heavily on the word "nominalism." Now Hobbes's philosophy *is* "thorough-going nominalism." However, Hobbes nowhere gave any evidence that he meant names could be transferred or that the giving of a name, even as a token, would accomplish anything else. Indeed, such an idea sounds like a "realist" view of names rather than a nominalist one. On the other hand, Hobbes practices his nominalism as a kind of "defineism" constructing great semantic chains of permutations on the same fundamental idea, e.g., "endeavour" in Chapter VI of *Leviathan*. Similarly, at the beginning of Chapters XIV and XXI, Hobbes again constructs semantic chains beginning from "liberty" as "the absence of externall Impediments." The second link in the

chain—at least in chapter XIV—is "the *right* of nature" which Hobbes defines as a kind of "liberty." The chain which Hobbes starts at the beginning of Chapter XIV ends in Chapter XVI where Hobbes says: "By authority, is always understood a Right . . ." All through this chapter, which is the climax of Part I, Hobbes defines authority and authorization by reference to "right" which has been chain-linked to "the absence of externall Impediments." The sovereign possesses this right and acts by it, so the sovereign must have received it by transfer from the subjects. This interpretation of Hobbes's view of authorization appears to lay Hobbes open to serious logical objections, but there is substantial textual evidence that Hobbes meant this. On this basis, this reviewer must judge that Watkins's account of Hobbesian authorization does not accurately represent Hobbes's meaning.

However, in every other respect, Watkins's book is clear, readable, engaging and convincing. It does not deserve to be out of print.

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† (p. 180) Reprint editor's note: as originally published, the review erroneously lacked the dash shown here in the final sentence.

‡ (p. 205) Reprint editor's note: as originally published, the review erroneously lacked indentation for this paragraph, failed to italicize "not", and added the characters shown here as struck-out and bracketed.

* (p. 211) Reprint editor's note: as originally published, the review erroneously lacked indentation for this paragraph, and omitted the language shown here as bracketed.