The A Priori Nature of the Political: Democracy and Scientific Method in Thomas Hobbes

Patrick Craig

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THE A PRIORI NATURE OF THE POLITICAL:

DEMOCRACY AND SCIENTIFIC METHOD IN THOMAS HOBBES

A Dissertation

Submitted to the McAnulty College and Graduate School of Liberal Arts

Duquesne University

In partial fulfillment of the requirements for
the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

By

Patrick Craig

December 2014
THE A PRIORI NATURE OF THE POLITICAL:

DEMOCRACY AND SCIENTIFIC METHOD IN THOMAS HOBBES

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Dissertation supervised by Daniel Selcer

My dissertation provides a treatment of Hobbes’s politics in light of his conception of scientific method. The scholarship devoted to these two components of Hobbes’s thought, that is his account of scientific method and his political philosophy, have largely existed in isolation from one another. Reading his politics through the lens of his account of scientific method, I bring two bodies of research on Hobbes together, and in so doing, offer a unique account of his political philosophy. When Hobbes’s political philosophy is approached in the way I suggest, what one finds is not a simple defense of authoritarian absolutism, but instead a much more progressive political theory, one that is structured around the democratic power of “the people” as a constitutive political force.
DEDICATION

For My Parents
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INTRODUCTION

Thomas Hobbes is best known for his political philosophy. The story he provides of the origin of commonwealths is as well known, is as familiar, as its author. Hobbes argues that individuals initially find themselves in a state of nature, or war of all against all, where “the life of man [is] solitary, poor, nasty, brutish, and short” (Lev., EW 3, 113). If they are to secure peace, these individuals must contract with one another to create a sovereign power. One of the central features of Hobbes’s politics is his claim that sovereign power must be absolute. Readers of Hobbes often find in his political philosophy a defense of unchecked absolutism, an enemy of democracy, and a stalwart opponent of any and all forms of political resistance. Hobbes’s politics are typically taken to defend a strict authoritarianism.

In what follows I argue that this traditional portrait of Hobbes’s political thought is fundamentally mistaken and that it stands in urgent need of reappraisal. To be fair, part of the responsibility for this reception may fall on Hobbes’s own shoulders. As Edwin Curley has pointed out in the Introduction to his edition of Leviathan, Hobbes’s penchant for the quotable often comes at the expense of serious and sustained engagement with his work.¹ The vicissitudes of the reception of Hobbes’s political science can largely be mapped according to the ways in which his texts have entered into the selective memory of his readers. Our collective memory of Hobbes’s politics is formed out of this selective process. In many instances, though certainly not all, our collective memory consists of not much more than mere sound-bites of his thought, mere “Hobbisms.” That Hobbes’s works are eminently quotable, however, in no way excuses a careful consideration of his

texts and what they have to offer. It is my contention that when one proceeds beyond
these so-called sound bites of his political philosophy, and ventures into the logic of his
arguments, one discovers a political thinker who offers not only a unique account of what
political science is, but also a political philosophy that clashes with our most cherished
notions of what Hobbes’s politics aims to defend. A closer look uncovers Hobbes’s
thought to be, perhaps surprisingly, an extended defense of the democratic nature of the
political.

Hobbes believed his theory of the political to be successful because it was
informed by a determinate scientific method, and it was this feature, he felt, that set his
political theory apart from others. In the first chapter, I provide some of the background
to Hobbes’s scientific methodology. While an exhaustive inventory of scientific methods
prior to, and during, Hobbes’s time lay far beyond the scope of this project, I do
nonetheless try to pinpoint some significant moments in the trajectory of the history of
scientific method, moments which are significant to the extent that they prove instructive.
What they provide is a sense of both the methods that Hobbes is reacting against, and
those that he appropriates to his own ends. I provide an overview of Aristotle’s method,
as found in the *Posterior Analytics*, and point to some of its defects when it comes to
providing the scientific knower with epistemological certainty. I then trace the way in
which Aristotelian method becomes reconfigured in the works of the sixteenth century
Paduan Aristotelian, Jacopo Zabarella. Zabarella transforms Aristotle’s method,
introducing important methodological terminology that will become central to Hobbes’s
own conception of method—analysis and synthesis.
There is much debate as to the relationship between Zabarella’s and Hobbes’s method. I argue that irrespective of any direct or indirect influence, an understanding of Zabarella’s method helps us understand what Hobbes is trying to do with his own. I then discuss how, from the late medieval through the renaissance periods, and into the early modern period, one witnesses a fundamental shift in the ways that thinkers understand the certainty afforded by *scientia*. What arises is what I call a constructive conception of certainty, one that views certainty to be found there where the knower makes the object being investigated. As I explain, this constructive conception of certainty is put to use by many influential thinkers of the period, from Descartes to Galileo, from Bacon to Vico. It is precisely this conception of certainty, I contend, that Hobbes employs in his account of political science.

In the second chapter I turn my attention to Hobbes’s methodology. Focusing for the most part on what he has to say about scientific method in *De Corpore*, I address how Hobbes understands method to function in the sciences and how this informs his understanding of the sciences themselves. Hobbes’s method is comprised of two methods, the analytic method and the synthetic method. The former proceeds from some phenomenon (or effect) and attempts to discover its causes. The latter begins with the causes of a phenomenon (or effect) and shows how it is that the causes bring about or generate the effect. I discuss how Hobbes views the causes of a phenomenon as the parts of the thing’s nature, which is to say, as constitutive or genetic elements of its being. Conversely, he understands the phenomenon to be constructed out of these parts of its nature. I go on to show how this conception of method influences the way the various sciences relate to one another. I argue that Hobbes ultimately divides the sciences into
natural sciences, on the one hand, and artificial sciences, on the other, owing to the constructive conception of certainty I mentioned above. Where natural sciences study things already made by nature, the artificial sciences study things that are the result of human artifice, that is, that are the direct result of humans making those things. Where the natural sciences have their basis in geometry, the most rudimentary of the natural sciences, as it studies the basic properties of bodies as such, the artificial sciences alone consist of political science. I explain why, on Hobbes’s account, the natural sciences necessarily employ the analytic method, thereby making them *a posteriori* sciences, whereas political science is an *a priori* science rooted in the synthetic method. Because of its *a priori* status, it is therefore capable of providing the scientist with certain and demonstrable knowledge regarding the parts of the nature of the commonwealth. Hobbes’s political philosophical works are best read, then, as works which delineate what it is that constitutes the very nature of sovereign commonwealths as such.

Where the first two chapters are concerned first and foremost with issues pertaining to methodology, in the third chapter I change gears and begin to provide a reading of Hobbes’s politics. The reading I develop is shaped by his scientific method and what he says about the status of political science as an *a priori* science. What I am primarily interested in, however, is the contents of his political science. The third chapter thus confronts what most people think of when they think of Hobbes’s political philosophy, his accounts of the state of nature, the laws of nature, the social contract, and so on. As I read Hobbes, his political science is not deduced from his materialist ontology, nor his mechanistic psychology, nor is it a hypothetical history of the origin of commonwealths. All of these interpretations, interpretations that feature predominantly
in Hobbesian scholarship and that have shaped most people’s understanding of Hobbes, fail to interpret his political science as an *a priori* science, one that stands independently of the natural sciences.

In their place I offer an interpretation of his politics that views the contents of his political science as being deduced from three primary principles, principles which are endemic to political science, and which form its theoretical basis. I call these principles (1) the principle of natural right, (2) the principle of equality, and (3) the principle of scarcity. These three principles, taken together, contain the genetic elements of the war of all against all, which is to say of the state of nature, just as they contain the genetic elements of all that follows from it. I explicate precisely how Hobbes links the problems of the state of nature, and its attempted resolution in the formation of the commonwealth via covenant, to these primary principles. In so doing, I argue Hobbes provides an *a priori* deduction of the commonwealth on the basis of these primary principles, solidifying their status as true political philosophical principles.

When I say that Hobbes’s political science is derived from these three primary political scientific principles, I do not mean to suggest that Hobbes explicitly says that these are the principles from which the rest of his politics deductively flow. He does not say that they are, and so I make no claim that he does. Nonetheless, a thorough and sensitive analysis of the logic of his arguments shows that they do form the basis of his political system and I try to show that this is the case. My interpretation strives to stay as close as possible to the letter of Hobbes’s text, supplementing the letter of Hobbes’s text not with what is merely Hobbesian in spirit, but with what I take to be necessitated by the arguments of the text, though sometimes not clearly expressed.
In the fourth chapter, I turn to Hobbes’s account of the structure of the commonwealth, that is, the state. Hobbes derives the state from a social contract. More specifically, he derives it from a transfer of right. In the state of nature, each individual agrees with every other individual to transfer a portion of their natural right to another individual or group of individuals, thereby making the latter the sovereign. In turn, those who have transferred a portion of their natural right thereby become subjects of the state, that is citizens. The state, for Hobbes, thus consists of both a sovereign power as well as subjects, and these two elements, I hold, comprise its structure. I argue that Hobbes’s views pertaining to the structure of the state are informed primarily by his account of scientific method, as well as his theory of causal power. Hobbes’s theory of causation has it that effects require what he calls plenary or entire causes. Plenary or entire causes, themselves, consist of both an active and passive component. Any given effect is brought about only if both the active and passive components of the plenary cause are present. If either the active or passive component of the cause is lacking, then causation will not occur, and there will be no effect. I claim that Hobbes understands the structure of the state on the basis of this theory of causal power. I show that the active cause of the state consists of sovereign power and its possession of absolute sovereign right, and that its passive cause consists of the safety, security, and felicity of subjects. Both must be present for the state to exist. If either, however, are found lacking, then the state will lack its plenary or entire cause, and hence not exist. This means that if sovereign power is exercised in such a way that the safety, security, and felicity of subjects is eliminated, then the state, as effect, will cease to exist insofar as its plenary cause ceases to exist. As I hope to show, this has profound implications for our understanding of the contours of
Hobbesian absolutism, mitigating a number of commonly held concerns. Seen from this perspective, Hobbes’s argument is not a philosophical justification of authoritarianism. Rather, it is an extended theoretical attack upon it.

The fifth and final chapter I push this reading further by examining Hobbes’s doctrine of retained rights, that is, his account of the portion of natural right that individuals continue to hold within the commonwealth as subjects. This account, I argue, harbors a lacuna. Though these rights are held by individuals, I make the case that they can be the grounds for collective action. The problem, however, is that these collective acts cannot be adequately explained in terms of the traditional categories of Hobbesian political subjects. As I try to show, neither individuals, nor the sovereign, nor the people, can properly be understood to be the subject of such collective acts. If one is to explain them, though, then one must do so in terms of a political subject that is irreducible to these standard categories. I show that the solution to this problem resides in the collective political subject of the democratic multitude. I show that the multitude is central to his account of the state of nature, his arguments surrounding the formation of the commonwealth, and ultimately his treatment of retained rights, and that in each instance it stands as a non-representative form of democracy. I contend, therefore, that the collective political subject of the democratic multitude is at the very heart of Hobbes’s political project, lending it a distinctly progressive orientation.

Given that Hobbes’s method features prominently in my reading of his political philosophy, the method I have used in interpreting his thought stands in need of some comment. My interpretation of his political philosophy pulls heavily from *The Elements*, *De Cive*, and *Leviathan*. While it is true that these works, taken together, span decades—
The Elements circulating already in 1640, the Latin edition of Leviathan published in 1668—it is startling how similar each iteration of his political philosophy is when compared to the others. In some cases, Hobbes may even have had one of his works open while writing the other. Thus, I often choose to refer to the passages in the relevant texts that most clearly present the stages of Hobbes argument I am addressing. This is not, however, to suppose that there are no differences between these works. The differences between them have been catalogued extensively, and it is not something here on which I wish to dwell. However, when there are differences in the accounts provided in the texts, I do my best to alert the reader to what the differences are, and where they occur.

My interests here are in Hobbes’s political science. The argument I present in the first three chapters entails that I have an understanding of Hobbes’s political science that is somewhat narrowly circumscribed by how Hobbes himself understands the limits of what does and does not count as political science in the strict sense. While The Elements, De Cive, and Leviathan contain Hobbes’s political science, in some instances they contain much more. This is seen perhaps most clearly in the case of Leviathan, though it is exhibited to varying degrees in his other texts. This sprawling work certainly contains Hobbes’s political science, but it also contains portions of his psychology, his theology, and even his ecclesiology. In cases where the reader may feel as though I have ignored significant portions of his text, in some instances it is because I understand those portions not to be part of his political science proper. I feel a more clear comprehension of his political science qua science will perhaps shed more light on these other valuable aspects of his works.

In what follows I have tried to provide a reading of Hobbes’s political science that attends as much as possible to the *a priori* scientific status he gave it. Reading Hobbes in this way requires that we reconsider much of what we know about Hobbes and his place within the political philosophical tradition. The reading I present demands that we rethink Hobbesian political philosophy in light of his scientific method. In so doing, it means we must come face to face not with one of the finest instances of authoritarian theory, but instead with one of the most powerful and unique pronouncements on the essentially democratic nature of the political.
Chapter 1
Historical Context of Hobbesian Methodology

Thomas Hobbes enunciates a political philosophy informed by a scientific method. If he is, as he claims he is, the first to see the precise way in which scientific method could be put to use in the field of political philosophy, the method he uses is not without its own history. In what follows I would like to take a look at the historical background and context out of which Hobbes’s conception of scientific method emerges. As I will argue, Hobbes’s method can be seen as part and parcel of a more general trend in the early modern period which characterizes the new mechanical philosophy, a trend which is best understood, at least at its most general level, as a reaction to Aristotle’s account of scientific method as it is presented in his *Posterior Analytics*. The latter text forms the basis of most, if not all, conceptions of scientific method that one finds in the late Renaissance and Early Modern periods. These periods are not, however, without their own developments concerning scientific method. These developments, as will become clear in what follows, influence Hobbes's own conception of scientific methodology.

In this chapter I first provide a general overview of Aristotle's account of scientific method as it is found in his *Posterior Analytics*. The account of method outlined there is one which sees science to be a demonstrative system which deduces scientific truths from first principles that are necessarily true and known with certainty. The Aristotelian conception of science looks somewhat different than science as we understand it today. While empirical science today is taken to be an endeavor that seeks to formulate probable hypotheses about the world based on the results provided by experimentation, Aristotle believes that science provides demonstrably certain knowledge.
about the world, not merely hypothetical knowledge. This is because the first principles of science, for Aristotle, are true, and the sciences are systems of truths that are derived deductively from true first principles. These true first principles are known as certain by means of an inductive investigation of nature, *epagōgē*, which brings one to an intuitive knowledge of the truth of the first principles. After having explained Aristotle's account of scientific method, I argue that the certainty of Aristotelian first principles cannot be established on the basis of this account of scientific method; in short, Aristotle's scientific method is unable to provide the scientist with the scientific knowledge it is designed to provide. I then turn to the work of the sixteenth century Italian Aristotelian Jacopo Zabarella, whose methodological work, work which he produced while at the University of Padua, represents the culmination of late Renaissance Aristotelian methodology. I focus on Zabarella's method, what he calls the *regressus*, for two reasons. The first is that Zabarella's method influences the work of figures that stand at the beginning of the modern scientific revolution, figures such as Galileo and William Harvey, and most importantly given our immediate concerns, Hobbes. Hobbes as we will see in the next chapter employs precisely the same methodological terms that Zabarella does. Hobbes appropriates from Zabarella a rigorous conception of procedures of resolution and composition; these in fact form the basis of Hobbes's scientific method. The second reason I focus on Zabarella's method is that I aim to show how his reconfiguration of Aristotelian methodology fails for the same reasons that Aristotle's method fails—it too is unable to establish the certainty of its first principles. As I argue, both Aristotle's and Zabarella's methods are unable to establish the truth of the primary principles of demonstration because they employ an essentially correspondence theory of truth. This
theory holds the primary principles of a science to be true if they correspond to the primary principles of the things which the sciences study. Their respective methodologies are unable to carry the weight that this realism demands. Finally I turn to an interesting development that takes place at the dawn of the Early modern period concerning the epistemological status of certainty. One sees thinkers such as Francis Bacon, Baruch Spinoza, and Galileo begin to understand certain knowledge to be a characteristic associated with the construction of the object of scientific investigation. This development understands certainty to be found in maker's knowledge, rather than in a passive correspondence between a scientific theory and the object of such a theory's investigation, as is the case in both Aristotle's and Zabarella's methods. Our work in this chapter will set the stage for the following chapter where I argue that Hobbes's account of scientific method appropriates, more or less indirectly, the resolutive and compositive procedures of Zabarella's method. But in doing this Hobbes substitutes the new constructive ideal of certainty for the aforementioned correspondence ideal. This substitution provides Hobbes the means of establishing the truth of the primary principles in demonstrative science without running into the problems of Aristotle and Zabarella. Furthermore, because construction is the basis for the certainty of the truth of primary principles, those sciences that study objects which are within our power to construct are worthy of the name demonstrative science, which is to say science in the true sense. It is for this reason, I argue, that Hobbes views political science as a demonstrably certain science. In order to make that argument, we must begin to say some things about Aristotle and his account of method.
Aristotle's theory of scientific method is presented most clearly in the *Posterior Analytics*, a book which is notoriously difficult, and notoriously unclear. But within its pages one finds an impressive attempt to provide the outlines of a proper scientific method, a method which used correctly would function as the most useful of tools, as an organon, in building a body of scientific knowledge. To possess such a body of knowledge is the attainment of *epistēmē*, of knowledge in the strict sense, which is to say of science.

For Aristotle, science is properly understood as a deductive system which starts from first principles and proceeds by way of syllogism to conclusions that explain a given fact or phenomenon. While scientific demonstrations are a type of deduction, not all deductions are scientific demonstrations. A number of characteristics distinguish science from other types of deductions, and these have to do mainly with the first principles, or *archai*, of scientific demonstration.

Demonstrative understanding in particular must proceed from items which are true and primitive and immediate and more familiar than and prior to and explanatory of the conclusions. (In this way the principles will also be appropriate to what is being proved.) There can be a deduction even if these conditions are not met, but there cannot be a demonstration—for it will not bring about understanding.\(^3\)

A few things should be said about these criteria.\(^4\) To begin with, the first principles must be true for only what is true is knowable. As Aristotle puts it, “They must be true because you cannot understand what is not the case.”\(^5\) Were the first principles of

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science not true, not only would they be unknowable but everything derived from them, the entire body of scientific knowledge, would also be not true, and therefore unknowable. Thus the possibility of scientific knowledge hinges from the beginning on the first principles of science being true.

What is more, the principles must also be “primitive”, or primary, meaning that there are no principles that are prior to them on which they depend. What this amounts to is that the first principles of science are themselves indemonstrable—where science consists of demonstrations, the principles from which these demonstrations proceed are themselves indemonstrable. Aristotle does not just assert that the first principles of science are indemonstrable, but instead establishes it by way of an argument that runs something like this. Imagine that first principles were instead demonstrable, that is, that they could be established as being derived from more primary principles. The primary principles of this demonstration would themselves, so the argument goes, have to be demonstrable, which is to say derived from more primary principles, which would themselves be demonstrable, and so on. On this hypothesis, were primary principles capable of demonstration then one would find oneself off to the races in an infinite regress of more and more primary principles to no end. The result would be that science could not even begin insofar as it would have no first principles. If there is to be any hope of scientific knowledge it follows instead that the first principles of scientific demonstration are themselves indemonstrable. This raises the issue of how these first principles are known to be first principles, which is to say how one is capable of understanding that they are true first principles. Aristotle must be able to explain how the first principles can be known, and yet be known without any recourse to demonstration.

How Aristotle does this, and whether or not he succeeds, is perhaps one of the most vexed questions regarding the scientific method that Aristotle lays out in the *Posterior Analytics*. As we will see, this issue serves as a locus for later developments of scientific method during the late Renaissance and Early Modern periods. Precisely how Aristotle's method factors into these developments will be addressed below.

The remaining three criteria pertain to how the primary principles relate to the conclusions that are derived from them. The first principles must be “explanatory of the conclusions” due to what scientific knowledge consists of. “We think we understand something *simpliciter* (and not in the sophistical way, incidentally) when we think we know of the explanation because of which the object holds that it is its explanation, and also that it is not possible for it to be otherwise.” Here 'explanation' translates *aitia*, which can also be rendered as cause. Scientific knowledge is not a mere knowing *that* such and such is the case, *to hoti*, but is moving beyond this to a knowledge *why* such and such is the case, *to dioti*; it is a knowledge of the reason why the fact or event is the way that it is. If science attempts to explain why certain things are the way that they are, and this is to be done on the basis of demonstration, then the first principles of demonstration themselves must be capable of explaining the conclusions demonstrated from them. With his characteristic brevity, Aristotle explains that they must be “explanatory because we only understand something when we know its explanation.”

The primary principles must also be prior to the conclusions. The reason for this stems from their being indemonstrable. For if the conclusions, *B*, are demonstrated from a specific set of principles, *A*, and *A* is not itself demonstrated from another set of

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principles (where this set is understood to include the conclusions, $B$), then the specific set of principles, $A$, must itself be prior to the conclusions $B$. In short the first principles of science are not established in a circular fashion or reciprocally from the conclusions, where the conclusions would establish the first principles and the first principles would establish the conclusions. Were it the case that the first principles were established circularly, the same principle would be both prior and posterior to itself. The very notion of this, he argues, is contradictory.$^{10}$

Finally, the first principles of science must be more familiar than the conclusions. Aristotle relates the criterion of familiarity to the criterion of priority.

Things are prior and more familiar in two ways; for it is not the same to be prior by nature and prior in relation to us, nor to be more familiar and more familiar to us. I call prior and more familiar in relation to us items which are nearer to perception, prior and more familiar $simpliciter$ items which are further away. What is most universal is furthest away, and the particulars are nearest—these are opposite to each other.$^{11}$

When looking at the first principles of science it is obvious that their familiarity cannot mean that they are more familiar to us. If they were more familiar in this sense, they would be widely and easily known, as widely and easily known as the particulars of our everyday experience. We would have scientific knowledge of 'why' things are the way that they are just as easily as we now have knowledge 'that' things are. A simple appeal to one's experience shows this to be false, and thus it follows that first principles must be more familiar in another sense. They are more familiar than conclusions in the sense that they are more familiar by nature.

To say that the primary principles of science must be more familiar by nature carries with it the implicit assumption, on Aristotle's part, of what it is that science

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$^{11}$ *An. Post.* I 2, 71b32–72a5.
studies. For him the world is hierarchically arranged in terms of kinds, and it is the scientist's job to investigate these kinds. When I said earlier that this model of science attempts to explain a given fact or phenomenon, this should be qualified a bit. What Aristotle's conception of science presumes to explain is why a given fact or phenomenon is the way that it is \textit{insofar} as it is the type of thing that it is. Science does not set out to explain particular things \textit{qua} particular things, but rather to explain particular things \textit{qua} the types of things that they are. Aristotle is not “really concerned with the particular causes of individual events, but with the general patterns which run invariably (or at least for the most part) through the structure of the world.”\textsuperscript{12} What is at issue here is the regularity or behavior of things as they are structured according to kinds. In the natural world, for example, these kinds are categorized according to genus and specific difference.

One can see in this criterion of familiarity Aristotle's realism. Here the truth value of the primary principles is coupled to the reality of things such that the task of the scientist is to replicate faithfully the forms of things.\textsuperscript{13} And while scientific knowledge is presented in propositional form, it does not consist of knowledge of propositions. Propositions are only there in order to mirror the structure of things, and it is knowledge of these things that constitutes the object of scientific investigation. The truth of propositions is assessed by the extent to which these propositions correspond with a reality that has an objective and independent form. The emphasis for Aristotle is always


\textsuperscript{13} While it is true Aristotle thinks our perception and experience of things is mediated, for we experience the likenesses of things, rather than the things themselves, nonetheless he thinks what we do perceive is truly like the objects that send their likenesses. His realism is thus not a simple direct realism, but some form of indirect realism. See \textit{De Anima}, II.5, 418a3–6; II.7; II.12. For a helpful and quick discussion of the differences between direct and indirect realism, see Tom Rockmore, \textit{On Constructivist Epistemology} (Lanham: Rowman and Littlefield, 2005), 10–12, 16–23.
on the side of things, and propositions are what allow us to express how it is that the things have accidents and relate to one another. As Terence Irwin puts it, for Aristotle “the relations between non-propositional things in the world, not the relations between our beliefs, make one rather than another proposition a first principle.”\textsuperscript{14} Primary propositional principles of science are true if they correspond to the primary principles that exist in reality, in the things themselves. “It is because some x in the world is primitive, immediate, a cause, or more knowable that the propositions about x have these same features. And all of these features are understood in absolute terms.”\textsuperscript{15} Scientific propositions, including first principles, must correspond to reality if they are to be true and the scientist's goal is to get this correspondence right.

Turning our focus to the first principles of science, they can be divided into three distinct groups, each considered to be primary.\textsuperscript{16} “Every demonstrative science,” Aristotle writes, “is concerned with three things: what it posits to exist (these items constitute the kind of which it studies the attributes which hold of it in itself); the so-called common axioms, i.e. the primitives from which its demonstrations proceed; and thirdly, the attributes, where it assumes what each of them means.”\textsuperscript{17} Here we have a distinction between hypotheses, axioms, and definitions, respectively.\textsuperscript{18} Aristotle categorizes the axioms as common primary principles (koinà) and the definitions and hypotheses as proper primary principles (ídia). Because he understands both common

\textsuperscript{16} \textit{An. Post.} I 2, 71b21.
\textsuperscript{17} \textit{An. Post.} I 10, 76b12–15.
\textsuperscript{18} I have, following McKirahan, chosen 'hypothesis' for \textit{hupóthesis}, rather than followed Barnes in his decision to translate this as 'supposition'. I will modify Barnes's translation, and will note when I do so. My reason for doing this is that hypothesis, not supposition, corresponds more closely with Hobbes's usage of the term.
and proper primary principles to be primary principles, I will refer to them collectively as primary principles.

The axioms are first principles which are not restricted to a particular science, but which can be found in more than one science, and so are common. Axioms do not exist, however, unequivocally in each science. Instead they are “common by analogy, since they are only useful in so far as they bear on the kind under the science.” The example that Aristotle provides in this context is that equals taken from equals result in equals remaining. This axiom applies to more than one science; for instance it applies equally to both arithmetic and geometry, to numbers as well as magnitudes. The principle does not exist in the same way, is not univocal, in each of these sciences because it applies to numbers and not magnitudes in arithmetic, and magnitudes and not numbers, as such, in geometry. Instead the axioms of a science are common only insofar as they bear an analogical resemblance to the axioms of the other sciences. The reason for this qualification is that the subject matter of a particular science determines how it is that the axioms are to be used in each science. Because the subject matter of each science is different, the application of the axioms to each subject is different. The implication is that axioms are common in only a loose sense, they are analogically common. It would be better to say that each science has its own axioms, but that these axioms share a common function in the sciences that they are the axioms of, and it is this function which separates the axioms of a given science from the other types of first principles which are considered by Aristotle to be specific to a given science. As to the function of axioms,

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20 Other examples of common axioms provided by Aristotle are the principle of non-contradiction, and the law of the excluded middle (An. Post., I 32, 88b1).
21 Cf. McKirahan, Principles and Proofs, 70.
Aristotle tells us, they are to be “the primitives from which [a science's] demonstrations proceed” and these “must be grasped by anyone who is going to learn anything whatever.”\(^{22}\)

The principles which are proper to a particular science, however, need not be grasped by anyone who is to learn anything whatever, but need only be grasped by one who is attempting to learn something about a specific subject in particular. Where the axioms apply (if only analogically) in more than one science, these particular principles exist only in their respective sciences. They therefore do not even maintain an analogical resemblance to the particular principles of other sciences. Hypotheses and definitions, which we mentioned above, are two types of particular principles. Hypotheses are principles which assert the existence, or non-existence, of the subject matter that is being investigated by a science.\(^{23}\) Definitions for Aristotle also imply the existence of the subject matter, but differ from hypotheses in that they focus on what it means for the things investigated to be the things that they are.\(^{24}\)

Definitions and hypotheses are particular to each science for the same reason that the axioms of the sciences are only common in an analogical sense—the principles of each science are determined by the subject that they are investigating. As proper primary principles, definitions and hypotheses, for Aristotle, go hand in hand. Where hypotheses assume that the object of scientific investigation is, the definitions of science attempt to define what it means to be that object. This means that definitions for Aristotle are real definitions, not nominal or lexical, as if the definitions being referred to here were the

\(^{22}\) An. Post. I 2, 72a15; I 10, 76b.

\(^{23}\) An. Post. I 2, 72a19–21; I 2, 76b1.

Definitions for Aristotle are real definitions of things. As he defines it in the *Topics*, “A definition is a phrase signifying a thing's essence,” that is, what it means to be that thing insofar as it is the kind of thing that it is. If a definition is to signify a thing's essence then strictly speaking there is no place for stipulative definitions among the primary principles either, for a definition is correct if and only if it corresponds to objects as they are. The classification of things into kinds is the result not of our conventions of classification, but is the result of the world being what it is. As we said earlier, the world is divided into classes of things, and a proper definition should get at how it is that a particular thing fits into this structure of classes of things. A true definition must delimit a thing and its *per se*, which is to say necessary, relations. This is why true definitions should be in terms of a thing's genus and specific difference, locating it within the structure of things as they necessarily are. As we shall see in the next chapter, Hobbes's take on definitions stands in distinct contrast to the Aristotelian position.

The model of science that Aristotle builds is one that begins with the axioms and definitions of a science, and uses them as premises in a deduction which explains a fact or phenomenon. Because the axioms and definitions are true, certain, and necessary, the conclusions which follow from the sound deductions are as well. The truth of the conclusion is thereby demonstrated. One can in turn use the conclusion of a

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28 *Topics*, VI 4.
29 From this point on I leave out any mention of hypotheses, in that hypotheses merely characterize that there is an object of scientific investigation; the content of hypotheses is therefore implicit in the fact that there is a science that seeks to study such objects, just as it is implied in the criterion Aristotle uses to distinguish true from false primary principles.
demonstration as a premise in another demonstration, and so on and so forth. The more
one does this, the more one's scientific knowledge increases. This occurs to the extent
that one is in possession of an ever greater number of demonstrative explanations. The
certainty of this knowledge depends of course on the validity of the demonstrations,
which is to say the correct employment of the syllogistic, but perhaps more importantly it
depends on the truth of the initial premises, that is the initial axioms and definitions.

As we saw earlier, knowledge of first principles cannot be reached by way of
demonstration as is the case with subsequent and dependent propositions. Without
knowledge of first principles, though, there can be no knowledge of subsequent and
dependent propositions. If scientific knowledge is to be possible at all, the axioms and
definitions that are the first principles of science must be known to be true, and yet this
knowledge must be reached without demonstration. Aristotle reserves his account of
how this takes place for the last chapter of the second book of the Posterior Analytics.

In his typical fashion he begins by addressing some of the puzzles, or aporiae,
that surround knowledge of first principles. One possibility is that knowledge of first
principles is a knowledge that is innate in us such that it would be a knowledge that is
possessed without any need for demonstration. One could begin with first principles
innately known, and from them, by way of demonstration, construct a body of scientific
knowledge. But “It is absurd to suppose that we possess such states; for then we should
possess pieces of knowledge more exact than demonstration without its being noticed.”
Aristotle's argument against the innate knowledge of first principles is one John Locke
will later use as an argument against innate ideas in the first book of his Essay

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Concerning Human Understanding.\textsuperscript{31} It is absurd to suppose we possess a type of knowledge that we are unaware of, or do not know that we possess. It makes no sense to speak of \textit{having} a type of knowledge that we do not know, for having knowledge is the same thing as knowing the knowledge that one has. Thus our knowledge of first principles is not an innate knowledge. We must, however, possess knowledge of first principles in some sense for if we lack all knowledge of first principles, and all knowledge is arrived at on the basis of prior knowledge as the opening line of the \textit{Posterior Analytics} declares, following the observations of Plato's \textit{Meno}, then it would appear that we could never come to a knowledge of first principles.\textsuperscript{32} Thus we must possess knowledge of first principles in one sense, and not possess it in another: “We must therefore possess some sort of capacity—but not one which will be more valuable than these states in respect of exactness.”\textsuperscript{33} The key element here is perception, broadly speaking.

While knowledge of first principles is not innate, there is something that is innate and this is the capacity of perception.\textsuperscript{34} As animals, we are born with the capacity to perceive the world around us. This capacity is then actualized when something in the environment is encountered. What is encountered in the act of perception is a particular thing—the blue of this coffee mug, the bark of that German shepherd, the musty smell of the book on the shelf, the roughness of the sycamore tree's trunk.\textsuperscript{35} If one only had the capacity to perceive, one would never know anything other than particulars. In order for

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\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{32} \textit{An. Post.} I 1, 71a1; II 19, 99b28.
\item \textsuperscript{33} \textit{An. Post.} II 19, 99b33
\item \textsuperscript{34} The following account is also found in the first chapter of the first book of the \textit{Metaphysics}.
\item \textsuperscript{35} On proper, common, and accidental sensibles see \textit{De Anima} II 6.
\end{itemize}
knowledge of universals to occur memory must supplement the act of perception, which it does by retaining the past perceptions of particular things. Memory aids the act of perception and allows continuity to be a facet of experience. Without memory it would be possible to perceive the same object numerous times, but each time it would be experienced as if it were the first time. Memory allows one to recognize a particular object as the same object that has been perceived before. Just as a number of perceptions results in memory, so too does a number of memories result in experience (*empeiria*). It is only after experience of the same or similar objects that one knows the form or essence that exists in each thing.\(^{36}\) This procedure is continued as more general, more basic universals are reached in and through the experience of less general, less basic universals.\(^{37}\)

“Thus it is plain,” Aristotle tells us, “that we must get to know the primitives by induction; for this is the way in which perception instills universals.”\(^{38}\) The movement from perception, to memory, to experience, to knowledge of universals, and ultimately of first principles, Aristotle refers to as *epagōgē*, here translated as “induction”. Aristotle’s account of how knowledge of first principles comes about is one that is, at least up to this point, thoroughly empirical. One begins with the particulars of experience and, by way of *epagōgē*, eventually comprehends the universals, that is, has knowledge of the essences of things, where these essences cause the things of experience to be what they are. This should come as no surprise for already we have seen Aristotle understands the principles of science to be true if and only if they correspond to the way things are in reality—possession of the essences or forms in things causes us to have knowledge of the

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\(^{36}\) *An. Post.* II 19, 100a3–9.

\(^{37}\) *An. Post.* II 19, 100a15–b4.

\(^{38}\) *An. Post.* II 19, 100b5.
universals.\textsuperscript{39} In order to know how things are in reality one must direct one's attention to the things themselves and one's experience of them, and it is 

\textit{epagōgē} which makes it possible for perception to actualize universals in the soul such that knowledge of the essences is had.

That the knowledge of first principles is empirical is also supported by the fact that such knowledge is not achieved as a result of any process of demonstrative reasoning. As we saw earlier, knowledge of first principles could not be demonstrative knowledge because if knowledge of first principles \textit{were} possible, then an infinite regress of first principles would ensue and scientific knowledge would be impossible. The centrality of \textit{epagōgē} in Aristotle's account solves this problem by placing such knowledge in the innate capacity of perception and the experience that develops on its basis. Aristotle's emphasis on the empirical side of things thus points to the fact that knowledge of first principles in particular, and knowledge of universals in general, is something that happens \textit{to} the one who perceives or knows, which amounts to the claim that “the soul is such as to be capable of undergoing this.”\textsuperscript{40} While it is certainly true that there are active components to Aristotle's account, it is essentially passive in orientation.

There is, however, a potential complication or difficulty for Aristotle's viewpoint. We have seen so far Aristotle's explanation of how comprehension of universals is achieved by way of \textit{epagōgē}. But how does one know that one has correctly comprehended a universal? Related to this, if the first principles of science are to be true, certain, and infallible, how is that that the process of induction can provide the theoretical basis for such truth, certainty, and infallibility? \textit{Epagōgē} would seem to be able to


\textsuperscript{40} \textit{An. Post.} II 19, 100a14.
approach truth, certainty, and infallibility but would inevitably fall short of such lofty criteria. What is it that allows one to move from *epagōgē* to comprehension of first principles? Traditionally the answer to these and related problems is to be found in Aristotle's concept of *nous*.

While *epagōgē* is the process that leads one to universals, the actual grasping or comprehension of universals is accomplished by *nous*. Many have taken Aristotle's use of *nous* to mean 'intuition'.

According to Jonathan Barnes, in the last chapter of the *Posterior Analytics* “Aristotle recognizes, at least tacitly, the notorious frailty of induction: induction, according to B 19, cannot by itself get us to the principles; there is a chasm which induction will not leap—we must fly over it on the back of intuition. The principles, in short, are apprehended by induction plus intuition, or by 'intuitive induction'.” According to Barnes's characterization of the traditional way of understanding the text, Aristotle's final chapter is “Janus-faced, looking in one direction towards empiricism, and in the other towards rationalism. The principles are apprehended by 'induction' (*epagōgē*) in an honest empiricist way; but they are also grasped by *nous*, or 'intuition' as it is normally translated, in the easy rationalist fashion.”

But can Aristotle have it both ways?

Barnes thinks so. On his interpretation *epagōgē* and *nous* are two different answers to two different questions. He argues that once one recognizes this, the apparent inconsistency of Aristotle's account can be recognized for what it is: a merely *apparent* inconsistency. At the beginning of the chapter Aristotle outlines what he will address

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42 Barnes, *Posterior Analytics*, 268.

43 Ibid., 259.
there: “As for the principles—how they become familiar and what is the state (hexis) which gets to know them—, this will be plain from what follows.” Induction, that is epagōgē, answers the question of how first principles come to be familiar. But nous answers the question of what state of mind one is in when one grasps the first principles. On Barnes's reading, nous is not a means of achieving knowledge of first principles, rather it is the hexis that characterizes the person who achieves knowledge of first principles by means of induction. Barnes claims that “nous, the state or disposition, stands to induction as understanding (epistēmē) stands to demonstration. Understanding is not a means of acquiring knowledge. Nor, then, is nous.” We could be satisfied with Barnes's reconciliation of Aristotle if it were not for the fact that his reading merely displaces the problem to another register. The question is no longer how does one jump from the process of induction to a grasp of first principles that is intuitive, but is now how does one jump from the process of induction to a state of mind that is intuitive. If it is difficult to accept that intuition can grasp first principles after being led to them by induction, it is just as difficult to see how induction can result in a hexis like that of intuition. The problem, it would seem, persists if only at a different level.

Whatever one makes of Aristotle's account of the relationship between epagōgē and nous, it still remains the case that knowledge of first principles and their truth is something that is accomplished by means of an empirical investigation into the particulars of experience and that nous results from such an investigation. Epagōgē allows one to move from these particulars to the first principles of science and these principles are the starting points for the demonstrations which result in epistēmē.

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45 Barnes, Posterior Analytics, 268.
It is also worth noting that there cannot be a universal science from which the specific sciences are exhaustively derived. The sciences for Aristotle are separate, distinct, and autonomous insofar as the principles from which they are demonstrated are separate, distinct, and autonomous. If one attempted to demonstrate a truth in one science on the basis of a truth from another science, the conclusion would not follow with necessity “for the extremes and the middle terms must come from the same kind, since if they do not hold in themselves, they will be incidentals.” Science sets out to explain why things are the way that they are either of necessity or for the most part—the mixing of sciences, what would come to be known in the medieval tradition as metabasis, fails at this task and can at best lead “only to category-mistakes” and equivocations. Aristotle does allow that one can “prove by any other science what pertains to a different science” as long as “they are so related to one another that the one falls under the other—as e.g. optics is related to geometry and harmonics to arithmetic.” The first principles of a science (such as optics) can be taken from the first principles of another science (such as geometry) only if the former is subaltern to the latter. Permitting the crossing of sciences only where they are subaltern does not jeopardize Aristotle's prohibition of metabasis because sciences which are subaltern to other sciences do not deal with radically different

47 An. Post. I 7, 75b11–12.
48 Amos Funkenstein, Theology and the Scientific Imagination From the Middle Ages to the Seventeenth Century (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1986), 36. Funkenstein goes even further, and I would argue too far, when he writes “So deep-seated is Aristotle's fear of mixing genera that one wonders whether its roots are not deeper than the ontological commitment to a rational, unique, non-arbitrary classification of the world. A recent anthropological theory stressed the fear of mixed, not clearly definable objects sensed by many cultures and expressed by prohibition of access or usage” (304). If Aristotle's fear is as great as Funkenstein suggests it is, it is hard to surmise how Aristotle could allow the Metaphysics to come so close to violating or at least compromising his prohibition of metabasis in its development of the theory of pros hen equivocity, a theory Funkenstein alludes to on the page immediately following the one just referenced.
49 An. Post. I 7, 75b14–16.
kinds; instead they are subaltern only if their kinds are the same “in some respect.” In instances of subalternation one does not so much jump from one science to another, but instead operates within the boundaries of a single science, at least “in some respect”. It is true for Aristotle that if the first principles of a given science are to correspond to the division of things into kinds, then the first principles of a specific science must be endemic to that science and that science alone, even if it is the case that the principles of one science can be put to use in other sciences. Each science is, and must be, autonomous from every other viewed from the perspective of their first principles.

Much of this general Aristotelian framework of the sciences and scientific methodology remained in place until the late thirteenth century and early fourteenth centuries. According to J.H. Randall, “From the beginning of the fourteenth century, however, there set in a persistent and searching reconstruction of the Aristotelian tradition, which, when directed to the Physics, led by gradual stages to the mechanical and mathematical problems of the Galilean age, and when directed to the Logic,” primarily to the Analytics, “led to the precise formulation of the method and structure of science acclaimed by all the seventeenth-century scientists.” We shall see that it is out of the reconstruction of Aristotelian scientific methodology that takes place during this time that Thomas Hobbes's account of scientific method finds its impetus.

What remained unclear in the Aristotelian account of science was primarily the precise relationship that maintains between the investigation of things and the rational

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50 An. Post. I 7, 75b10.
51 This accounts for why, at least in part, Aristotle is compelled to divide the sciences into those which are theoretical, those which are practical, and those which are productive. This is also consistent with the view that the sciences possess a somewhat hierarchical order for Aristotle. The distinctiveness of the sciences is what allows for anything like a hierarchical ordering of them; if they were not distinct, such a hierarchy would lose all order.
intuition of universals and first principles, between *epagōgē* and *nous*. The Aristotelian account of science as a demonstrative system seems clear enough so long as the first principles of demonstration are themselves comprehended. That the entire demonstrative apparatus depends on the truth of these first principles, and thus on the noetic grasp of them, highlights the importance and necessity of knowing how this takes place.

While Paris had been the center of much important work on these issues in particular, and scientific methodology in general throughout the middle ages, the fifteenth century saw a shift, at least in some respects, from Paris to Padua, Italy. This change represented not only a shift in thinking about scientific methodology, but also about what it was that science was studying. In no discipline was this more evident than physics. At the dawn of the early modern period one sees here a movement away from the qualitative physics so closely associated with the Parisian Aristotelians, toward a more mathematical approach to the workings of the natural world.53 A number of thinkers at the University of Padua contributed to the transformation of the Aristotelian methodology into the methodology of the modern scientific revolution.54

The best known of the Paduan theorists is likely Galileo Galilei, who is often counted among the founders of that so-called revolution. Galileo moved from Pisa to Padua in 1589 in order to teach mathematics, and from 1592 to 1610 he held the chair of

that department.\textsuperscript{55} It was at Padua that he developed his theory about the law of falling bodies, and it was there also that he built his first telescope. William Harvey, known for being the first to provide a comprehensive explanation of the circulatory system, was a student in the renowned medical faculty during this same time.\textsuperscript{56} While both Galileo and Harvey are known for their scientific advances, their discoveries, that is their putting scientific methodology to use,\textsuperscript{57} it is in the work of Jacopo Zabarella, perhaps “the most renowned teacher of logic in Europe during the sixteenth century,” that one finds an exceedingly developed formulation of what that method is.\textsuperscript{58}

**ZABARELLA’S REGRESSUS**

Jacopo Zabarella was born in Padua 1533 and grew up there. He received his doctorate in philosophy from its university in 1553, and then went on to teach there in 1564, first in the faculty of logic, and then in the faculty of natural philosophy in 1569, where he would remain until his death in 1589. Zabarella's work on method is best understood as an attempt to work within the Aristotelian methodological tradition.\textsuperscript{59} Zabarella attempts


\textsuperscript{58} Gilbert, *Renaissance Concepts of Method*, 167. Cf. Randall, *The School of Padua*, 49. Charles B. Schmitt, “Experience and Experiment: A Comparison of Zabarella's View with Galileo's in *De Motu*,” *Studies in the Renaissance*, 16 (1969): 82. Stephen Clucas argues in his “*Scientia and Inductio Scientifica in the Logica Hamburgensis* of Joachim Jungius,” in *Scientia in Early Modern Philosophy: Seventeenth-Century Thinkers on Demonstrative Knowledge from First Principles*, eds. Tom Sorell, G.A.J. Rogers, and Jill Kraye (Dordrecht: Springer, 2010), 53–70, that the methodological work of Joachim Jungius, who was also trained at Padua, fits this bill more so than does Zabarella insofar as the latter does not emphasize the centrality of experience in the modern scientific enterprise enough. Though I agree with Clucas on this issue, my reason for taking a look at Zabarella is that Hobbes himself, as I will show in the next chapter, has little interest in the centrality of experience in the scientific endeavor. What is more, Jungius's method fails to provide the certain knowledge of \textit{φύσις} that is required for \textit{scientia} or \textit{epistēmē}, and for the same reasons that Zabarella's does.

not to forge an entirely new methodological path, but instead to rectify some of the shortcomings and inadequacies of the method that had been developed in the *Posterior Analytics* and subsequently handed down through the Renaissance Aristotelian tradition, these largely having to do with the relationship between *epagōgē* and *nous*.

Zabarella first distinguishes order from method.⁶⁰ “Order,” he tells us in his *De Methodis*, “is something universal and extends more broadly than does method, for in order we regard a science as a universal whole and compare its parts to each other, whereas method consists in the investigation of one thing inquired after without comparison of any of the science's parts to each other.”⁶¹ Order is concerned primarily with arranging the parts of a science with a view towards pedagogic economy. As Zabarella defines it, “order of teaching is an instrumental habit by means of which we are able to so dispose the parts of any discipline, that the discipline may be learned as optimally and easily as can be.”⁶² In many cases a discipline is more easily learned if one part of that discipline is treated and learned before another part of that discipline. Ordering the parts of a discipline does not *produce* scientific knowledge, but instead arranges the science in such a way that the production of scientific knowledge is *facilitated*.

Method, on the other hand, can produce scientific knowledge. As Zabarella defines it, “method is an instrument of [the] understanding bringing about knowledge of

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⁶⁰ Lisa Jardine traces the influence that this distinction of Zabarella’s between *ordo* and *methodus* has on late Renaissance and early modern discussions of scientific methodology, especially insofar as they influence the work of Francis Bacon in her *Francis Bacon: Discovery and the Art of Discourse* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1974), 51.

⁶¹ *De Methodis* I.3.5; All references to Zabarella will be to Jacopo Zabarella, *On Methods* and *On Regressus*, ed. and trans. John P. McCaskey (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2011). References to *De Methodis* will follow the format of book, chapter, and paragraph; those to *De Regressus* will follow the format of chapter and paragraph.

⁶² *De Methodis* I.11.2.
Method is able to produce knowledge due to its inferential nature, where the movement from what is known to what is unknown, such that it becomes known, is achieved by way of syllogistic inference.\textsuperscript{64} Zabarella names his method as a whole \textit{regressus}.\textsuperscript{65} In many ways Zabarella's \textit{regressus} mirrors the Aristotelian method we looked at above. Following Aristotle, Zabarella agrees that the proper form of scientific method is that of syllogism, even going so far as to claim that method and syllogism are one and the same.\textsuperscript{66} Such scientific knowledge can proceed in one of two directions. “It happens […] that in every syllogism constructed for the sake of knowing scientifically, it is necessary that progression occurs either from cause to effect or, on the contrary, from effect to cause.”\textsuperscript{67} The former he calls compositive or demonstrative method, the latter resolutive method. These methodological terms have their roots in the work of the fourth century mathematician Pappus of Alexandria,\textsuperscript{68} and even before that they can be traced in some fashion to the second century medical writings of Galen.\textsuperscript{69} As we shall see, these are the names Hobbes gives to his methods as well. Composition and resolution are each, in their own right, scientific methods, however, taken together they constitute two of the three major steps of the \textit{regressus}.

Resolution begins with what Zabarella calls “confused” knowledge of the effect. “We know an effect confusedly when we know that it is [but] without knowledge of the

\textsuperscript{63} De Methodis, III.2.1.
\textsuperscript{64} De Methodis, I.3.2.
\textsuperscript{65} As Heikki Mikelli has pointed out in his ‘Jacopo Zabarella: The Structure and Method of Scientific Knowledge,’ 186–187, “Zabarella was not the first Aristotelian in Padua to elaborate the \textit{regressus} method, but it reached a high point in his works.”
\textsuperscript{66} De Methodis, III.3.4.
\textsuperscript{67} De Methodis, III.4.4.
\textsuperscript{69} Gilbert, Renaissance Concepts of Method, 13–24.
cause.” The senses are capable of achieving the “knowledge that something is the case (quód).” Here Zabarella follows Aristotle's claim that scientific knowledge has its beginning in the senses. What he has added to the Aristotelian account is the concept of the distinction between distinct and confused knowledge. Resolution proceeds on the basis of this confused sensory knowledge of the effect, and searches out the cause of this effect demonstrating that the cause exists. Taken to its limit, resolution will arrive at the first principles, the ultimate causes of a given effect or phenomenon, showing that they exist.

In the method of Aristotle once one had grasped the principles or causes of a phenomenon by way of epagōgē, aided by nous, one could then immediately turn around and use them as the primary propositions of one's scientific demonstrations. But this procedure, contends Zabarella, is problematically circular. Using his distinction between confused and distinct knowledge he argues that to begin with confused knowledge of an effect, as is the case with all forms of resolution, including induction, and so Aristotelian epagōgē, can only result in confused knowledge of a cause. But just as confused knowledge of an effect can at best result in confused knowledge of the cause, so too can confused knowledge of a cause only result in confused knowledge of an effect, “since nothing gives to another that which it does not itself have.” Demonstration on the basis of confused knowledge will only ever produce confused, and thus not scientific, knowledge. Aristotle's method fails to satisfy one of its own conditions, that its principles be established in a non-circular fashion.

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70 De Regressu, IV.2.
71 Ibid.
72 De Regressu, IV.5.
What is needed, Zabarella realizes, is a third intermediate step between the resolutive phase, which moves from effect to cause, and the demonstrative or compositive phase, which moves from cause to effect. This third phase must transform the confused knowledge of the cause into a distinct knowledge of the same. But how does one come to distinct knowledge of the cause? “There are two things, I think, that help us in knowing the cause distinctly. The first, of course, is knowledge that it is the case (quòd), which prepares us for discovering what it is (quid).”\textsuperscript{73} The resolutive method, as we have seen, is responsible for this first step.

The other thing, without which the first would not suffice, is a comparison of the discovered cause with the effect by means of which it was discovered—not, of course, by knowing that this is the cause and that is the effect but only by comparing the latter thing with the former. For thus it happens that we are led little by little to knowledge of the characteristics of the former thing, and, once one characteristic has been discovered, we are helped to discover another, until finally we know that this is the cause of that effect.\textsuperscript{74}

The confused knowledge of the cause is transformed into distinct knowledge, then, by what he calls a “mental examination of the cause or a mental consideration [mentalem considerationem].”\textsuperscript{75}

It should be clear from this that mental consideration is an essential component of Zabarella's method. In fact, Zabarella situates the entire methodological project of \textit{De Regressu} in terms of its ability to side-step the circularity inherent in Aristotelian methodology.\textsuperscript{76} Unfortunately Zabarella does not say much about what this mental consideration of the cause consists of. If it is clear what function it serves in his method, it is not entirely clear how one engages in the mental consideration of causes. What little

\textsuperscript{73} \textit{De Regressu}, V.4.
\textsuperscript{74} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{75} \textit{De Regressu}, V.2.
\textsuperscript{76} The first chapter of \textit{De Regressu} is titled “What a regressus is and what a circle is.”
he does say is that what is being considered is “the nature and characteristics of that
cause, by means of which it is able to produce” the effect as it is.\textsuperscript{77} When the cause has
been considered in this way, the knowledge one has of it is no longer confused but rather
distinct.

With this distinct knowledge of the cause in hand, one can then proceed from this
knowledge of the cause and deduce the effect from it by way of demonstrative syllogism.
This is the compositive phase of the \textit{regressus}. The knowledge of the cause that results
from this is now distinct, certain, and worthy of the name \textit{scientia}. Though it is the same
effect that is known at the beginning of the resolutive phase and at the end of the
compositive phase, the quality of this knowledge has changed from confused to distinct
and done so in a non-circular fashion.\textsuperscript{78} In summary,

Regressus, therefore, is necessarily composed out of three parts. The first, of
course, is demonstration \textit{quòd}, by which we are led from confused knowledge of
the effect to confused knowledge of the cause. The second is that mental
consideration, by which we acquire distinct knowledge of the cause from
confused knowledge of it. And the third is a demonstration \textit{potissima}, by which
we are finally led on from the cause known distinctly to distinct knowledge of the
effect.\textsuperscript{79}

Zabarella's division of the sciences into the theoretical, or speculative, the
practical and the productive branches is also characteristically Aristotelian. Like
Aristotle he believes that it is really only the speculative sciences that are truly sciences:

“Scientific knowledge (\textit{scientia}) taken properly, has no place except in the contemplative

\textsuperscript{77} \textit{De Regressu}, V.13.
\textsuperscript{78} “We know an effect confusedly when we know that it is [but] without knowledge of the cause, and
distinctly when [we know that it is] by means of knowledge of the cause. The former is said to be
knowledge that something is the case (\textit{quòd}), the latter [knowledge of] what something is on account of
(propter quid) and also, at the same time, [knowledge of] what something is (\textit{quid}) and to know what it is
on account of (propter quid) are the same thing” (\textit{De Regressu}, IV.2).
\textsuperscript{79} \textit{De Regressu}, V.12
The reason for this is that the speculative or theoretical sciences, what Zabarella calls the contemplative disciplines, are “where eternal and necessary things are treated, while the remaining disciplines are concerned with contingent things, which can be made or not made by us; and also because in the other [disciplines], the goal is not knowledge, but activity.”81 The certainty and necessity of the speculative sciences are established on the basis of the things that the speculative sciences study. However, because the practical sciences, such as political science, are not concerned with studying such things, they are not strictly speaking sciences. There is nothing especially interesting about this claim; Zabarella's realism here is in lock-step with Aristotle's. Zabarella's unique insight, however, is that this has important implications for the relationship between the compositive and resolutive methods.

If both the compositive and resolutive methods are considered scientific methods, they are not equally scientific. Instead as Zabarella sees it the “resolutive method is a servant to demonstrative and is directed toward it,” and nowhere is this more clear than in the speculative sciences, because “the ultimate end and goal of everyone who is concerned with speculative sciences is to be led by means of demonstrative method from knowledge of beginning-principles to perfect scientific knowledge of the effects that issue from those beginning-principles.”82 If one already had knowledge of the beginning principles of a specific speculative science, then the resolutive method would be unnecessary. Here Zabarella is really just rehearsing Aristotle's own argument against the possibility that knowledge of first principles is innate. One field where the resolutive method is not needed is mathematics, where one can proceed from the “beginning-

80 De Methodis, II.7.5. See also De Methodis, III.20.4.
81 Ibid.
82 De Methodis, III.18.3.
principles to effects that are always unknown according to nature.”

A case in point is Euclid's *Elements* which proceeds in a wholly compositive fashion, from beginning principles to effects. When it comes to the practical and productive sciences, however, the resolutive method remains indispensable, though nonetheless subsidiary. This is because in being concerned primarily with action, the practical and productive sciences retain a place for a conception of the *end* or *telos* of that action, that is, a conception of the for-the-sake-of-which the action is to be done. The resolutive method leads one in the practical or productive sciences from this end to the means necessary to bring about that desired end.

Though Zabarella notes mathematics as a speculative science that can proceed solely on the basis of the compositive method, it is really natural science that he is interested in. A fully developed natural science should proceed from the primary principles of things, as universal causes, and use the compositive method, that is demonstrative syllogism, to demonstrate the effects that follow, with necessity, from those causes. Here the *regressus* is really just an updated version of the cherished method that is found in the *Posterior Analytics*. As we saw a moment ago, the appeal of this update is its ability, Zabarella claims, to get around the problem of circularity that was perceived to be in the latter by inserting an intermediary stage of mental examination between the movement of the resolutive and compositive methods.

But it is here, precisely, that Zabarella's *regressus* method hits a snag. Though Aristotle's method was taken to task for being inherently circular in that it proceeds from confused knowledge of an effect to distinct knowledge of the cause, where it is only justified to proceed from confused knowledge of an effect to confused knowledge of the

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83 Ibid.
cause, a mental consideration is the response Zabarella provides to transform that confused knowledge of the cause into the distinct knowledge of the cause that is needed for a scientific demonstration of the effect. If we are to hold Zabarella to his claim that “nothing gives to another that which it does not itself have,” then it remains uncertain how he thinks a confused knowledge of the cause can, by means of one's mental consideration of it, result in distinct knowledge of that cause. It is as though the entire problem of Aristotelian method has been displaced by Zabarella from the relationship between epagōgē and nous and contracted into the act of mental examination of the causes of natural phenomena. 84 What is the reason behind this?

Because Zabarella, like Aristotle, understands the world to be divided up into natural kinds, and also maintains a conception of the scientific enterprise in which the compositive method aims to mirror the order of nature, and the resolutive method buttresses this endeavor, both Zabarella and Aristotle find themselves forced to explain how it is that the primary principles of nature can be known with certainty such that they can function as the certain primary principles of the demonstrative science being built. Where Aristotle's answer was that such certain knowledge was achieved by induction, Zabarella's is by a mental consideration of causes. Unfortunately the methods of both

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84 Watkins, Hobbes's System of Ideas, 54, argues that Zabarella might himself have been aware of the frailty of his method, at least in De Regressu, where “It is as if Zabarella came to realize that his earlier claim that the resolutive method is an 'exceedingly efficacious' instrument 'for the discovery of those things that are very obscure and hidden' had been rather too sanguine.” The problem with Watkins's argument is that it ignores the important role that Zabarella confers on the intermediate stage of mental consideration. Both in De Methodis and De Regressu Zabarella argues for the necessity of the mental consideration of causes. If Zabarella were as confident in the resolutive method as Watkins says he is in either of these works, it is unclear why Zabarella would defend the necessity of the mentalem considerationem. Instead it seems to me that it makes more sense to infer that Zabarella himself was well aware of the limits of resolution and explicitly developed his regressus as an attempt to address these limits.
Aristotle and Zabarella are unable to achieve this certainty. Zabarella merely repeats Aristotle's mistake, but in his own way.\textsuperscript{85}

\textbf{CONSTRUCTIVISM AND GENERABILITY, TOWARD A NEW CRITERION OF CERTAINTY}

What should be increasingly clear to us is the incongruence between Aristotle's and Zabarella's scientific methodology, on the one hand, and the object of scientific investigation, on the other.\textsuperscript{86} The problem that persists is how the principles that are better known by nature can become the same principles as those that are better known to us, such that they are one and the same. How can the knowledge of the scientist reproduce in an exact manner the order of things? In the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries one begins to witness an attempt not so much to reconceptualize scientific method in order to more adequately represent reality as it is in itself, but more so to rethink and reconsider what it is that constitutes the object of scientific investigation.

It was mentioned above that the Aristotelian conception of the sciences is one in which each science is autonomous. The autonomous status of the various sciences is something that Zabarella subscribes to as well, and for the exact same reasons.\textsuperscript{87} This should not be too surprising, as it is the dominant viewpoint of much of the Aristotelian-


\textsuperscript{86} Schmitt, “Experience and Experiment,” 125, addresses a similar issue. Cf. Ralph Blake, Curt Ducasse, and Edward Madden, \textit{Theories of Scientific Method: The Renaissance through the Nineteenth Century} (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1960), 7. If, however, this issue is not clear to us, it was certainly clear to Francis Bacon, whose \textit{New Organon} was an attempt to solve these issues surrounding the old \textit{Organon} so dear to the project of Renaissance scholasticism. For a quick overview of this topic, see Michel Malherbe, “Bacon's Method of Science,” in \textit{The Cambridge Companion to Bacon}, ed. Markku Peltonen (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 75–98, esp. 79.

\textsuperscript{87} On this see Mikkeli, “Jacopo Zabarella,” 182–184.
Scholastic tradition through the Middle Ages. But one finds already by the fourteenth century its dominance begin to wane. From the fourteenth through the sixteenth centuries one sees an increasing distrust of the Aristotelian position of *metabasis* in favor of a more unified conception of the various sciences. According to Amos Funkenstein, by the seventeenth century “what was a methodological sin to Aristotle [had become] a recommended virtue.” Metabasis was no longer the perceived threat it once was.

When one turns to explanations of why it is that this trend emerges at this time, why there occurs, as Daniel Garber has nicely put it, “a major change in what might be called the disciplinary geography,” two interrelated issues come to the fore. The first pertains to the increasing emphasis on mechanization and mathematization in the sciences. Viewed as a mechanistic system of matter in motion, the natural world was no longer understood as the kind of thing that was classified into kinds radically and essentially distinct from one another. If each facet of reality is really at its most basic level matter in motion, then *metabasis* is not an issue so long as the primary principles of science are the primary principles of matter in motion. Related to the rise of mechanism is the realization that mathematics is the language adequate to represent this new mechanistic view of the world.

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88 Funkenstein, *Theology and the Scientific Imagination*, 6. According to Funkenstein this can be traced back to the incompatibility of *metabasis* with Termynistc accounts of science, such as that proposed by Ockham (307).
89 Ibid.
91 The well-known rejection of Aristotelian formal and final causes as adequate explanatory tools in the natural sciences is one aspect of this more general trend toward mechanization.
The shift to mathematization and mechanization in the early modern period is accompanied by a second, parallel development regarding the certainty of knowledge. For both Aristotle and Zabarella we saw that truth is a matter of correspondence. At the turn of the seventeenth century a new standard of certainty, “an entirely new ideal of knowing—of acquiring knowledge,” emerges. This new standard or ideal of epistemological certainty and necessity is to be found in the form of knowledge by construction.

Perhaps it is more accurate to say that the new standard of knowledge by construction is not entirely new at this time, but an old standard of knowledge rediscovered and revived such that it finds new purchase at the dawn of the modern period. What Funkenstein has called the ergetic ideal of knowing, that knowledge by construction is adequate to provide the knower with certainty, has a long lineage. According to Antonio Pérez-Ramos, “A tradition which we can trace back to classical Antiquity had identified the human knower as first and foremost a maker or doer (more generally, an agent) and had seen his true character as a knower as wholly or preeminently depending on his credentials as a maker.” In the early modern period such a conception of knowing accompanied the reconfiguration of scientific methodology taking place. “This new, ergetic ideal of knowing stood squarely against the old, contemplative ideal. Common to most ancient and medieval epistemologies was their receptive character: whether we gain knowledge by abstraction from sense impressions, or by illumination, or again by introspection, knowledge or truth is found, not

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constructed.”97 This was certainly the case, as we have seen, in the work of Aristotle and Zabarella for whom scientific certainty was taken, or was ideally supposed to be taken, from the structure of things as they are. By the seventeenth century, however, a large portion of the work being done on scientific methodology assumed a constructivist stance.98

One can see this, for example, in the case of Francis Bacon, for whom the knowledge of a thing's Form is equivalent to the knowledge necessary to produce that thing.99 Bacon's famous maxim from Book I, Aphorism 3 in the *New Organon* that “Human knowledge and human power come to the same thing, because ignorance of cause frustrates effect. For Nature is conquered only by obedience; and that which in though is a cause, is like a rule in practice,” exhibits his faith in, and willingness to make use of, the maker's knowledge tradition.100 What Bacon seeks to develop, at least by 1620, is a criterion of certainty judged on the basis of whether or not such knowledge provides one with the capacity to construct the thing under investigation.

This criterion of constructability, Funkenstein has pointed out, is also put to use later in 1637 by Descartes in his *Discourse on Method*. In Part Five of that work Descartes recounts his attempt in *Le Monde* to provide an alternative mechanical account of the origin or generation of the world. Descartes does not set out to provide an account

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that corresponds to the actual creation of the world, to faithfully describe how it in fact took place, which would be, he realizes, impossible. Instead he aims to speak solely of what would happen in a new world. I therefore supposed that God now created, somewhere in imaginary spaces, enough matter to compose such a world; that he variously and randomly agitated the different parts of this matter so as to form a chaos as confused as any the poets could invent; and that he then did nothing but lend his regular concurrence to nature, leaving it to act according to the laws he established.101

If certain knowledge of the generation of the world cannot be had through a faithful description of how it in fact took place, in a reconstruction of the original process, it can be had through a rational construction of a new world in every sense identical to the one in which we live.102 The marker of truth has shifted, at least as it is concerned here, from a correspondence between the theory and reality, to the construction of the object under investigation. That the object constructed corresponds to reality is only a secondary consideration, subordinate, it could be argued, to the construction itself.

Bacon and Descartes are by no means the only figures among the early modern philosophical landscape to employ such a constructive ideal. One could just as easily refer to Galileo's idealized experiments in his physics, or to the use of genetic definitions in the opening demonstrations of Spinoza's Ethics. What they all capture, each in their own way, is a turn away from the perspective of science that formed the basis of Aristotelian scientific thought, one which saw the certain character of scientific knowledge to be taken, that is passively received, from the things themselves, and toward a constructive view of scientia that is essentially active and productive in character.103

102 Funkenstein, Theology and the Scientific Imagination, 320–323.
103 Funkenstein, Theology and the Scientific Imagination, 298–299. The passivity of Aristotelianism can be seen in Aristotle's insistence that the primary principles of science must be “appropriate” to what is being
do not mean to suggest that each of these important figures shared commitments to the same conception of scientific method, nor that they eschewed realism completely. They did not. For instance, Bacon’s inductivism is in sharp contradistinction to Descartes’s and Spinoza’s propensity for demonstrative deduction. These differences maintain across, and so are representative of, the early modern landscape. Nonetheless, the fact that the constructive ideal of certainty bridges these disparate scientific methodologies and orientations attests to its theoretical and explanatory power.

In each of these instances the constructive ideal is put to work in the traditionally theoretical or speculative disciplines, disciplines which Aristotle or the Renaissance scholastics would recognize as demonstrative disciplines. Bacon employs it in his natural science, Descartes in his, and the same can be said for Galileo. Spinoza's appeal to the ergetic ideal in the first book of the *Ethics* is within the limits of the traditionally theoretical discipline of metaphysics. What each of these figures has done is retained the traditionally Aristotelian categorization of the sciences, at least to some extent, but shifted the criterion of certainty involved in those sciences from a passive replication of, or correspondence to, the object under investigation, to a productive construction of the same.

proved (*An. Post.* I 2, 71b26). It would seem that this passivity is endemic to the correspondence theory. The passivity referred to pertains to how the truth of principles is established; demonstrating from these principles is of course an activity the scientist engages in.

104 Rockmore, in his *On Constructivist Epistemology*, too quickly categorizes the thinkers we have just taken a look at as realists, for he fails to recognize the constructive aspects of their thought that we have discussed.

105 This is not unrelated to Funkenstein's claim that “the study of nature in the seventeenth century was neither predominantly idealistic nor empirical. It was first and foremost *constructive*, pragmatic in the radical sense. It would lead to the conviction that only the doable—at least in principle—is also understandable: *verum et factum convertuntur*” (*Funkenstein, Theology and the Scientific Imagination*, 178). Consider with this Barnes's remark, quoted above, that the final chapter of Aristotle's *Posterior Analytics* is “Janus-faced, looking in one direction towards empiricism, and in the other towards rationalism.” The constructivist orientation cuts across these two paths, reconfiguring each in its own way.
As I will argue in the next chapter, Hobbes's political science shares a number of affinities with this intellectual environment. While Hobbes's scientific methodology bears a number of similarities to the scientific method of folks like Zabarella, it at the same time embodies the constructive ideal of scientific certainty that is so characteristic of the early modern period. By supplementing the former with the latter, I shall argue, Hobbes is able to avoid the pitfalls of the Aristotelian conception of science, and in so doing construct a certain and necessarily true a priori political science.
In the last chapter we first took a look at Aristotle's conception of scientific methodology. We saw that Aristotle views science as a deductive system that is ultimately derived, according to the rules of the syllogistic, from primary principles. As to how these primary principles of science are known, his answer is that they are induced from experience. As a result, each science, according to the Aristotelian model, is independent from every other because the world itself is divided up into kinds that are independent from one another. So long as the primary principles of the things the sciences study are known with certainty, the deductive system derived from those primary principles is also certain. But as we saw, Aristotle is unable to explain adequately how these first principles are known to be certain on the basis of epagōgē and nous. We then turned to the work of the Paduan Aristotelian Jacopo Zabarella. Zabarella's project represents a culmination of late Renaissance work on scientific method. Even though Zabarella's method is located within the larger Aristotelian tradition, it modifies Aristotle's method in a couple of important respects. Zabarella is aware of the problem associated with certain knowledge of primary principles on the basis of Aristotle's method, and his project can be viewed as an attempt to fix these problems. Zabarella's regressus method consists of three stages: the resolutive stage, which proceeds from a confused knowledge of an effect to a confused knowledge of its possible cause, a stage of mental consideration of this possible cause that results in a distinct knowledge of it, and finally a compositive stage, which proceeds in a deductive manner from the distinct knowledge of the cause to a
distinct knowledge of the effect. As we saw, Zabarella views the second stage of the mental consideration of causes to be the cure for what ails Aristotle's method.

Upon closer inspection, however, it was shown that Zabarella's solution is merely apparent. Just as Zabarella introduces the notions of clarity and distinctness, on the one hand, and resolution and composition, on the other, the problem of how one knows the first principles of science with certainty remains in the Zabarellian account at the level of the mental consideration of causes. For both Aristotle and Zabarella, then, their scientific methods are unable to provide scientific knowledge because of their respective conceptions of scientific certainty. Certainty for both Aristotle and Zabarella is dependent upon the correspondence of the primary principles of science to the primary principles of the things that the sciences study.

We then turned our attention to the constructive ideal of scientific certainty that began to emerge at the opening of the early modern period, as seen in figures such as Bacon, Descartes, Galileo, and Spinoza. For these thinkers, certainty is not achieved by means of a passive correspondence between a scientific theory and the objects of such a theory's investigation, but instead by way of a productive construction of those objects. We saw that the maker's knowledge tradition resonated with these thinkers, especially when one looks to the work they did within the traditionally theoretical or speculative disciplines.

In this second chapter we turn our attention to Thomas Hobbes. I will begin by taking a look at his conception of scientific method. Hobbes feels that all previous attempts to present a political science worthy of the name had failed “for the want of method” (Lev., EW 3, 33). Hobbes's account of scientific or philosophical method is
presented most clearly in his *De Corpore*, the first book of his tripartite *Elements of Philosophy*.\(^{106}\) As I aim to show, the account of method that one finds there shares a number of similarities with Zabarella's method, most notably in its employment of the dual movement of resolution and composition. If it resembles Zabarella's method to this extent, it also diverges in one significant respect. Hobbes jettisons the Aristotelian approach to scientific certainty in terms of correspondence and substitutes in its place the ergetic or constructive ideal of knowledge so popular at his time. After having taken a look at how Hobbes mobilizes the constructive ideal, we will then proceed to examine how this influences his conception of the relationships between the sciences. As I will argue, by pairing his resolutive-compositive method with a constructive theory of epistemological certainty, Hobbes distances himself from the traditional Aristotelian view that only the theoretical sciences are demonstrably certain. For Hobbes, the natural sciences are not demonstrably certain. Instead they are at best hypothetical and deal only with statements of probability. It is in political science and geometry, rather, that one finds the ideal of scientific demonstrability embodied. Where political science had been, for so long, considered a practical science insofar as it was thought to study contingent things, Hobbes views it as the most certain of sciences, even going so far as to claim that political science is an *a priori* science.\(^{107}\) In the third chapter I will provide a reading of

\(^{106}\) The other two parts of the *Elements of Philosophy* are *De Homine*, followed by *De Cive*.

\(^{107}\) Douglas M. Jesseph, “*Scientia* in Hobbes,” in *Scientia in Early Modern Philosophy*, ed. Tom Sorrel, G.A.J. Rogers, and Jill Kraye (Heidelberg and New York: Springer Verlag, 2010), 125, suggests “The certainty of *scientia* is thereby purchased at the expense of foregoing any claim to *scientia* about those things we do not ourselves construct, and one might well wonder whether this is a fair epistemological bargain.” Given what I have argued in the previous chapter as well as the argument I will be developing here, I believe Hobbes would have found it a steal, for the methodologies of Aristotle and the Paduans such as Zabarella failed to deliver what they were selling, namely a sufficient account of epistemological certainty within the context of their respective accounts of science.
his political philosophy through the lens of his conception of scientific method, but before that is done, we must now attempt to understand what that scientific method is.

**HOBBS AND THE METHOD OF SCIENCE**

Hobbes equates philosophy with science. For him they are one and the same. “PHILOSOPHY is such knowledge of effects or appearances, as we acquire by true ratiocination from the knowledge we have first of their causes or generation: And again, of such causes or generations as may be from knowing, first their effects” (*De Corp.*, *EW* 1, 3). 108 Hobbes’s definition of philosophy mirrors his definition of science: “But we are then said to know any effect, when we know *that there be causes of the same*, and *in what subject those causes are*, and *in what subject they produce that effect*, and *in what manner they work the same*. And this is the science of causes, or, as they call it, of the ἀἰτία” (*De Corp.*, *EW* 1, 66). Both philosophy and science amount to the knowledge that is produced in and through a rational consideration of things and their causal interactions with one another. They are both knowledge of causes. 109 Because of this, Hobbes uses the terms “philosophy” and “science” interchangeably, and we will do so as well.

This places Hobbes within a long tradition stretching back at least as far as Aristotle. We saw in the last chapter that Aristotle understands scientific knowledge to consist of knowledge of a thing's aitia, which is to say knowledge of a thing's explanation or cause—science moves beyond a mere knowledge to ὁτι to a knowledge to διότι. This too is the case for Hobbes. For him causal knowledge is not given in perception but must

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109 It is for this reason that Hobbes says philosophy is “the natural reason of man” in the Epistle to the Reader of *De Corpore* (*EW* 1, xiii).
be achieved through an employment of reason, an application of reason to, or a rationalization of, the phenomena under investigation.

Hobbes believes that this rational investigation can take two paths. The first proceeds from the knowledge one has of a cause to its effect. In this case, Hobbes will sometimes prefer to use the language of “generates” or “produces” rather than “causes”, as can be seen in the definitions of philosophy and science given above. The second manner proceeds from the knowledge one has of a given effect, which is to say an appearance or phenomenon, to what might cause such an effect. The second route, then, moves from an effect to its cause. On this account, philosophical or scientific knowledge can be understood to be knowledge of cause and effect which proceeds from either of these to the other.

In both cases this knowledge is achieved as a result of the process of “ratiocination”. Hobbes understands ratiocination to be computational: “Now to compute, is either to collect the sum of many things that are added together, or to know what remains when one thing is taken out of another. Ratiocination, therefore, is the same with *addition* and *subtraction* […]. So that all ratiocination is comprehended in these two operations of the mind, addition and substraction” (*De Corp.*, *EW* 1, 3).110 While the mention of addition and subtraction brings to mind the computation associated with the arithmetical manipulation of numbers, ratiocination includes the manipulation not only of numbers, but a wide variety of things, for “magnitude, body, motion, time, degrees of quality, action, conception, proportion, speech and names (in which all the kinds of

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110 Martinich, *Hobbes*, 272, argues Hobbes’s view of reason as computational is one of his distinctly great contributions to philosophy. Cees Leijenhorst in his *The Mechanisation of Aristotelianism: The Late Aristotelian Setting of Thomas Hobbes’ Natural Philosophy* (Leiden: Brill, 2002), however, argues that Hobbes is instead “taking up a Ramist topos” (40).
philosophy consist) are capable of addition and subraction” (De Corp., EW 1, 5).
Hobbes often speaks as though what is really being added and subtracted are mental
images, concepts, and words (both individually and in propositional form), and so it
would follow that ratiocination can be both a linguistic and non-linguistic activity.

In order to illustrate the ratiocinative operation, Hobbes provides the following
example. Imagine someone saw something far off in the distance, but did not know
exactly what it was. Initially the only idea one would have is an idea of a body, or an
idea of what is called by the name of body. “Again, when, by coming nearer, he sees the
same thing thus and thus, now in one place and now in another, he will have a new idea
thereof, namely, that for which we now call such a thing animated” (De Corp., EW 1, 4).
Thereby this someone would add the idea of animated to the already possessed idea of
body. Imagine, then, that the person moves closer to this animated body, and so
“perceives the figure, hears the voice, and sees other things which are signs of a rational
mind,” the result would be that “he has a third idea, though it have yet no appellation,
namely, that for which we now call anything rational” (De Corp., EW 1, 4). Adding the
idea of rational to the idea of an animated body results in having the idea of “body-
animated-rational, or man,” where this idea can be understood to be the sum of the
previous ideas which have been added together (De Corp., EW 1, 4). Such is the
reasoning operation of addition.

The ratiocinative process of substraction, or substraction as Hobbes calls it, works
in the opposite direction. Encountering a man, the individual would have “the whole idea
of that man; and if, as he goes away, he follow him with his eyes only, he will lose the
idea of those things which were signs of his being rational, whilst, nevertheless, the idea
of a body-animated remains still before his eyes” (De Corp., EW 1, 5). If the man would continue to depart, eventually the idea of animated could then be subtracted, with the sum being merely the idea of an individual body.

The ratiocination associated with science is for the most part linguistic. This means that what is being added and subtracted are words and the conceptions associated with those words. As he puts it in Leviathan, such ratiocination “is conceiving of the consequence of the names of all the parts, to the name of the whole; or from the names of the whole and one part, to the name of the other part” (Lev., EW 3, 29). Addition proceeds from the names of the parts of a thing to the names of the whole which those parts constitute, while subtraction proceeds in the opposite direction. In a moment we will have more to say about what Hobbes means here by parts and wholes; as we shall see, these terms are central to his conception of science. But it is sufficient at this point to note that when these names are added to one another and arranged in propositional form, these propositions can then be added to one another in the form of syllogisms, such that the conclusions of these syllogisms stand as the sum of the preceding propositions.

Reason has a goal, or end as well. Hobbes tells us that the purpose or goal of reason, what it by nature strives to do,

is not the finding of the sum and truth of one, or a few consequences, remote from the first definitions, and settled significations of names, but to begin at these, and proceed from one consequence to another. For there can be no certainty of the last conclusion, without a certainty of all those affirmations and negations, on which it was grounded and inferred. (Lev., EW 3, 31)

Reason has as its purpose the organization of the procedures of addition and subtraction into demonstrative form. Reason by its very nature seeks to provide demonstrations.
As can be seen from Hobbes’s definition of philosophy, what ratiocination concerns itself with insofar as it is applied scientifically or philosophically is the causes and effects of phenomena or appearances. This brings us to Hobbes’s conception of method. He defines method as “the shortest way of finding out effects by their known causes, or of causes by their known effects” (De Corp., EW 1, 66). Scientific method employs the process of ratiocination in order, on the one hand, to know the causes that, compounded together, are capable of producing a given effect, or on the other, to know what a set of causes is capable of producing when compounded together. In the former, one begins with a known effect and attempts to uncover what causes would be capable of producing the effect, while in the latter one begins with a set of causes, and reasons what effects will result from such causes. Whether one is adding causes together to conceive of possible or actual effects, or subtracting possible or actual causes from a known effect determines which method one is to use.

The movement from cause to effect is governed by the synthetical method, while the movement from effect to cause is governed by the analytical: “There is therefore no method, by which we find out the causes of things, but is either compositive or resolutive, or partly compositive, and partly resolutive. And the resolutive is commonly called analytical method, as the compositive is called synthetical” (De Corp., EW 1, 66). In the last chapter we saw Zabarella’s method recast some of the fundamental components of Aristotle’s method, and it did so, in part, by reformulating the Aristotelian method in terms of the regressus whose three moments were the resolutive phase, the phase of mental consideration, and the compositive phase. Here we see Hobbes mobilize two of the three Zabarellian methodological movements: the resolutive or analytical phase, and
the compositive or synthetical phase. What Hobbes leaves behind of the Zabarellian *regressus* is the phase of mental consideration.

As I argued, Zabarella's phase of mental consideration is problematic insofar as it is unable to transform the confused knowledge of a cause into distinct knowledge of the same. This makes it remain an essentially circular doctrine. As I will argue below Hobbes's solution to this problem consists in an appeal to the constructive notion of epistemological certainty that renders the need for a phase of mental consideration obsolete. It is because of this that Hobbes only appropriates the analytic and synthetic moments of Zabarella's method for his own.

It should be noted there has been some debate as to what extent, if any, Hobbes's method is influenced by Zabarella in particular, and the School of Padua in general. Douglas Jesseph, focusing on Galileo, doubts Hobbes's method is indebted in any significant sense to Paduan methodology. He argues that though “Galileo was strongly influenced by the Paduan school,” it is Galileo’s insight that the world is a mechanical system governed by the laws of motion that influenced Hobbes more so than Galileo’s method. “There is certainly no reason,” Jesseph writes, “to doubt that Hobbes was influenced by talk of analytic and synthetic methods, but this is because nearly every discussion of methodology in the seventeenth century contains a set piece on the

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111 The phase of mental consideration is unnecessary in all of Hobbes's sciences, but for different reasons depending on whether one is concerned with *a priori* or *a posteriori* sciences.

112 Cf. Jan Prins, “Hobbes and the School of Padua: Two Incompatible Approaches of Science,” *Archiv Für Geschicte Der Philosophie*, 72 (1990): 26–46. Prins quite convincingly argues that Hobbes's methodology is different than Zabarella's in a number of different respects, most notably insofar as Hobbes and Zabarella have different conceptions of epistemological certainty. As will become apparent below, I agree with Prins on this issue. Rather than view Hobbes's and Zabarella's positions on method as incompatible, I am at this point only emphasizing their similarities which must be recognized if one is to properly understand the genesis of Hobbes thought regarding method.

distinction between analysis and synthesis. There is consequently nothing unique about […] the Paduan school on this score.”

When it comes to method, Jesseph suggests that Hobbes is directly influenced more by the methodological climate of his own philosophical landscape than he is by the School of Padua, even if it is the case that Hobbes’s method shows a “strong similarity” to their work.

Though Jesseph may be correct that Hobbes was interested more by Galileo’s views regarding mechanism than those regarding method, Jesseph overstates his case. Even if Jesseph is correct that Galileo’s influence on Hobbes is not primarily one that is methodological, this does not mean Galileo’s Paduan methodology had no influence on Hobbes. For if Jesseph is right that Hobbes’s intellectual development is heavily indebted to Galileo, and that some of Hobbes’s most basic metaphysical and scientific views show the Italian’s influence on his thought, it makes sense to assume that Hobbes was influenced, to some extent, by the method Galileo used to reach those views.

Moreover, while Jesseph is surely correct that Hobbes is influenced by discussions of analysis and synthesis that take place during his own time, it is certainly reasonable to think Hobbes’s engagement with Galileo is one of the primary loci of such an influence. Jesseph makes the case that Hobbes had in-depth knowledge of Galileo’s work from the early 1630s, primarily through Hobbes’s time spent with the “Welbeck Academy” via his association with the Cavendishes who were Hobbes’s patrons for much of his life. Hobbes’s interest in Galileo’s thought continued, Jesseph argues, when Hobbes was in exile in Paris. While there, Hobbes’s association with Marin Mersenne put him in contact with some of the greatest intellectuals of his time. It was Mersenne

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that organized the replies, including Hobbes’s, to Descartes’s *Meditations*. It would be Mersenne who facilitated Hobbes’s engagement with these important discussions of analysis and synthesis going on then. But by Jesseph’s own admission, “Hobbes’s exposure to and engagement with Galileo’s ideas was far more profound during the 1640s in Paris,” than it had been previously.\(^{116}\) It stands to reason that Galileo undoubtedly was one of the main figures of inspiration in Hobbes’s intellectual development, one through which he became familiar with, and interested in, discussions of analysis and synthesis as is evidenced by the intellectual energy Hobbes devoted to him during that decade.\(^{117}\) As Jesseph notes, “Hobbes saw in Galileo’s analysis of natural motion a tool that could be generalized to cover all possible kinds of motion, and thus deliver a method that could solve any geometrical problem.”\(^{118}\) Thus even Jesseph recognizes the importance of Galileo’s method for Hobbes. In Galileo’s work Hobbes witnessed what such methodological procedures were capable of accomplishing when it came to scientific developments and this no doubt proved influential in Hobbes’s own thinking about method.\(^{119}\)

Galileo was not the only thinker with links to Padua with whom Hobbes was familiar.\(^{120}\) As we saw in the last chapter, William Harvey spent time on the medical faculty at Padua. Harvey was one of Hobbes’s close associates, but how familiar Hobbes was with Harvey’s work is difficult to say with absolute precision. We do know that


Hobbes was friends with Harvey, meeting with him often.\textsuperscript{121} In fact the two were close enough for Harvey to leave money to Hobbes in his will.\textsuperscript{122} It is likely that two individuals mutually interested in science and scientific methodology would discuss these things together, especially if they were as close as it appears they were. Admittedly this is only highly probable rather than certain.

All of this partial evidence taken together leads one to conclude that it is plausible to think Hobbes was familiar with Paduan methodology by way of his contact with Harvey and Galileo. This supports the view that Hobbes's analytic-synthetic method is influenced, at least to some extent, by the Paduan methodology put to use in Harvey's and Galileo's work, and formulated most clearly in the work of Zabarella.

To return to our discussion of Hobbes's method, when Hobbes speaks of the relationship between causes and effects and the usefulness of the analytic-synthetic method for discovering these relations, he often speaks of causes and effects in terms of parts and wholes, where the “whole” being referred to here is the effect or phenomenon, and the “part” referred to is one of the constitutive causes of the whole of which it is a part. Thus wholes are comprised of parts in the same sense that effects are caused by their causes, “For the cause of the whole is compounded of the causes of the parts” (\textit{De Corp.}, \textit{EW} 1, 67). Method allows one to move from what one knows to what one does not know, to transform what is unknown into something known on the basis of what one already knows (\textit{De Corp.}, \textit{EW} 1, 66).


Depending on the circumstances, however, what is known and what is unknown may change. When it comes to the world that we experience by way of sensation, what we encounter and are more familiar with are wholes, that is phenomena, and so we know the wholes more so than the parts which comprise the phenomenal wholes. This type of knowledge, again, “is called the ὅτι,” that is knowledge of fact or knowledge that something is the case (*De Corp.*, *EW* 1, 66). To return to our example, “when we see a man, the conception or whole idea of that man is first or more known, than the particular ideas of his being *figurate, animate, and rational*; that is, we first see the whole man, and take notice of his being, before we observe in him those other particulars” (*De Corp.*, *EW* 1, 66–67). One initially knows *that* what one sees is a man; one has the whole idea which is of man. What is unknown, or at least more unknown, is the parts which comprise this whole. The knowledge which consists of knowing how parts come to comprise or bring about the wholes of which they are parts, as we have said, “is the science of causes, or, as they call it, of the ὅτι*, which is a knowledge of why the fact is what it is, or how the fact came to be the fact that it is (*De Corp.*, *EW* 1, 66). In causal terms it is knowledge of what caused a given effect, or what effects are caused by a given cause. As Hobbes himself puts it, it is knowledge “that there be causes of the same, and in what subject those causes are, and in what manner they work the same” (*De Corp.*, *EW* 1, 66).

From the perspective of scientific knowledge what is more known are the parts which constitute the wholes of phenomenal experience, while it is the wholes of phenomenal experience which are more known from the perspective of sensory experience. “And therefore in any knowledge of the ὅτι, or that any thing *is*, the beginning of our search is from the whole idea; and contrarily, in our knowledge of the
διότι, or of the causes of any thing, that is, in the sciences, we have more knowledge of the causes of the parts than of the whole” (De Corp., EW 1, 67). Scientific knowledge, then, consists of knowing which parts constitute which wholes, and amounts to an understanding of the causes that bring about the things that are.

But what kinds of things qualify as parts on this model of science? Knowing Hobbes’s position on this would appear to be of some importance given that science consists of a proper understanding of how such parts relate to wholes. Taking into account Hobbes’s well-known materialist ontology where all that exists are bodies in motion, one would expect these parts to be just that: parts or portions of body. One would expect Hobbes to declare that a phenomenal whole is a body that is comprised of smaller bodies, and these smaller bodies must be what he means by parts. Moreover, one would expect Hobbes to conceive of the relationship of parts to wholes to be one of quantitative difference, where parts are smaller quantities than the wholes which would be the aggregates of them. But while Hobbes does consider bodies to be made of smaller bodies, and these smaller bodies to be made of smaller bodies still, it is clear from what he says regarding parts that such portions of body do not qualify as parts in the technical sense in play here (Lev., EW 3, 672). Instead “by parts,” he writes, “I do not here mean parts of the thing itself, but parts of its nature; as, by the parts of man, I do not understand his head, his shoulders, his arms, &c. but his figure, quantity, motion, sense, reason, and the like; which accidents being compounded or put together, constitute the whole nature of man, but not the man himself” (Lev., EW 3, 672). One can see that Hobbes has in mind two different things when he refers to “parts of the thing itself,” on the one hand,

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123 Hobbes understands matter and body to be the same. On this account as a conceptual innovation of late Aristotelian theories of matter and body, including Zabarella’s, see Leijenhorst, The Mechanisation of Aristotelianism, esp. 138–169.
and “parts of its nature,” on the other. The former no doubt individuate bodies from one another and establish their material difference. However, science is not concerned with these. Rather science as he has outlined it is primarily concerned with the parts of a thing’s nature.

Properly speaking, the parts of a thing’s nature are its accidents. Accident, a term loaded with scholastic significance, takes on a typically modern hue in Hobbes’s definition of it. The way that Hobbes thinks about accidents is similar to the way that Galileo thinks about accidents. For Hobbes, an accident is “the manner by which any body is conceived; which is all one as if they should say, an accident is that faculty of any body, by which it works in us a conception of itself” (De Corp., EW 1, 103). Hobbes’s definition here is complicated, in that in one and the same breath he seems to imply both that an accident depends on its being perceived, and that it is something not in the perceiver, or conceiver, but rather is something in the body, a faculty of the body itself. It is paramount that we be sensitive to what sense accidents are and are not in bodies according to Hobbes if we are to understand what a part of a thing’s nature is, and thus what it is that the analytic-synthetic method resolves and composes in its operation.

Hobbes’s position is that accidents are not to be identified with bodies. Some philosophers think an accident is “some part of a natural thing, when, indeed, it is no part of the same” (De Corp., EW 1, 103). In this context Hobbes means by “part” a material portion. Though some believe accidents are to be found in bodies, as if they are material

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124 Leijenhorst, The Mechanisation of Aristotelianism, 168. In addition to this material account of individuation, Leijenhorst argues Hobbes also incorporates a formal aspect, the synthesis of which amounts to a semantic conception of individuation.
portions of those bodies, Hobbes denies this. For “When an acci-
dent is said to be in a body, it is not so to be understood, as if any 
thing were contained in that body; as if, for example, redness 
were in blood, in the same manner, as blood is in a bloody cloth, 
that is, as a part in the whole” (De Corp., EW 1, 104). His argu-
ment is if an accident were a part of bodies in the sense of a part 
in a whole, then accident would be no different than body, 
which is absurd. Instead what are parts of a body are smaller parts 
of bodies, not accidents. Accidents must be something else.

Hobbes’s thinking here mirrors what we saw him say earlier 
concerning the parts of a thing’s nature. Just as the parts of a 
thing’s nature are not to be identified with the material portions 
of that thing, so too are accidents not to be identified with the 
material portions of a thing—accidents then should not be con-
ceived as parts of a body in this sense.

As Hobbes defines it, an accident is “the manner by which any 
body is conceived; which is all one as if they should say, an 
accident is that faculty of any body, by which it works in us a 
conception of itself” (De Corp., EW 1, 104). Here we have to make 
some sense of Hobbes’s statement that an accident is a faculty of a 
body. We just learned that, for him, accidents are not to be understood as 
eexisting in bodies, but now we have him claim that accidents are fac-
culties of bodies. How can accidents be faculties of bodies and yet 
not be in, or be parts of, bodies? Is Hobbes here being inconsistent?

A closer look at what Hobbes has to say about accidents shows 
that he is not being inconsistent. Hobbes thinks that accidents are 
faculties of bodies. As we already know, these faculties of 
bodies must not be in bodies as parts are to wholes. In the 
definition of accident just given, Hobbes equates faculties of bodies with the manner by
which bodies are conceived. An accident, insofar as it is a faculty of a body, consists of
the way that body produces a conception of itself in a perceiver. In *Leviathan*, Hobbes
explains this is done when such a body “worketh on the eyes, ears, and other parts of a
man’s body; and by diversity of working produceth diversity of appearances” (*Lev., EW*
3, 1). The faculty of a body then is *how* a body produces conceptions of itself,
appearances, in the mind of a perceiver by means of a “diversity of working”.

In claiming an accident is not part of a body, and yet a faculty of that body, we see
Hobbes remains consistent. Accidents are not in bodies, but instead are the ways that
bodies produce conceptions in the minds of perceivers. Accidents are not bodies, rather
they are what bodies *do*; they are how bodies are arranged and the form or pattern their
movements take. Accidents, or sensible qualities “are in the object, that causeth them,
but so many several motions of the matter, by which it presseth our organs diversely.
Neither in us that are pressed, are they any thing else, but divers motions; for motion
produceth nothing but motion” (*Lev., EW* 1, 2). Accidents as they are found
independently of their being perceived are then the form or patterns of the movements of
bodies. 126 This allows Hobbes to claim that they are faculties of bodies, and yet not
conflate his account of accidents with his account of bodies.

The distinction being made by Hobbes here forms the basis for his considering the
attribution of thinghood to accidents to be faulted for absurdity. Attributes are not things,
if things are to be equated with bodies. The assumption that redness, for example, is a
body or a part of body is an absurd proposition (*De Corp., EW* 1, 55–64). The bodies are
one thing, the form or pattern of their movement that constitutes an accident is another.

126 In line with this, Jürgen Overhoff, in his *Hobbes’s Theory of the Will*, correctly points out “Hobbes
believed accurate mathematical definitions of the *properties* of corporeal appearances [entailed] at the same
time the knowledge of the *motions* that generated them” (21).
As these forms and patterns of movement cause movement in the perceiver, via the sense organs, these patterns and forms of movement are perceived as the appearances of accidents, that is, the accidents are then sensed by the perceiver. Put more simply, what exists in the perceiver and is mind dependent is the idea or conception of the accident, which is the idea or conception that is caused by matter in motion, while what exists in the world is matter in motion, whose particular structures and movements are what causes such ideas of accidents.

Cees Leijenhorst in his *The Mechanisation of Aristotelianism: The Late Aristotelian Setting of Thomas Hobbes’s Natural Philosophy* convincingly argues that Hobbes puts forth both a realist, as well as phenomenalist, account of accidents. What he calls the realist account corresponds to what we have said about accidents as both the structural organization of matter and the patterns of movement it takes. Conversely, what he calls the phenomenalist account corresponds to what we have said concerning the perception of such patterns of movement. Thus I am, for the most part, in agreement with Leijenhorst on this issue. Where our accounts differ revolves around Leijenhorst’s propensity to emphasize the phenomenalist account to such an extent as to marginalize the role of the realist account in Hobbes’s thinking. In one place Leijenhorst writes “In the proper sense, only *phantasmata* should count as accidents.” To put it this way renders talk of having ideas of accidents problematic, in that it confuses the form of the idea *qua phantasmata* with its content *qua* accident, in essence identifying them as one and the same. As I have argued, I think it makes more sense to understand Hobbesian

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127 Leijenhorst *The Mechanisation of Aristotelianism*, 155–163.
accidents as patterns of movement and forms of material organization which, then, cause us to perceive them as various phantasmata.

We are now in a position to see how it is that the analytic-synthetic method relates to this entire discussion of parts and wholes, accidents and bodies. Given a thing, one can employ the analytic method and resolve that thing into its possible causes. When one does this, one is attempting to gain a better understanding of the parts of the thing’s nature. To understand the parts of a thing’s nature is to understand the accidents of that thing, for as we have seen, Hobbes equates the parts of a thing’s nature with its accidents. Accidents, we said, are the pattern or form of the movement of the material portions of a body; they are the way a given body produces in a perceiver a partial conception of itself. The analytic method therefore resolves a thing into the patterns and forms of a body’s movement, that is, its structure. This is the same as to uncover, by way of analysis or resolution, its accidents or the parts of its nature.

Conversely, given some thing that possesses causal power, one can take this cause and employ the synthetic method and gain a better understanding of the nature of the thing that is the effect. When one does this, one attempts to grasp what kind of a whole such parts are capable of generating or constituting. These parts are not the material portions of the body that is caused, but rather the parts of the thing’s nature, its accidents, the patterns and structures of its movement. The synthetic method begins with the parts of a thing’s nature, its accidents, and proceeds to understand how these constitute the thing that is the effect. Thus the synthetic method provides one the means to know the form, structure, or nature of a given thing and how that thing is the product of its form, structure, or nature.
The extent to which one utilizes the analytic-synthetic method is determined by the scope of one’s scientific investigations. One can experience a thing, and resolve that thing into its constitutive causes, and take these causes, and resolve them into their constitutive causes, and so on, continually resolving or analyzing causes into their causes. Eventually, however, one will reach the most universal of causes, for those that search after science indefinitely, which consists in the knowledge of the causes of all things, as far forth as it may be attained, (and the causes of singular things are compounded of the causes of universal or simple things) it is necessary that they know the causes of universal things, or of such accidents as are common to all bodies, that is, to all matter, before they can know the causes of singular things, that is of those accidents by which one thing is distinguished from another. \((De\ Corp.,\ EW\ 1,\ 68)\)

Hobbes’s mention of “universal” things and “singular” things stands in need of some comment.

As one resolves or analyzes something into its constitutive causes, one thereby discovers things which are more universal. The further one analyzes, the more universal the causes become. That these causes are universal does not imply that they have any real existence \(as\) universals, as if universals had a real existence distinct from particular things. Rather, Hobbes maintains their existence is nominal. It is because “from divers things we receive like conceptions, many things must needs have the same appellation […] and those names we give to \(many\) are called \(universal\) to them all […]: such appellation as we give to \(one\) only thing we call \(individual\), or singular” \((EL,\ EW\ 4,\ 21)\). Hobbes’s nominalism strictly precludes that universals be associated with things, as if a number of particular things actually possess these universals and so share in their possession of them. Instead, particular things each have their own particular patterns of movement. It is these patterns of movement that cause in perceivers specific types of
conceptions. Universals are names that refer to conceptions caused by similar patterns of movements of bodies. Singulars, likewise, are names that refer to conceptions caused by a unique pattern of movement in bodies. Universals and singulars are not to be found in things, as they are strictly speaking associated with the names given to the conceptions that are themselves caused by the patterns of movement of bodies. Each body has its own pattern of movement, but these patterns of movement can cause either similar or dissimilar conceptions in perceivers. It is these similar or dissimilar conceptions that are universals and singulars, respectively. To be sure, similar or dissimilar conceptions can be traced back to either similar or dissimilar patterns of motions, but these patterns of motion are not the same thing as the things, or bodies, whose motion they are. Were they, there would be no sense in saying Hobbes was a nominalist. Instead, it makes better sense to say that Hobbes’s position is best understood as a modified nominalism.\textsuperscript{129} Universals and singulars name conceptions caused by the patterns of movement of bodies and should not, strictly speaking, be identified with bodies as such. Universals and singulars are not \textit{in} bodies but are associated with the movement of bodies and, more properly, with the conceptions these movements cause. As we saw earlier, these patterns of movement that cause conceptions that we either nominate as universals or singulars are the properties, or parts, of a body.

It is for this very reason that Hobbes equates universals with the parts of a thing’s nature: “And thus the whole, that is, those things that have less universal names, (which for brevity’s sake, I call singulars) are more known to us than the parts, that is, such things as have names more universal, (which we therefore call universals); and the causes of the parts are more known to nature than the cause of the whole; that is, universals than

\textsuperscript{129} Cf. Pettit, \textit{Made With Words}, 36.
singulars” (*De Corp.*, *EW* 1, 67–68, translation modified). From a phenomenal perspective one knows better the whole, which is to say, the particular thing that is experienced and which causes a singular conception of itself. From a scientific perspective, one progresses to the parts of such a thing’s nature, and unearths more and more universal causes of such a thing, in turn coming to know them better than the particulars of experience.

Hobbes proceeds to give one of his favorite geometrical examples:

If there be propounded a conception or *idea* of some singular thing, as of a square, this square is to be resolved into a *plain*, terminated with a certain number of *equal* and *straight* lines and right angles. *For* by this resolution we have these things universal or agreeable to all matter, namely, *line*, *plain*, (which contains *superficies*) terminated, *angle*, *straightness*, *rectitude*, and *equality*.” (*De Corp.*, *EW* 1, 69)

These universals may not be known at first sight when one looks at a piece of paper and views a square; after all, what is more known to us is the whole idea of the square, not the parts of the square’s nature, these being better known to nature (*De Corp.*, *EW* 1, 67). However, through the process of ratiocination and the application of the analytic method, one comes to know that these universals are part of the nature of the singular square that is on the paper. One could continue to analyze line, plane, and so on into their constitutive causes and eventually arrive at what Hobbes considers the most universal of causes, motion. “For the variety of all figures arises out of the variety of those motions by which they are made; and motion cannot be understood to have any other cause besides motion” (*De Corp.*, *EW* 1, 69–70). When one attempts to analyze motion into its

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constitutive causes, one finds that the cause of motion is simply motion, this being the most universal of causes.\textsuperscript{131}

After having analyzed things into their constitutive causes, and thereby having reached the most universal of causes, Hobbes states that one’s knowledge of these most universal of causes is knowledge of first principles. For Hobbes, first principles are definitions. He states unequivocally “Besides definitions, there is no other proposition that ought to be called primary, or (according to severe truth) be received into the number of principles” (\textit{De Corp.}, \textit{EW} 1, 82). Strictly speaking these definitions are of our conceptions of primary things, rather than definitions of the primary things themselves. Hobbes’s treatment of definition here remains consistent with his conception of ratiocination. Recall that what is being added and subtracted in the process of ratiocination are conceptions, and the most primary principles that can be added and subtracted are themselves definitions, “which are nothing but the explication of our simple conceptions” (\textit{De Corp.}, \textit{EW} 1, 70).

With these primary propositions corresponding to the primary principles in hand, one can then use them to establish the truth of the effect from which one began the analysis. In doing so, one puts to use the synthetic method to demonstrate, on the basis of these propositions, the conclusion that such and such is the case, that is, that such and such is the cause of the thing which one set out at the beginning to understand the nature of. “The whole method of demonstration, is \textit{synthetical}, consisting of that order of speech which begins from primary or most universal propositions, which are manifest of

\textsuperscript{131} It is interesting that Hobbes considers the most universal of causes to be motion, rather than something like body. This has led some to argue that Hobbes’s (meta)physics is not mechanistic, but is rather dynamic. Gary B. Herbert in his \textit{The Unity of Scientific and Moral Wisdom} (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 1989) argues that the concept of conatus is at the heart of Hobbes’s dynamism.
themselves, and proceeds by a perpetual composition of propositions into syllogisms, till at last the learner understand the truth of the conclusion sought after” (*De Corp.*, EW 1, 81–82). While Hobbes at times refers to the analytic method as a method of invention, insofar as one invents the definitions of the foundational principles of the various sciences, he refers to the synthetic method as a method of teaching, in that it is the synthetic method which one uses in demonstrating to others the truth of the variety of conclusions which populate the field of scientific knowledge. “For in teaching philosophy, the first beginning is from definitions; and all progression in the same, till we come to the knowledge of the thing compounded, is compositive” (*De Corp.*, EW 1, 85).

With these last pieces of the puzzle now in place, the basics of Hobbes’s scientific method is now complete. How, though, does Hobbes’s method relate to those we visited last chapter?

THE CERTAINTY OF HOBBESIAN PRIMARY PRINCIPLES

*Prima facie* this account of scientific method is not drastically different from either Aristotle's or Zabarella's account. Put most basically, all of these thinkers view science as a set of demonstrations from primary principles. Upon closer inspection, though, one begins to see how radically different Hobbes's conception of method is. This difference lies mainly in the unique way that Hobbes understands primary principles. Given that Hobbes believes science is a deductive system that derives ultimately from primary principles, he also holds that if the conclusions are to be true, their truth must be derived from the truth of the primary principles. In Hobbes's case this means that the primary principles of science, the definitions, must be true. This is a constraint he is well aware
of (De Corp., EW 1, 86). We saw in the case of Aristotle, the truth of primary principles was a function of their correspondence with reality; the same was the case with Zabarella. The problem that each of them ran up against was how best to guarantee this correspondence. On Hobbes’s account, neither Aristotle's *epagōgē* nor Zabarella's mental examination were able to provide certainty. If Hobbes's method is to succeed where they have failed, he must not establish the certainty of his definitional primary principles in either of these ways. How then, for Hobbes, is the truth of primary principles established?

Some scholars take Hobbes to be a conventionalist when it comes to the truth value of the primary principles. In a moment we will see why this position is incorrect, but first let us summarize it. To say that Hobbes's view of definitions is essentially conventionalist is to say that the definitional primary principles are true insofar as they are stipulated as definitions; they are true precisely because they have been stipulated. As Donald Hanson has shown, this conventionalism “was an integral part of the program of the philosophers” engaged with the new science in the early seventeenth century, “For it is an idea we find not only in Hobbes but in the work of his closest intellectual associates among the new philosophers, Marin Mersenne and Pierre Gassendi; and in his great rival, Descartes, and even in Galileo himself.” The evidence for this view comes from what Hobbes has to say about the nature of language, or more specifically what he has to say about the names that definitions define.

Hobbes often speaks as though the relationship between a name and its meaning, or a name and the definition which explicates its meaning, is arbitrary. “A name or appellation […] is the voice of a man arbitrary, imposed for a mark, to bring into his mind some conception concerning the thing on which it is imposed” (EL, EW 4, 20; cf. De Corp., EW 1, 86). While names and their definitions have coalesced over time through common usage, what establishes the relationship between names and their definitions initially is an act of stipulation. According to A.P. Martinich, these stipulative primary principles are true, then, “by fiat and not by anything in the world,” that is they are true insofar as they inaugurate true usage and thereby establish the truth of the meanings of the names they define.\(^{134}\)

This conventionalism is supported, furthermore, by Hobbes's nominalism which we briefly took a look at above.\(^{135}\) If universals are not to be found in things, then the criterion of truth used to evaluate the definitions of the universals cannot be one of correspondence between the definitions and the essences of things, as Aristotle and Zabarella maintain. Instead their truth must be established another way and stipulation, therefore, provides Hobbes with an alternative account of the truth of the primary principles of science.

Others, however, see Hobbes as presenting a self-evidence theory of truth vis-à-vis definitions, a view equally as misplaced as the conventionalist reading.\(^{136}\) According to David Johnston, Hobbes following Aristotle recognizes that the first principles of

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demonstration cannot themselves be demonstrated.\textsuperscript{137} Instead, first principles “are self-evident truths, and must simply be presented to the reader in the hope that he or she will recognize them as such.”\textsuperscript{138} Primary principles are self-evident in this sense if the knowledge of their truth does not rely on anything else in order to be understood. On this account they must be recognized as true in both a non-empirical and non-demonstrative manner. Self-evident here means that the definitions are directly intuited as being true, almost as if they are understood through an act of Aristotelian noesis.

These alternative approaches to Hobbes on this issue attest to the fact that at times he sounds like he is presenting a conventional account of truth, while at others it sounds as though he takes the primary principles and their truth to be self-evident. The problem ultimately is that these are conflicting accounts of truth. If a principle is true by convention, then it is not self-evident, and thus not immediately true. Likewise, if a principle is true because it is necessary and self-evident, it must not be true based on the contingency of conventionalism. This has led some readers of Hobbes to claim that he holds two irreconcilable accounts of the truth of the primary principles, an observation which, if true, would reflect poorly on Hobbes philosophical thought.\textsuperscript{139} But when one turns to what Hobbes actually says about definitions, neither the conventional account nor the self-evident account is to be found.

Regarding the conventionalist reading, it is true that Hobbes thinks that the origin of names is conventional, but it does not follow from this that the definitions of science

\textsuperscript{137} See \textit{De Corp.}, \textit{EW} 1, 80–81.
Definitions are not the same as the names that they define, which is to say the definiens is conceptually distinct from the definiendum. While the usage of the name, in this case the definiendum, may have conventional origins, it in no way follows that the relationship between the definiendum and the definiens is also conventional, as the conventionalist reading wrongly supposes.\footnote{A similar point is made by Jesseph, “Scientia in Hobbes,” 123. See also Jesseph, “Hobbes and the Method of Natural Science,” 100-101.}

Definitions are a type of proposition, and Hobbes claims “A proposition is a speech consisting of two names copulated, by which he that speaketh signifies he conceives the latter name to be the name of the same thing whereof the former is the name; or (which is all one) that the former name is comprehended by the latter” (De Corp., EW 1, 30). A true proposition is one where the former name is comprehended by the latter, a false proposition one where the former name is not comprehended by the latter (EL, EW 4, 23; De Corp., EW 1, 35). Propositions are characterized by a relationship of comprehension, not a relationship of convention.\footnote{Cf. Leijenhorst, The Mechanisation of Aristoteliansism, 44.} With respect to definitions, a true definition is one in which the definiens must comprehend the definiendum, or in other words the definiens must connote what the definiendum connotes. To connote in this sense is the same as to say the intension of the definiens must include, must comprehend, the intension of the definiendum. I say connote here to preserve the essentially linguistic property Hobbes ascribes to truth. Truth for him is a property of language and meaning, not of things (De Corp., EW 1, 35).\footnote{The relationship of comprehension, or containment, factors prominently in Hobbes’s more general account of language. On the relationship between comprehension and positive and negative names, see for example De Corpore, EW 1, 27; 40. On the relationship between comprehension and resolution and composition, especially as it factors in geometrical analysis, see De Corpore, EW 1, 69ff.} However, if it is to be a true primary principle of science, this connotation must take a very specific form, namely

\footnote{Cf. Mintz, The Hunting of Leviathan, 24.}
connoting by means of a genetic definition.\textsuperscript{144} This is something about which we will have more to say in a moment. Nonetheless, to interpret Hobbes’s primary principles as true by convention, as this reading does, ignores these important issues and professes an incorrect view of the primary principles of science for Hobbes.

Furthermore, while Hobbes does think the primary definitions should be evident, he does not understand evidence to mean an immediately intuited grasp of what is being defined, \textit{pace} those who read him as presenting a self-evidence theory of truth. Hobbes writes in \textit{Leviathan} that “the truth of a proposition,” and thus the truth of a primary proposition, “is never evident, \textit{until} we conceive the meaning of the words or terms whereof it consisteth, which are always conceptions of the mind” (\textit{Lev., EW} 4, 28, emphasis added). If the truth of primary principles were self-evident in an immediately intuited sense, then one would not have to wait for the “the meaning of the words or terms whereof it consisteth” to be understood. This is why in the \textit{Elements of Law}, it seems to me, Hobbes distinguishes between truth and evidence. There he says “for if truth were enough to make it knowledge, all truth were known; which is not so” (\textit{EL, EW} 4, 28). One can hold the truth, and yet not know the truth that one holds because that truth is not evident. If self-evidence did mean immediate intuition, then either all truths would immediately be known, which is not the case, or it would be impossible for someone to hold the truth and not know it, a circumstance that Hobbes thinks does occur. Both of the above interpretations, the conventional and the self-evident, impose on Hobbes's account of definitions views that he himself does not hold.

\textsuperscript{144} Cf. Garrett, \textit{Meaning in Spinoza’s Method}, 155n.23.
What he actually says is that definitions can take one of two forms—they can either be genetic definitions or definitions by circumlocution (*De Corp.*, *EW* 1, 83).\(^{145}\)

The latter are more proper for the definition of “things of which we can conceive of no cause at all” (*De Corp.*, *EW* 1, 81–82). The example Hobbes provides is the definition of motion as “the leaving of one place, and the acquiring of another continually” (*De Corp.*, *EW* 1, 81). Such definitions by circumlocution “as best explicateth the force of [a] name,” need only raise in the mind a clear idea of the thing defined (*De Corp.*, *EW* 1, 83).\(^{146}\) It may strike one as odd that Hobbes provides motion as an example of something without a cause, and thus something open to circumlocutory definition given Hobbes thinks motion *does* have a cause—its cause is motion (*De Corp.*, *EW* 1, 70). However it makes sense for Hobbes to say that motion as such has no cause if by this he is understood to mean that motion has no cause other than itself, a position he maintains. In fact, if definitions by circumlocution are to be reserved for those things that have no cause, motion may be the only thing a circumlocutory definition is appropriate for.\(^{147}\)

Genetic definitions would be reserved for everything else.

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\(^{145}\) There seems to be an error in the Molesworth edition. The text mixes up the types of definitions (circumlocution and genetic) with their explanations and the examples associated with them. For instance, it has ‘motion’ as a thing that does have a conceivable cause, and ‘a specific figure’ as something that has no conceivable cause. At least in this context, motion is something Hobbes claims does not have a conceivable cause, other than itself, and a specific figure is something he does think has a conceivable cause. This error is repeated throughout. In what follows I correct that error where necessary.

\(^{146}\) Hobbes writes that circumlocutory definitions are those that “raise in the mind of the hearer perfect and clear ideas or conceptions of the things named” (*De Corp.*, *EW* 1, 81). He also writes that circumlocutory definitions are those which “best explicateth the force of that name” (*De Corp.*, *EW* 1, 83). I take Hobbes to intend the same meaning in these accounts, in that a definition which “best explicateth the force of that name” is none other than the definition which raises “in the mind of the hearer perfect and clear ideas or conceptions of the things named”. This fits within Hobbes’s broader understanding of definition in general as “the explication of our simple conceptions” (*De Corp.*, *EW* 1, 70). These simple conceptions must be the same as the perfect and clear ideas just mentioned.

\(^{147}\) On this account, circumlocutory definitions continue not to be self-evident, in that even with these, such a definition is only evident after the meaning of the words which comprise it are understood. It thus shares this feature with all definitions.
Genetic definitions are not to be confused with generic, or diaretic, definitions—that is, definition by proximate genus and specific difference. Rather, genetic definitions must provide the cause of the thing being defined, “as when we define a circle to be a figure made by the circumduction of a straight line in a plane, &c.” (De Corp., EW 1, 81–82). What is defined, outlined, and delimited is the process by which the object being defined is brought about, or generated, that is, it must determine its cause. The process of taking a straight line, or more properly a line segment, fixing one of its ends and revolving it about this fixed end causes a circle to be produced. Likewise “a line is made by the motion of a point, superficies by the motion of a line, and one motion by another motion, &c” (EW 1, De Corp., 70–71). Each of these geometrical examples is a genetic definition insofar as the genetic definition results in the production of the term being defined and in effect produces it.

It is telling that Hobbes turns to geometry to elucidate genetic definitions and how they define. As I will show, geometry exemplifies science for Hobbes in its capacity to produce certainty. Its scientific status is closely related to its use of genetic definitions within the framework of the compositive method, features that it shares, as we shall see, with political science.

Genetic definitions in science are to be given priority over circumlocutory definitions, in that the latter are only to be provided as primary principles if the former are not available, and it seems in very few cases they are. This is a consideration that must be taken into account given the very nature of science:

The reason why I say that the cause and generation of such things, as have any cause or generation, ought to enter into their definition is this. The end of science is the demonstration of the causes and generations of things; which if they be not

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148 For Hobbes’s views on generic definitions, see De Corp., EW 1, 83.
in the definitions, they cannot be found in the conclusion of the first syllogism, that is made from those definitions; and if they be not in the first conclusion, they will not be found in any further conclusion deduced from that; and, therefore, by proceeding in this manner, we shall never come to science; which is against the scope and intention of demonstration. (*De Corp.*, *EW* 1, 82–83)

Genetic definitions ought to be the primary principles from which the synthetic method proceeds, forming the basis of scientific demonstration.\(^{149}\) According to David Gauthier, this genetic criterion of truth affords Hobbes “a quite original view of definitions in demonstrable science.”\(^{150}\) How so? The answer to this question can be gathered from our work thus far.

Hobbes has provided an alternative account of the truth value of the primary principles that does not ground their truth in a correspondence with reality, as was the case for Aristotle, Zabarella, or even Boyle. Hobbes’s alternative is predicated upon a genetic or generative criterion of certainty. His approach to this issue shows the influence of the *ergetic* or constructive ideal of knowing we visited in the last chapter. This ideal holds that certainty is not to be found in an empirical investigation of nature, but is instead to be found in the activity of our construction. As Aaron Garrett has claimed, Hobbes’s method, along with his account of definition, “provides an archetypal example of makers knowledge, we know what we can make and we know it insofar as we can make it.”\(^{151}\) On this model, one can know with certainty only what it is one produces.\(^{152}\) In such cases, one has certain knowledge because one has immediate access to the efficient cause of the construction. One does not have to reason from the effect to its possible cause. Instead, one has certain knowledge of the effect because one is

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\(^{150}\) Ibid.


involved in the causal process itself. Hobbes has shifted the locus of scientific certainty from correspondence to construction. According to Amos Funkenstein, “No other thinker of the seventeenth century argued as consistently as [Hobbes] did for the constructive character of all human manifestations—language, science, political order. No one stressed more forcefully that all knowledge is knowledge by doing.”¹⁵³ According to A.P. Martinich, “For Hobbes, scientific knowledge is generative knowledge.”¹⁵⁴

The view of science that Hobbes holds is one which begins from genetic definitions and constructs the object being defined from those definitions. To do this is to demonstrate the causal process that produces the effect. The primary principles are true if they are able to generate the object being defined, and the conclusions of the demonstrations are true if they are the product of the aforementioned construction. According to Garrett, Hobbes’s “Genetic definitions are ideal for proofs, as they maintain causal connections at each stage of the syllogism or proof, and thus are able to show that the conclusion is caused and or generated by the premise. With genetic definitions the conclusion is both proof and pudding, so to speak.”¹⁵⁵ Because science is the knowledge of the causes of things, synthetic demonstrations rooted in genetic definitions express just this relationship. And insofar as certainty can be attained in science, it consists of knowledge of the primary principles, the genetic definitions, which account for the generation or construction of those things being studied and explained by means of the demonstrations. This conception of demonstrative science bears directly on the relationships between the various sciences such as geometry, physics, psychology, and political science, relationships to which we now turn.

¹⁵³ Funkenstein, Theology and the Scientific Imagination, 327.
THE ORDER OF THE SCIENCES

Hobbes's classification of the sciences is quite simple. He tells us in *De Corpore* that “The principal parts of philosophy are two. For two chief kinds of bodies, and very different from one another, offer themselves to such as search after their generation and properties; one whereof being the work of nature, is called a *natural body*, the other is called a *commonwealth*, and is made by the wills and agreement of men. And from these spring the two parts of philosophy, called *natural* and *civil*” (*De Corp., EW* 1, 11). The division of philosophy into natural philosophy, on the one hand, and political philosophy, on the other, follows the distinction of types of bodies into natural and artificial bodies.\(^{156}\)

In the English edition of *Leviathan* Hobbes presents this division of the sciences as a table divided into two branches representing these two parts of philosophy.\(^{157}\) The Latin edition of *Leviathan* and *De Corpore* do not present the order of the sciences in a chart but do discuss their order. While their presentation is somewhat different from the chart presented in the English *Leviathan*, this difference is of no consequence for the argument I will be putting forth. It might also be pointed out that this separation of the sciences is not as clear in the Latin *Leviathan* and *De Corpore* as it is in the English *Leviathan*. This is true, and it is one reason I will be focusing on the latter in what follows. Nonetheless the separation of the natural and artificial sciences is present in the other works as well, and can be found even in *De Homine*.\(^{158}\) As I will now argue,

\(^{156}\) As I explain in a moment, Hobbes must think that political science is not the only artificial science and that there must be other artificial sciences than political science. See esp. note 174.

\(^{157}\) This chart can be seen at *Lev., EW* 3, 72–73. For an overview of the significance of the chart, see Noel Malcolm, *Leviathan*, vol. 1 (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2012), 141-145.

\(^{158}\) In *De Corpore*, for instance, Hobbes explicitly addresses the possible severance of civil and moral philosophy (psychology) from one another (*De Corp. EW* 1, 73). In *De Homine* Hobbes writes “For man is not just a *natural body*, but also a part of the state, or (as I put it) of the *body politic*; for that reason he had to be considered as both man and citizen, that is, the first principles of physics had to be conjoined with those of politics” (*De Homine*, 35). That the principles must be conjoined points to their initial separation
Hobbes distinguishes the natural from the artificial sciences, a separation he performs in both editions of *Leviathan*, in *De Corpore*, and in *De Homine*, and proceeds to ground both the natural sciences and the artificial sciences on certain, *a priori* sciences, geometry and political science respectively. As we will see, this organization of the sciences is structured directly by Hobbes’s constructive conception of certainty and the maker’s knowledge tradition of which he is a part.\textsuperscript{159}

Focusing on the natural sciences, Hobbes understands them to be related to one another in a systematic fashion. All natural sciences can ultimately be derived from geometry, which Hobbes thinks is the most fundamental of the natural sciences. Geometry occupies this fundamental position among the natural sciences for two reasons.

To begin with, it is the most fundamental of the natural sciences because it studies the most fundamental properties of bodies:

For first we are to observe what effect a body moved produceth, when we consider nothing in it besides its motion; and we see presently that this makes a line, or length; next, what the motion of a long body produces, which we find to be superficies; and so forwards, till we see what the effects of simple motion are; and then, in like manner, we are to observe what proceeds from the addition, multiplication, subtraction, and division, of these motions, and what effects, what figures, and what properties, they produce; from which kind of contemplation sprung that part of philosophy which is called geometry. (*De Corp.,* \textit{EW} 1, 71)

To say that the other sciences can be derived from geometry amounts to saying that one can begin with geometry and use the synthetic method to proceed to the other natural sciences and their propositions. After geometry, one can proceed synthetically to mechanics, to physics, to physiology, and on to psychology. In each case, the latter can

\textsuperscript{159} Jesseph, “\textit{Scientia} in Hobbes,” 124, places Hobbes squarely within this maker’s knowledge tradition.
be derived from the former. As to what extent the subsequent sciences are dependent
upon the prior sciences is not clear.

At times Hobbes’s position appears to be that they are deduced directly from the
prior sciences, and that ultimately all the natural sciences can be deduced directly from
the most basic principles of geometry. But as William Sacksteder and others have
correctly pointed out, Hobbes is wrong to think that a complete reduction from the less
fundamental to the more fundamental sciences is possible. ¹⁶⁰ Each natural science must
be differentiated from the others by principles specific to that science alone, such that
these principles make that science what it is and provide it with its own domain of
investigation. Furthermore, to think that all the natural sciences are deduced from
geometry amounts to an erasure of their disciplinary boundaries and the elimination of
any natural science other than geometry. A complete deduction of the natural sciences
from geometry entails that geometry is the only natural science, which is patently false.

At other times, in fact more often than not, Hobbes’s position is more sensible. In
instances such as these, Hobbes believes that the subordinate sciences rely on only some
of the principles of the prior, more comprehensive sciences. This order is one which
proceeds from the more universal to the less universal and the latter sciences depend on
the prior, more fundamental sciences for their demonstrations, but the prior sciences do
not depend on the latter sciences.¹⁶¹ For example, because physiology is the study of the
movement of the bodies of organisms or animals, it presupposes and thus depends on the
principles of the motions of bodies interacting with one another, and so depends on the

principles of physics. The latter, physics, presupposes and thus depends on the principles of body in general, which is to say geometry, in that the knowledge of the interaction of bodies is dependent upon knowledge of body in general. This is why Hobbes claims “they that study natural philosophy, study in vain, except they begin at geometry; and such writers or disputers thereof, as are ignorant of geometry, do but make their readers and hearers lose their time” (*De Corp.*, *EW* 1, 73). Geometry, however, does not depend on the principles of physics, and the principles of physics in no way depend on the principles of physiology. As Hobbes writes in the Latin edition of *Leviathan*, “since the subjects of the sciences are bodies, it is classified into species in the same way the bodies themselves are classified into species, i.e., so that the more universal precede the less. For the universal things are essential to those belonging to the species, and therefore, the knowledge of the universals is essential to the knowledge of the species, so that the latter cannot be grasped except by the light of the former.”162 The dependency of the subordinate natural sciences on the prior natural sciences is one where subordinate sciences employ principles from the prior sciences, but a complete reduction of the latter to the former is negated insofar as the more subordinate sciences employ propositions not found in, and thus not deduced from, the prior sciences. For example, geometry is a much more fundamental science than astronomy, at least within Hobbes’s order of the sciences. Where astronomy may put to use propositions from geometry, such as those regarding the relationship between foci and ellipses in its calculations regarding planetary orbits, geometry does not put to use propositions unique to astronomy. When Hobbes speaks like this, his position is much more palatable than when he speaks as if complete deduction of the subordinate sciences from geometry is possible. In either case, it is clear

Hobbes maintains that all natural sciences in the end depend on geometry insofar as it is the study of body in general, which is to say body in its most universal respect, and for this reason geometry holds pride of place among the natural sciences.

The second reason that geometry is the most fundamental of the natural sciences is because of the certainty of its propositions, a certainty not to be found in the other natural sciences. This is because geometry is capable of a priori demonstration. Hobbes writes “when we know a certain proposed theorem to be true, either by knowledge derived from the causes, or from the generation of the subject by right reasoning,” such science is a priori (De Homine, 41; cf. Six Lessons, EW 7, 183–184).163 An a priori science then is a priori if one can possess genetic knowledge of its subject matter. The constructive ideal of epistemological certainty that we discussed above is at the center of this conception of the a priori. This can be seen in Hobbes's claim that “science is allowed to men through the former kind of a priori demonstration only of those things whose generation depends on the will of men themselves” (De Homine, 41). Hobbes thus equates a priori knowledge with knowledge of the genetic process by which a prior cause brings about its posterior effect. Geometry satisfies this condition in that “the causes of the properties that individual figures have belong to them because we ourselves draw the lines” (De Homine, 41).164 Recall Hobbes's genetic definition of a circle as the figure produced by the rotation of a line segment about a point. This definition of the circle is a

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163 This counters, in part, the claim made by Johnston in his The Rhetoric of Leviathan, 138, that on Hobbes’s account nothing is contrary to reason. If this were the case, science, as such, would be impossible.

164 Whatever the merits of such a unique conception of geometry, this is nonetheless Hobbes's position. On geometry's definitions and their capacity to generate geometrical objects, see De Princiipsis et Rationatione Geometrarum, OL 4, 421. As Douglas Jesseph points out in his “Hobbes and the Method of Natural Science,” 87, this unique conception of geometry applies to Hobbesian geometry, rather than geometry of a more traditionally Euclidean sort. For a helpful overview of the trajectory of Hobbes’s work on geometry, and his dialogue, or lack thereof, with his contemporaries, see Douglas Jesseph, “The Decline and Fall of Hobbesian Geometry,” Studies in History and Philosophy of Science 30 (1999): 425-453.
priori in that knowledge of what causes a circle amounts to knowledge of a circle, and this is knowledge that we can possess because we, after all, know with certainty the causes necessary to produce a circle.

While it is true that the other natural sciences depend on geometry and put its principles to use in their demonstrations, and to that extent, contain an a priori component, they are not as such a priori sciences.¹⁶⁵ This follows from the fact that the causes of the things which they study are not in the grasp or power of those who study them—the objects which they study are not capable of being constructed or generated, in short made, by the scientist. Because these things are not in our power, but in the divine will, and since the greatest part of them, namely the ether, is invisible; we, that do not see them, cannot deduce their qualities from their causes. Of course, we can, by deducing as far as possible the consequences of those qualities that we do see, demonstrate that such and such could have been their cause. This kind of demonstration is called a posteriori. (De Homine, 42)

The natural scientist is confronted by a world already constituted, already generated. One's knowledge of this world can never achieve the epistemological status of absolute certainty given that certainty entails knowledge of the thing's generation. Since the natural world is already generated, the natural scientist cannot possess certain knowledge of that world, for the natural scientist can have knowledge only of effects, moving from these to the possible cause of such effects.

It should be recalled that the mental consideration phase of Zabarella's regressus was an attempt to achieve certainty about natural causes. Hobbes has no need for this phase of mental consideration because he rejects the possibility of certain knowledge in all the natural sciences save geometry. Furthermore, in geometry a phase of mental

¹⁶⁵ That there is an a priori element in other natural sciences to the extent that geometry plays a role in those sciences, see De Homine, 42.
consideration is unnecessary because one does not begin from confused knowledge of the
causes. Because geometry is *a priori*, the knowledge one begins with is already distinct,
and thus the problem of transforming confused knowledge of the cause into distinct
knowledge of the same never occurs. As I will argue in a moment, political science also
evacuates any need for mental consideration of causes due to its *a priori* status.

So even in those cases where the natural scientist observes nature in action, that
is, actually witnesses the generation of a natural thing, for example the blooming of a
flower, the complexity of the natural world guarantees the possibility that some causes
integral to the generative process remain unobserved. As Hobbes puts it in the
*Decameron Physiologicum*: “For there is no effect in nature which the Author of nature
cannot bring to pass by more ways than one” (*DP*, *EW* 7, 88). The best that the natural
scientist can hope for is to begin with these experiences of the natural world, employ the
analytic method, and arrive at possible or likely causes of the natural phenomena that are
experienced, these framed in the form of hypotheses (*De Corpore*, *EW* 1, 387-388).¹⁶⁶
The natural scientist could then take these hypotheses to give a likely account of, using
the synthetic method, the causes behind the things of nature. On this model, hypotheses
remain an indispensable component of all the natural sciences save geometry, the latter
having no need for hypotheses because it is the sole *a priori* science among them.¹⁶⁷

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¹⁶⁶ Martinich claims “a logically related difference between synthetic reasoning and analytic reasoning is
that synthetic reasoning does not use conjectures [hypotheses], whereas analytic reasoning does”
(Martinich, *Hobbes*, 274). This cannot be correct, for synthetic reasoning occurs in the natural sciences and
conjectures, or hypotheses, play an integral role in those sciences. See also Jesseph, “Hobbes and the
Method of Natural Science,” 94.

¹⁶⁷ On the criteria that hypotheses must meet, see *Dialogus Physicus*, *OL* 4, 254. For an extended
examination of the role of hypotheses in Hobbes’s philosophy, see Frank Horstmann, “Hobbes on
In the 1660s and 1670s, Hobbes engaged in a heated debate with Robert Boyle, a central figure of the Royal Society and proponent of experimentalism, over the role of science and its epistemological status.\(^{168}\) Boyle’s position remained that science could at best achieve the status of probabilistic knowledge, and could do so only through the formulation of probable hypotheses. His reasons are in fact the same as Hobbes’s regarding natural science and its constraints, namely the complexity of nature and the lack of knowledge concerning the causal processes at work in the natural world.\(^{169}\) Boyle believed natural scientific knowledge must remain uncertain to the extent that it remained incomplete, and it remained incomplete to the extent that causal knowledge of nature eluded the natural scientist’s grasp.\(^{170}\) Hobbes and Boyle, at least on this point, were in agreement regarding the natural sciences.

What Hobbes disagreed with above all else was that experimentalism and its associated probabilism should extend to all the sciences. The debate essentially revolved around what constituted scientific knowledge: hypothetical probability or demonstrative certainty. Boyle championed the former, Hobbes the latter.


When it came to epistemology, Boyle’s correspondence theory of truth forced him to deny that the sciences could possess certainty.\textsuperscript{171} We see Boyle merely accept what Aristotle and Zabarella denied, namely that the natural sciences cannot provide certain knowledge of their subject matter. Hypotheses, according to Boyle, are to be judged by the extent to which they could account for the phenomena of nature, by the extent to which, as Rose-Mary Sargent has put it in her treatment of Boyle’s philosophy of science, the hypothesis and the scientific theory developed on its basis provide one reason to believe “we have made contact with the world and that our theory is more than a mere mental construct.”\textsuperscript{172} However, when one turns one’s attention to Hobbes, his substitution of the constructive notion of epistemological certainty allowed him, on the one hand, to agree with Boyle that the vast majority of natural sciences could at best attain the status of highly probable knowledge. Yet on the other hand, it allowed him to hold to the belief that some sciences were capable of providing certainty.\textsuperscript{173} According to Hobbes, certain are those sciences that are \textit{a priori}, and \textit{a priori} are the sciences which study things the scientist can construct.

We have already seen that Hobbes considers geometry to be such an \textit{a priori} science, and thus a science characterized by certainty. Even if Hobbes’s reasons for claiming that geometry is a certain science are unique, based as they are on his constructivism and its link with his conception of the \textit{a priori}, Hobbes certainly was not alone in his high estimation of geometry as the paragon of scientific certainty. This was a view shared by many of Hobbes’s contemporaries. What sets Hobbes apart from his

\textsuperscript{171} Shapin and Schaffer, \textit{Leviathan and the Air-Pump}, 23.
\textsuperscript{172} Sargent, \textit{The Diffident Naturalist}, 57.
contemporaries, and what we shall focus on for the remainder of our time, is his view that political science, too, is an *a priori*, necessarily certain science.

THE OUTLINE OF AN A PRIORI POLITICAL SCIENCE

Political science, as its name implies, is a type of science for Hobbes. As a type of *scientia* it conforms to his conception of science as a reasoned investigation of the causes of phenomena. All phenomena are types of bodies and their movements. As we have argued the patterns of these movements are the qualities or accidents that distinguish a given body from others. The sciences are differentiated from one another by the different types of bodies they investigate. In the case of political science the body investigated is the body politic, the commonwealth (*De Corp., EW* 1, 11). Political science as a discipline seeks to discover the constitutive causes of a commonwealth and its sovereignty.

However, political science is a very special type of science as it is the only *a priori* science Hobbes mentions other than geometry. Political science, “(that is, the sciences of *just* and *unjust*, of *equity* and *inequity*) can be demonstrated *a priori*; because we ourselves make the principles” (*De Homine*, 42). Just as the constructive ideal of certainty was the reason why geometry is an *a priori* science, so too is it the reason why political science is an *a priori* science; Hobbes is entirely consistent on this point. Just as it is we who draw geometrical figures, so too is it we who, by covenant, make commonwealths (*Six Lessons, EW* 7, 184).

Hobbes gives political science its own branch in his Table of the Sciences, choosing not to list it within the branch of natural sciences. This is because political
science is the study of an artificial body rather than a natural body.\textsuperscript{174} At a general level, both branches of the table of the sciences can ultimately be traced back to \textit{a priori} sciences that form their basis: the \textit{a priori} science of geometry for the study of natural bodies, and the \textit{a priori} science of politics for the study of the artificial body which is the commonwealth. As the foundational sciences in their respective branches, geometry and politics occupy a privileged position among the sciences for Hobbes because of their certain and \textit{a priori} status.\textsuperscript{175} The certainty that is to be found in the sciences of each branch, whatever the degree of certainty there may be, can be traced back to these two sciences.

For Hobbes to view political science as \textit{a priori} means that it is not, by definition, an empirical science, and so does not proceed by way of \textit{a posteriori} demonstration. This has an important implication for political science and its relationship to the natural sciences. If the natural sciences other than geometry are \textit{a posteriori} sciences, and Hobbes thinks they are, then political science cannot be deduced from them and, consistently, maintain its \textit{a priori} status; one cannot proceed synthetically from them to arrive at the primary principles, the definitions, of political science.

A number of scholars have failed to recognize this, maintaining instead that Hobbes’s political science is derived from his psychology, or moral science. This interpretation as a feature of contemporary Hobbes scholarship can be traced back to

\textsuperscript{174} If political science is an artificial science, and not a natural science, because it studies an artificial body, namely the commonwealth, and the latter is an artificial and not a natural body because it is not given in nature but artificially constructed by humans, it is not clear why geometry is not also an artificial science given its constructive character. Thus there is a tension in Hobbes’s conception of geometry, embodying both \textit{a priori} and the most basic form of the natural sciences, a tension not easily resolved. Because our concern is with Hobbes’s conception of political science, an examination of the reasons for this tension in the case of geometry, and the implications of it, would take us too far afield. I thus intend to address this issue in other work in the future.

\textsuperscript{175} While Hobbes only mentions geometry and political science as \textit{a priori} sciences, it is conceivable that there are other sciences that satisfy his criteria of certainty.
J.W.N. Watkins’s influential study. They maintain that Hobbes’s politics is derived from his egoistic psychology which has its basis in a mechanistic account of the human passions. This mechanism, furthermore, is ultimately rooted in his mechanistic physics. The principles of Hobbes’s politics are deduced or derived from these natural sciences, and can be understood as a particular application of the more general natural scientific principles found in those disciplines.

But if Hobbes's political science were derived from his psychology, or moral science, then political science would not be *a priori*, but rather *a posteriori*. What is more, if the primary principles of political science were derived from his psychology, this would mean that they must be demonstrated from that psychology. But Hobbes unequivocally denies that the definitional primary principles of political science, like those of the other sciences, can be demonstrated (*De Corp., EW* 1, 80–81). The primary principles of political science cannot be derived from the natural sciences, for if they were, they would not be primary principles—primary principles by their very nature cannot be demonstrated. Given that Hobbes does believe political science is *a priori* it follows that his politics is not deduced from his psychology, in particular, nor from any of the other natural sciences, in general. It is not *a posteriori* at all.

He writes in *De Corpore* that political science can be “severed” from moral philosophy, which is to say psychology, as well as the other natural sciences. Hobbes states

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Civil and moral philosophy do not so adhere to one another, but that they may be severed. For the causes of the motions of the mind are known, not only by ratiocination, but also by the experience of every man that takes the pains to observe those motions within himself. And, therefore, not only they that have attained the knowledge of the passions and perturbations of the mind, by the synthetical method, and from the very first principles of philosophy, may by proceeding in the same way, come to the causes and necessity of constituting commonwealths […]; but even they also that have not learned the first part of philosophy, namely geometry and physics, may, notwithstanding, attain the principles of civil philosophy, by the analytical method. (De Corp., EW 1, 73–74)

Given what he says here, the principles of political science, then, are not necessarily deduced from the natural sciences since they may be reached in another fashion. This implies that the principles of political science may, nonetheless, be deduced from the natural sciences. I do not mean to suggest that Hobbes himself denied that the principles of political science could be derived from the prior sciences. In this passage Hobbes clearly assumes that they can. However, I deny, first, that such a derivation is the only way one can establish these principles as scientific principles, and second, that such a derivation from the natural sciences actually succeeds, following Sacksteder's observation mentioned above. As Sacksteder has shown, to derive all the sciences in this way ultimately results in there being only one science, geometry, thereby eliminating any distinction among the sciences. This puts one in an implausible position.

In addition to Sacksteder's claim, what we have shown is that such a derivation would also eliminate the a priori status of political science. This follows from the fact that political science would be derived from the a posteriori sciences, especially psychology. Thus while the logic of Hobbes's account of the a priori would suggest that political science is necessarily severed from the natural sciences, Hobbes himself professes the weaker position that the severance of political science from the natural sciences is merely possible. My claim is that Hobbes can meaningfully maintain the
stronger version of the necessary severance of political science from the other sciences.\(^\text{178}\)
The only way for Hobbes to consistently maintain political science’s \textit{a priori} status is to hold that political science is not synthetically demonstrated from the other \textit{a posteriori} natural sciences, but instead that it is synthetically demonstrated on the basis of its \textit{own} primary principles. Where the natural sciences exist in some sort of dependent relationship with geometry, political science not only can, but ought to exist outside this chain of dependency due to its \textit{a priori} status.

This severance of political science is supported, furthermore, by what Hobbes has to say about hypotheses. Earlier it was shown that hypotheses perform an indispensible role in Hobbes’s conception of the natural sciences. Not only do hypotheses supplement empirical investigations, filling in the epistemological gaps in lieu of the lack of certainty in those sciences, but in so doing, hypotheses also distinguish the natural sciences from one another. This separation thereby negates the possibility of a complete deduction of the subordinate natural sciences, such as physiology and psychology, from the more comprehensive sciences, such as physics and geometry. If Hobbes denies a complete deduction of the natural sciences from geometry is possible, as the textual evidence earlier referenced indicates, it is also reasonable, in fact it is more probable, that Hobbes has to deny a complete derivation of political science from geometry is possible, given that political science is not even a natural science—it is artificial. Thus the position that political science is severed from the natural sciences is favored overwhelmingly by the textual evidence itself.

In fact Hobbes writes that it was his recognition of this that allowed him to write \textit{De Cive} when he did. In the Preface to \textit{De Cive} Hobbes explains why he was able to

write it prior to *De Corpore* and *De Homine*, works which together comprise his *Elements of Philosophy*. Initially he tells us he had planned to treat first “of body and its generall properties; in the second of man and his speciall faculties, and affections; in the third, of civill government and the duties of Subjects” (*De Cive*, 35). But circumstances disrupted Hobbes's plan. The “approaching War” he says “was the cause which (all those other matters deferr'd) ripen'd, and pluckt from me this third part,” namely *De Cive*, ahead of the other two works in natural philosophy (*De Cive*, 35–36). “Therefore it happens that what was last in order, is yet come forth first in time, and the rather, because I saw that grounded on its owne principles sufficiently knowne by experience it would not stand in need of the former Sections” (*De Cive*, 36). Given that, for Hobbes, political science is a true deductive system synthetically demonstrated from primary principles, the primary principles themselves must be true. Here Hobbes suggests that the truth of the principles of political science are not derived from, are not dependent upon, any principles or propositions that are proper to physics or psychology. Political science he claims is independent of the natural sciences in that it is “grounded on its owne principles”, not those of the natural sciences.¹⁷⁹ According to Yves Charles Zarka, political science is irreducible to a natural science, and for precisely these reasons. “Hobbes’s political theory,” he tells us, “has nothing to do with the physics of the state.”¹⁸⁰

The purely *a priori* status of Hobbes's politics may seem at odds with his repeated insistence that the principles of political science are “sufficiently knowne by experience”.

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After all, I just argued that *a posteriori* demonstration plays no role in his politics, and yet Hobbes again and again makes reference to the role that experience plays in coming to know these primary principles of politics. One of the better known instances of this is in the “Introduction” to *Leviathan*. There Hobbes, after his beautiful description of the commonwealth as an artificial man, proposes that comprehensive knowledge of the science of politics can be attained if one takes to heart the adage “*nosce teipsum, read thyself*” (*Lev., EW* 3, xi). To do this one begins with the experiences that one has of the motions of their own mind, that is their passions, as well as their experiences of interacting with other individuals in civil society, and resolves or analyzes by means of the analytic method those motions into their constitutive causes. One thus ultimately arrives, at least in principle, at the primary principles of political science.

This has led some scholars to understand Hobbes’s politics and its principles to be induced from experience. While there exist a number of different formulations of this perspective, in general these scholars think that the basic propositions of Hobbes’s politics are grounded in, and taken from, observations of human behavior, some even seeing Hobbesian politics as a prefiguration of positivism. The Hobbesian political program, on this reading, is one that is essentially empirical in its orientation, providing broad generalizations of the human political experience.

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181 This has led Strauss, *The Political Philosophy of Thomas Hobbes*, 29, that “Hobbes's political philosophy is really, as its originator claims, based on a knowledge of men which is deepened and corroborated by the self-knowledge and self-examination of the individual, and not on a general scientific or metaphysical theory. And because it is based on experience of human life, it can never, in spite of all the temptations of natural science, fall completely into the danger of abstraction from moral life and neglect of moral difference.” Strauss uses this to support his central position that Hobbes's political philosophy has its roots not in modern science, but classical humanism. On the influence humanism had on Hobbes’s thought, see Quentin Skinner’s *Reason and Rhetoric*. For a development of Skinner’s position, see Overhoff, *Hobbes’s Theory of the Will*, 89-103.

182 Hobbes intentionally mistranslates this dictum, which can be found as early as *EL, EW* 4, 25–26.

This interpretation of Hobbes’s politics cannot be right though. Hobbes’s emphasis on experience cannot mean the principles of political science are grounded in experience. If they were, then he would have to hold that political science is \textit{a posteriori}, which is something we have seen he denies. Hobbes does not say that the principles of political science are grounded in experience, nor does not say their truth is established empirically. What he says is that we can come to knowledge of the principles of political science by way of experience. How one learns of a truth is not the same as what it is that makes the truth true. These are two very different things, and they amount to the distinction between the order of knowing and the order of being—the \textit{ordo cognoscendi} and the \textit{ordo essendi}—a distinction popular among the Scholastics and one that Hobbes would have been familiar with.\textsuperscript{184} Consider the following quick example: a child may learn that $2+2=4$ by adding groups of apples together, and thereby understand the truth of this equation. The apples do not make $2+2=4$, for the equation is true independent of apples. Likewise, the principles of political science may be known by way of experience, but experience does not make them true, it does not establish or ground their truth. The truth of the primary principles of political science, as we saw earlier, is established in and through the capacity of the primary principles, the definitions, proposed by the scientist to generate the thing defined. True primary principles of political science are proper genetic definitions. These principles may be arrived at by way of the analytic method beginning from experience, but they are not in and of themselves established \textit{by} the analytic method, and thus are not grounded \textit{in} experience.\textsuperscript{185} This thereby ensures that


political science remains *a priori* in that the analytic method plays no role in its demonstrations (*De Corp.*, EW 1, 80).\(^{186}\)

All of this leads one to the conclusion that Hobbes views political science as an independent *a priori* science grounded on, that is, synthetically demonstrated from, its own principles.\(^{187}\) These principles are the genetic definitions that contain the construction of the object investigated by political science (*Six Lessons, EW* 7, 184). For political science this object is the commonwealth and its sovereignty. To outline such a construction is to account for the parts of the thing’s nature, in this case the nature of the commonwealth. Hobbes’s position is that to construct the commonwealth and its sovereignty on the basis of genetic definitions is to explicate the parts of their nature, to determine what the nature of a commonwealth and its sovereignty is; it is to define and delimit them.\(^{188}\)

What is more, because of its *a priori* status, Hobbes's politics is purely formal, even structural in orientation. It can therefore be taken as an attempt to elucidate, from an *a priori* perspective, the form or structure of the commonwealth and sovereignty *as such.*

\(^{186}\) Again, the natural sciences other than geometry certainly depend on the analytic method in their demonstrations, for it is the analytic method which provides the means of postulating hypotheses. The demonstrations of Hobbes's political science, though, are much like those of Euclid. As Grant has put it in his “Geometry and Politics: Mathematics in the Thought of Thomas Hobbes,” when one turns to the method of Euclid's *Elements*, what one is confronts is “wholly synthetic,” but “of the preliminary 'analysis', the possibly laborious elucidation of the basic concepts, the discoveries of the proofs and construction, no hint remains; the dust of the workshop has been cleared away’ (51). It is the same, he claims, with Hobbes's texts. Though Hobbes perhaps himself used the analytic method to arrive at the principles of his political philosophy, this analysis plays no role in the textual demonstrations. While I am particularly fond of Grant's portrayal of the disappearance of analysis in the demonstrations of political philosophy, I disagree with him that synthesis in political philosophy proceeds from the principles of the natural sciences. Jesseph, “Hobbes and the Method of Natural Science,” 94, points out “This conception of analysis as a preface to synthesis is in keeping with the traditional characterization of analysis as the ‘method of invention or discovery’ and synthesis as the true ‘method of demonstration.’”


This is why Hobbes remarks in the Epistle Dedicatory to *De Cive* that he has “been very wary in the whole tenour of my discourse, not to meddle with the civill Lawes of any particular nation whatsoever, That is to say, I have avoided coming a shore, which those Times have so infested both with shelves and Tempests” (*De Cive*, 27). Hobbes’s conception of political science is not an empirical investigation into the structure or organization of any given political formation, as we might understand the political scientist today to investigate the functioning of the bicameral parliament of the United Kingdom, or the Federation Council of Russia and its interaction with the State Duma. Rather political science is a study of commonwealths and their sovereignty as such. The nature of a commonwealth and its sovereignty is nothing other than this form or structure synthetically demonstrated on the basis of the primary principles of Hobbes’s political science. In the following, third, chapter I will show just what the primary principles of political science are, and explain how Hobbes constructs an *a priori* political science from them.

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In the second chapter we took a look at Hobbes's analytic-synthetic method and how it relates to the ratiocinative process as he understands it. This method, I said, is designed to provide one with scientific knowledge insofar as it focuses on the causal relationships that obtain among bodies in all of their various configurations. I argued that Hobbes's method bears a number of similarities to the scientific methods developed at the University of Padua, most notably Zabarella's method, which I spent some time discussing in the first chapter. According to Hobbes the analytic method is designed to proceed from effects to their causes, and ultimately to the most universal of causes. The most universal of causes, we learned, are the primary principles of things. We saw that primary principles are understood by Hobbes to be genetic definitions that account for the genesis of the thing defined. It was in this context that Hobbes puts into play the genetic criterion of certainty in vogue among a number of his fellow philosophers. The primary principles of science are true if they are capable of generating the object being defined in the investigation. The synthetic method proceeds from these causes and demonstrates how they bring about their effects. What this amounts to, it was claimed, is a demonstration of the nature of the effects. I then turned to the various sciences to determine how Hobbes conceives of their relationships to one another. Hobbes holds that the sciences can be divided into two branches, where one branch consists of the natural sciences and the other branch consists of the artificial sciences. The natural sciences are arranged in a demonstrative chain from the most universal of natural sciences, geometry,
to the more specific natural sciences such as physics and psychology. Geometry, the most fundamental of the natural sciences, is an \textit{a priori} science in that its principles can be known with certainty. Likewise political science, the sole artificial science Hobbes classifies, is also an \textit{a priori} science. I argued ultimately that Hobbes understands political science to be independent of the natural sciences, grounded on its own primary principles, genetic principles not taken from the natural sciences. We then concluded that Hobbes's \textit{a priori} political science begins with these primary principles and generates, by means of the synthetic method, the commonwealth and its sovereignty. In doing so, Hobbes claims to have given an account of the nature of the commonwealth.

In this chapter we turn to Hobbes's political science itself. I will be concerned primarily with the insight that motivates Hobbes's political philosophy, namely that political philosophy, as a discourse, is an \textit{a priori} system synthetically demonstrated from primary genetic principles. To read Hobbes in this way forces us to reconsider the concepts and arguments that Hobbes puts forth in his political texts. As we shall see, a number of these central concepts, concepts such as the right of nature, the state of nature, and the laws of nature have been interpreted by scholars in ways inconsistent with the \textit{a priori} status of the politics within which they are put to use by Hobbes. However, if the politics he presents is \textit{a priori}, and thus not empirical, then the principles from which that politics is demonstrated must be \textit{a priori} as well. As I argued in the last chapter, for Hobbes to derive his political science from principles endemic to the natural sciences would necessitate that political science, insofar as it is derived from these principles, itself be a species of natural science, and hence empirical. Given that Hobbes explicitly rules out the natural scientific status of political science, it follows the principles of
political science themselves must not be empirical principles taken from those natural sciences. Instead, an interpretation sensitive to their a priori status must be carried out if one is to interpret Hobbes within the context of his own scientific methodology.\textsuperscript{190}

In what follows I will begin by taking a look at the predominant interpretations of the state of nature given by scholars. I argue that all of these interpretations commit the same fundamental mistake. All of them wrongly interpret this central notion of Hobbes’s political philosophy as if the concept of the state of nature were itself an empirical concept. To do this, I claim, forfeits any possibility of interpreting his political science as an a priori science. I next offer in place of these misguided empirical interpretations my own interpretation of the state of nature which understands it in ways more faithful to its a priori status. In order to make sense of this, I show how the state of nature is not the starting point of Hobbes’s politics, but is in fact a concept derived from the a priori primary principles of Hobbes’s politics. These principles I call the principle of natural right, the principle of equality, and the principle of scarcity. I show in what ways Hobbes derives the principal causes of fighting that produce the state of nature as a war of all against all. I then proceed to show how it is that the laws of nature fit into the demonstrative framework of Hobbes’s a priori politics. I argue that Hobbes presents a unique treatment of natural law, one that emphasizes their origin not in the commands of God, nor in the structure of the physical universe, but rather in the primary principles of his politics. The laws of nature, I explain, address the principal causes of fighting, and outline how it is that these causes can be eradicated and peace be achieved. Following this account of the laws of nature, I demonstrate how Hobbes links these laws of nature to

\textsuperscript{190} Within the confines of Hobbesian methodology, science must either be empirical or a priori, as I argued in chapter 2. Methodological approaches other than these do not fit within the framework of Hobbesian science.
the covenant which establishes the commonwealth and sovereignty. Central to Hobbes’s position is the notion that the state of nature and the pervasive fighting which characterizes it in part follows from the diversity of judgment possessed by individuals in the state of nature. Hobbes argues that this conflict of judgment results in the conflict of war. Hence to produce peace the diversity of wills must somehow be de-diversified, or unified, and this is ultimately accomplished by the creation of a common sovereign power. Hence in demonstrating the causes of the sovereign commonwealth, I argue Hobbes has accounted, on the one hand, for its genesis, and on, on the other, successfully provided an *a priori* interpretation of its nature. In the fourth chapter I will examine an interesting component of Hobbes’s view of the nature of the sovereign commonwealth.

**The Natural State**

The most familiar of Hobbes's political concepts, even to those unfamiliar with Hobbes's work, is the state of nature. The state of nature Hobbes believes is a war of all against all, and is a state in which “the life of man [is] solitary, poor, nasty, brutish, and short” (*Lev.*, *EW* 3, 113). It is only the Leviathan, “that *mortal god,”* that can save us from ourselves, get us out of the state of nature and into a state of civil peace (*Lev.*, *EW* 3, 158). Hobbes's political philosophy, in each of its iterations, is concerned with the presentation of this story and how man emerges out of the state of nature and into the light that is the commonwealth, with its crowning achievement the institution of sovereign power. The state of nature, as a concept, is integral to Hobbes's argument and to his politics. This is something all readers of Hobbes agree on. But, despite how well known this concept is,
these interpreters have been unable to agree on its epistemological status, and thus its specific function in Hobbes's political philosophy.

Some scholars have understood the status of the state of nature in his political philosophy to be derived, necessarily, from Hobbes's account of psychology. What this means is that the truth of the state of nature as a principle of politics is to be derived, or synthetically demonstrated from, his mechanistic account of the passions as it is found, for instance, in his De Homine, or in Part One of Leviathan. Those who read Hobbes in this way understand the state of nature to be the situation that results when humans and their actions are determined solely by their psychological and emotive states, physiologically understood. Because humans are essentially egoistic, they find themselves in a situation where their individual interests collide and are at odds with one another. The war of all against all, the state of nature, is its product. Conversely the state of nature, as a war of all against all, can be resolved, using the analytic method, into its constitutive components and be reduced to matter in motion at the level of human psychology. The principles governing matter in motion as it applies specifically to humans can in turn be resolved into more general principles, ultimately allowing one to arrive at the most basic principles of motion as it pertains to bodies as such. Those who pursue Hobbes with this understanding view the state of nature as derived from, and thus demonstrated on the basis of, Hobbes's natural sciences. This is to interpret the state of nature within a deductive chain extending back to the most universal and primary

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principles of physics, and even stretching back to geometry. In the last chapter I briefly discussed those scholars who view Hobbes’s political philosophy as derived from the natural sciences—this interpretation of the state of nature falls within that interpretative schema.

To read Hobbes's politics in this way is to turn that politics into a natural science. This would be fine were it not for the fact that those who do so erase any possibility that his politics be *a priori*. We have seen the natural sciences are hierarchically arranged: geometry studies the most universal principles of natural bodies, physics the principles of the interaction of these natural bodies, mechanics the principles of these bodies in motion, and so on, each successive natural science limiting its field of investigation to more and more specific ways in which natural bodies are, which is to say to limit - successively the respective domains of each. The natural sciences, save geometry, are *a posteriori* sciences in that they rely on the analytic method to provide hypothetical explanations of the natural phenomena which they study. To suppose that the state of nature is derived from Hobbes's natural sciences, such as psychology, is thus to suppose that Hobbes's political science is *a posteriori* because it is derived from those *a posteriori* sciences. As was shown in the last chapter, Hobbes thinks political science is *an a priori* science, and it is not clear how those who pursue the reading that sees the state of nature as deductively dependent upon his natural sciences can justify their position in the wake of his pronouncement that politics is *a priori*. Perhaps the only option at their disposal is to pronounce Hobbes’s thought as internally inconsistent. As we shall see, however, there remains a way more faithful to Hobbes’s thought that understands it as internally consistent, one which I will be pursuing in a moment.
Other readers of Hobbes take the state of nature to be a real, historical reality.\textsuperscript{192} To say that Hobbes believes the state of nature is a historical reality is to say that he thinks the state of nature either has existed in the past at some moment in history, or alternately, that it exists somewhere in the world at present. In both cases this interpretation understands the state of nature to be of philosophical value to the extent that it functions descriptively in Hobbes’s philosophy, describing individuals who either have existed or do exist in a pre-civil condition.

If one pays some attention to Hobbes’s texts it becomes immediately apparent that Hobbes believes nothing of the sort. On numerous occasions Hobbes explicitly denies that the state of nature exists as historical fact, a stance which puts him in close proximity to the skeptical position that David Hume would voice concerning the historical reality of the social contract in the state of nature in his “Of the Original Contract”.\textsuperscript{193} In \textit{Leviathan} Hobbes writes “it may peradventure be thought, there was never such a time, nor condition of war as this; and I believe it was never generally so, over all the world” (\textit{Lev.}, \textit{EW} 3, 114). In \textit{De Cive} he provides his reasons for denying the state of nature as historical fact. There he writes that “a Family is a little City,” (\textit{De Cive}, 101) in that “a Sonne cannot be understood to be at any time in the State of Nature, as being under the power and command of them to whom he owens his protection as soon as ever he is born, namely either his Fathers, or his Mothers, or his that nourisht him” (\textit{De Cive}, 48–49). The same, we can assume, should be said for a daughter. Because all children are always

\textsuperscript{192}Johnston, \textit{The Rhetoric of Leviathan}, 189; Ryan, “Hobbes's Political Philosophy,” 218. Strauss, in his \textit{The Political Philosophy of Thomas Hobbes}, provides a variation of this interpretation of the state of nature which can be seen from his claim that it is a “typical history” which comes to take on “historical significance” by its being instantiated at real historical moments (104, 107). Malcolm, \textit{Leviathan}, vol. 1, 17, refers to it as a “quasi-historical story.”

born into social relationships, at least of a sort, then individuals never exist in the state of nature. These considerations make it difficult, if not impossible, to consider the status of the state of nature in Hobbes as possessing the status of an historical fact. The only way one could do this is if one ignores the letter of Hobbes's texts. This may lead one to an interesting take on the state of nature, but it surely would not lead one to Hobbes's take.

A third common interpretation of the state of nature some scholars provide views its function in Hobbes's argument as a hypothetical condition. When it comes to reading the state of nature as a hypothesis in Hobbes’s political science, those who provide this interpretation recognize Hobbes thinks it is impossible to establish the existence of the state of nature as historical fact, and they instead suppose the state of nature possesses a hypothetical existence. Gregory Kavka defends such a position. According to him, to understand the state of nature as hypothetical means “people have good moral reasons for obeying political authorities in certain sorts of States (e.g., satisfactory States), because they would in certain counterfactual (i.e., nonfactual) circumstances consent to do so.”

As Kavka explains elsewhere, “Hobbes is essentially a hypothetical contract theorist. For him, the social contract is not an actual historical event, but a theoretical construct designed to facilitate our understanding of the grounds of political obedience.” According to Kavka, Hobbes’s hypothesis of the “nonfactual” or “counterfactual” state of nature functions primarily as a heuristic device to aid in our understanding of why it is we have certain political obligations, and the conditions under which such obligations obtain.

On this reading Hobbes’s hypothetical state of nature sounds much like the hypothetical

state of nature put forth later by Jean-Jacques Rousseau’s *Discourse on the Origin of Inequality* as a state which “must not be taken for historical truths, but only for hypothetical and conditional reasonings better suited to clarify the Nature of things than to show their genuine origin.”[196]

The problem with reading the state of nature as a hypothesis in the sense that Kavka and others do is that it is an inaccurate portrayal of how hypotheses function within the broader context of Hobbes’s account of science. Note that for Kavka and others, hypothesis refers to a set of counterfactual or nonfactual circumstances mobilized for heuristic ends. As I discussed in chapter 2, Hobbes conceives of hypotheses as providing possible causes of phenomena, that is “some ways and means by which they may be, I do not say they are, generated” (*De Corp.*, *EW* 1, 388). Hypotheses do not provide necessary causes of phenomena, in which case they would not be hypotheses, instead they provide likely or probably causes of phenomena observed. While true causes of natural phenomena are impossible to know for certain, good hypotheses on Hobbes’s account are those that most likely “may be the true causes” (*De Corp.*, *EW* 1, 531, my italics). The problem is that were the state of nature a counterfactual or nonfactual set of circumstances or state of affairs as Kavka and others assume, the state of nature would be a poor candidate for a good hypothesis on Hobbes’s own standard of what constitutes a good hypothesis. If good hypotheses on Hobbes’s account best approximate the actual causes of phenomena, and the state of nature is a nonfactual or counterfactual cause, then the state of nature does not approximate the actual causes of the phenomena and hence is a bad hypothesis on Hobbes’s own terms. And within the

context of Hobbes’s account of scientific method and the role of hypotheses therein, Hobbes would more than likely consider Rousseau’s hypothesis inferior to his own insofar as Rousseau’s fails to approximate the true causes of things, for as Rousseau says “Let us therefore begin by setting all the facts aside, for they do not affect the question” as to the origin of government and commonwealths.\(^{197}\) This marks a significant difference between Hobbes’s and Rousseau’s conceptions of the state of nature, one that has gone largely unnoticed. But focusing back on Hobbes, Kavka and others who pursue readings like him are left to explain why Hobbes would attempt to build a political science on the basis of what he would himself consider a poorly formulated hypothesis.

The other possibility available for readers wishing to pursue some sort of hypothetical account is to accept that the state of nature is not a hypothesis in the sense at work in the readings of Kavka and others, and to instead assert that the state of nature is a good hypothesis in the precise sense that Hobbes himself understands the term.\(^{198}\) Given the difficulty of establishing the true causes of the first commonwealths, historically speaking, the state of nature is a hypothesis that attempts to spell out what was most likely the cause of the first commonwealths. Though it is impossible to prove the state of nature as historical fact, it is perhaps the most probable of causes responsible for producing the systems of sovereignty Hobbes is so interested in, and hence stands as a

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\(^{197}\) Rousseau, *Discourse on the Origins of Inequality*, 19.

\(^{198}\) For varieties of this reading, see Watkins, *Hobbes's System of Ideas*, 72; Grant, “Geometry and Politics,” 151. Ross Harrison in his *Hobbes, Locke, and Confusion's Masterpiece*, 68, claims that the state of nature is a “hypothetical condition” that is “introduced for the purposes of argument,” by Hobbes. This is a confusing claim on Harrison's part given his insistence later in the book that the state of nature is not a hypothetical postulate, but instead an “empirical claim, given the guns and garrisons that states have at their borders” (93). The latter claim would place him in the camp of interpreters, just discussed, that view the state of nature as historical fact. But it would seem that either the state of nature is hypothetical, and so not an empirical fact, or an empirical fact, and so need not be hypothetically postulated. While these options cannot both be true, they can both be false. I believe neither are correct interpretations of the state of nature.
good working hypothesis to explain their genesis and is a close approximation to the facts.

But were the state of nature a hypothesis in Hobbes’s own sense of the term, the political science synthetically demonstrated on the basis of it would be no different in status than the *a posteriori* approach of physics. I showed in the last chapter that physics requires hypotheses to supplement empirical observation. Because the workings of the natural world lay beyond our complete grasp, hypotheses come to fill in the gaps, so to speak. If the state of nature in Hobbes’s political science were a hypothesis in his own sense then his politics would have to forfeit the claim that it is an *a priori* science. The question that comes to the fore regarding this reading is why Hobbes holds himself to be the first to establish political science on firm and certain foundations if those foundations were neither firm nor certain, but instead hypothetical, as this approach maintains is the case? Lacking an answer it is makes sense to say that the state of nature must not be a hypothesis in the distinctly Hobbesian sense.

What these three interpretations of Hobbes's state of nature have in common is they all understand that concept to be founded or established *a posteriori*. This can be seen in the first group's claim that the concept is derived from the natural sciences, in the second group's claim that the state of nature is an empirical fact, and in the third group's claim that the state of nature is a hypothesis. In each of these cases, it is understood as an *a posteriori* concept, and this in turn characterizes his political science as *a posteriori* insofar as it is deduced from the state of nature. These common interpretations of the important concept of the state of nature thus fail to take into account the *a priori* status of political science that Hobbes takes the time to construct.
Again, there are good reasons as to why the *a posteriori* approach to Hobbes’s political science has gained a foothold among readers. As I explained previously, Hobbes does at times open the door to such a reading of his thought and there is some textual evidence to support the *a posteriori* position. The primary locus is that of Hobbes’s comments in *De Corpore* that the principles of political science can be arrived at by both the analytical method as well as the synthetic method (*De Corp., EW* 1, 73-74). As I claimed, following Sacksteder, a derivation of the principles of political science from the principles of psychology, physics, and geometry ultimately does not succeed in that it would result in a reduction of each science, including political science, to a species of geometry, which is absurd. While this perhaps goes unnoticed by Hobbes, he does recognize that political science *can* be separated from moral science: “Civil and moral philosophy do not so adhere to one another, but that they may be severed” (*De Corp., EW* 1, 73). But if one approaches Hobbes’s political thought from the vantage point of the *a posteriori* interpretations of the state of nature I just outlined, it immediately becomes impossible to explain how it is it that political science can indeed be separated from moral philosophy. What is more it becomes difficult to uphold Hobbes’s distinction between the branches of the sciences that study natural bodies, on the one hand, and artificial bodies, on the other. In order to explain how it is possible to cut political science from moral philosophy, and why the distinction between the natural and artificial sciences is justified, what must be provided is an *a priori* interpretation of his political thought, one that does not succumb to the temptations of the *a posteriori* approach that predominates the literature.
In light of this, I propose the primary principles of Hobbes's *a priori* politics consist of a number of basic concepts that are capable of generating the state of nature, and ultimately the commonwealth and its sovereignty. Because these concepts generate the state of nature, they occupy a position in Hobbes's argument that is logically prior to the concept of the state of nature. The state of nature is not the starting point of Hobbes's political scientific demonstration, but is a concept derived from other more fundamental principles.

These principles, while they may be understood empirically, are not strictly speaking empirical principles. Recall the basic difference between the *ordo cognoscendi* and the *ordo essendi* Hobbes repeatedly employs. While the principles of Hobbes’s political science can be understood empirically, which is to say arrived at by means of the analytical method, this does not constitute or establish them as the primary principles of his politics. Rather they are asserted by Hobbes as the primary principles of his *a priori* politics because these principles, taken together, are capable of producing or generating the contents of Hobbes’s political science. What is more, they conform to the synthetic method insofar as they proceed from cause to effect. They are true political scientific principles because they cause, ultimately, the institution of the sovereign commonwealth. I will now explain what the primary principles of Hobbes’s politics are.

**The Primary Principles of Hobbes’s Politics and the State of Nature**

To begin with, Hobbes affirms as a primary principle of his politics the fundamental equality of humans. Equality is defined by him as an equality of ability or power in the

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sense of a “present means; to obtain some future apparent good,” and it he intends
equality to extend both to faculties of mind and body (Lev., EW 3, 74).

As Gregory Kavka has pointed out, this definition is purely formal in that it “identifies powers as
means or capacities to attain one's ends or objectives, without any restriction on what
those ends may be.” Hobbes does not mean to suggest that all humans are equally
strong, equally intelligent, equally witty. While some may be stronger than others, some
more intelligent than others, some more witty than others, at the end of the day, whatever
superiority may be had by an individual in one respect, that superiority may be lacking in
another respect. After all, “NATURE hath made men so equal, in the faculties of the
body, and mind; as that though there be found one man sometimes manifestly stronger in
body, or of quicker mind than another; yet when all is reckoned together, the difference
between man, and man, is not so considerable, as that one man can thereupon claim to
himself any benefit, to which another may not pretend, as well as he” (Lev., EW 3, 110;
 cf. Elements, EW 4, 81–82).

In positing this basic equality, Hobbes consciously rejects the hierarchical
conception of human beings that had been a fundamental assumption of much scholastic
thought, if not much western philosophical thought, since Aristotle's Politics.

Hobbes writes,

I know that Aristotle in the first book of his Politics, for a foundation of his
doctrine, maketh men by nature, some more worthy to command, meaning the
wiser sort, such as he thought himself to be for his philosophy; others to serve,
meaning those that had strong bodies, but were not philosophers as he; as if

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200 On this fundamental equality see Elements, EW 4, 82; De Cive, 44.
201 Kavka, Hobbesian Moral and Political Theory, 93.
202 As Hobbes puts it in De Cive, “they are equals who can doe equall things one against the other; but they
who can do the greatest things, (namely kill) can doe equall things. All men therefore among themselves
are by nature equall; the inequality we now discern, hath its spring from the Civill Law” (45).
203 Martinich, Hobbes, 144, points out, “For an employee of various noblemen for most of his life, this is a
daring observation” on Hobbes’s part.
master and servant were not introduced by consent of men, but by difference of
wit: which is not only against reason; but also against experience. (*Lev.*, *EW* 3,
140–141)

According to Hobbes, a central feature of Aristotle’s politics, “a foundation of his
doctrine,” is the notion of the basic inequality of individuals. For Aristotle, some
individuals by their very nature are superior to others who are essentially inferior. In this
passage Hobbes rejects the fundamental orientation of Aristotle’s position—for Hobbes,
Aristotle is wrong to assert their inequality. In terms of experience, Hobbes thinks that a
quick look around should suffice to refute Aristotle’s position. One observes wiser
individuals in positions of servitude and those less wise in positions of mastery; stronger
individuals in positions of slavery and weaker individuals in positions of power. There
seems no empirical basis for Aristotle’s claim. However these empirical
considerations are not Hobbes’s primary reason for rejecting Aristotle on this point.

When it comes to why Aristotle is wrong about their inequality, notice that Hobbes
rejects this principle of Aristotle's politics primarily because it is against reason, and only
secondarily because it is “also against experience.” What should we make of the priority
Hobbes gives to reason here?

When Hobbes says that Aristotle's principle that humans are unequal is against
reason, I take him to mean that it is not according to “right reason”. In *De Cive* Hobbes

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204 It may be objected, for instance, that men are by nature unequal to children in their power, and that the
empirical point stands. As Hobbes puts it in *Leviathan*, however, even when it comes to “strength of body,
the weakest has strength to kill the strongest, either by secret machination, or by confederacy with others,
that are in the same danger with himself” (*Lev.*, *EW* 3, 110). There remains an equality even between men
and children due to the fact that “there needeth but little force to the taking away of a man’s life”
(*Elements*, *EW* 4, 82). Because children, as well as men, have the capacity or power to take away a man’s
life, a power which requires but little force, “they who can do the greatest things, (namely kill) can doe
equall things” (*De Cive*, 45). The equality remains one of power or capacity, rather than an equality of
opportunity or benefits deserved, for even when it comes to opportunity, in the state of nature each
individual has an equal capacity to take advantage of their opportunities. It is civil society, Hobbes thinks,
that tends to change this. Cf. Rawls, *Lectures on the History of Political Philosophy*, 43.
writes “By Right Reason in the naturall state of men, I understand not, as many doe, an infallible faculty, but the act of reasoning, that is, the peculiar and true ratiocination of every man” (De Cive, 52). Of course this raises the question of what Hobbes means by “true” ratiocination. In this context “true” means “concluding from true principles rightly framed” (De Cive, 52). This surely answers what constitutes the truth of something that is concluded from true principles, but it does not explain what makes or justifies those principles true themselves. I argued in the second chapter, however, that Hobbes understands primary principles to be true if they are capable of causing or generating what is concluded from them. To say that a principle is against reason is to say that it is not true, and to say that it is not true is to say that it fails properly to account for the generation of the thing defined. To return to Hobbes's critique of Aristotle, this means it amounts to a denial that the inequality of humans as a primary principle is capable of accounting for the generation of sovereignty.\(^{205}\) The fact that Aristotle's principle does not correspond to things as they are found in experience is only of secondary importance, and merely confirms, rather than establishes, the falsity of the principle. Once again Hobbes is careful to distinguish between what founds the truth or falsity of something, what justifies it as true, and what allows one to recognize or come to understand this truth or falsity. Experience only plays the role of the latter, rather than the former foundational role. Conversely the appeal to right reason does, he thinks, establish the falsity of Aristotle’s principle. So Hobbes thinks that the primary principle of the fundamental equality of each human to every other human is true according to reason in that it can

\(^{205}\) Alternately, it remains possible that Aristotle’s political principles are capable of explaining certain political phenomena, but they are incapable of explaining the nature of sovereign political systems. Just as non-Euclidean geometries need not refute Euclidean geometry, neither need Hobbesian political philosophy refute Aristotle. What is required is a delimitation of different domains. With respect to our concerns, Aristotle’s principles fail to explain the domain of sovereignty.
account for the generation of sovereignty. Just how it plays a role in the generation of sovereignty will become evident in a moment.

Hobbes is well aware that the principle of equality is not enough, on its own, to generate sovereignty. This is shown by the fact that it is not the only primary principle that he provides. The second primary principle that Hobbes offers, I argue, is what he calls the “right of nature”. Hobbes distinguishes “right” from “law”. Where “RIGHT, consisteth in liberty to do, or to forbear,” law “determineth, and bindeth to one of them: so that law, and right, differ as much, as obligation, and liberty; which in one and the same matter are inconsistent” (Lev., EW 3, 117). As Hobbes understands it law is a restriction of right, therefore where there are no laws to restrict right, such right, whatever right in particular it may be, is unlimited and unrestricted.

The specific right known as the right of nature Hobbes defines at one point as “the liberty each man hath, to use his own power, as he will himself, for the preservation of his own nature; that is to say, of his own life; and consequently, of doing any thing, which, in his own judgment, and reason, he shall conceive to be the aptest means thereunto” (Lev., EW 3, 116). One of the most fundamental, and thus most universal, of political principles is that individuals desire their own preservation: “for every man is desirous of what is good for him, and shuns what is evill, but chiefly the chiepest of naturall evills, which is Death” (De Cive, 47). While individuals have a number of desires, the desire for self-preservation is the most basic or fundamental of desires, it is

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206 Harrison recognizes the right of nature as a “fundamental axiom of [Hobbes's] new science in his Hobbes, Locke, and Confusion's Masterpiece. I agree with Harrison that the right of nature is a fundamental principle of Hobbes's new science, but I disagree with him that it is an axiom in the technical sense. We saw in the last chapter that Hobbes thinks only definitions satisfy the conditions of first principles. See also De Corp., EW 1, 82. Cf. Pettit, Made With Words, 166n.7; Strauss, The Political Philosophy of Hobbes, 15.
the “chiefest” and most universal of human motivational principles. Its universality as a principle stems from the fact that the satisfaction of the desire for self-preservation is the condition of possibility for the satisfaction of other desires.207 By definition any given desire presupposes the desire for self-preservation. If one fails to preserve oneself, that is if one dies, then it is impossible to possess any other desires. These additional desires are thus predicated upon the most universal of desires, the desire for self-preservation.208 Because there are no laws to restrict acting upon such a desire, one thereby has an unrestricted right to one’s self-preservation.209 Self-preservation and natural right are intrinsically linked for Hobbes.

What is more, if one has a right to self-preservation, as an end, Hobbes thinks one also has an unrestricted right to the means to that end (Lev., EW 3, 117). Because the right of nature entails the right of individuals to provide for their survival, and because almost anything in the state of nature may be judged to be a means to that survival, then the right of nature also entails a right to those means as well.

It is therefore neither absurd, nor reprehensible; neither against the dictates of true reason for a man to use all his endeavours to preserve and defend his Body, and the Members thereof from death and sorrowes; but that which is not contrary to right reason, that all men account to be done justly, and with right; Neither by the word Right is any thing else signified, then that liberty which every man hath to make use of his natural faculties according to right reason. (De Cive, 47)

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208 F.S. McNeilly, The Anatomy of Leviathan, 181, argues the right of nature is not a universal principle, but rather a materially determined principle. This, he claims, is because some individuals may not consider their self-preservation to be the chiefest of goods. McNeilly’s argument presupposes that Hobbes is making an empirical claim with the principle of the right of nature. What he ignores is that even in those cases where an individual (albeit mistakenly) considers something other than self-preservation to be the chiefest good, self-preservation as a principle of human motivation must already, as a condition, be satisfied such that goods other than self-preservation be considered chiefest. Cf. Strauss, The Political Philosophy of Hobbes, 15.

209 There are no laws at this point of Hobbes’s argument because there has not yet been a contract to institute laws such that they bind, and thus restrict, those who are party to the contract. On Hobbes’s argument, see Martinich, Hobbes, 230.
Without a right to the means apt to provide or aid in the preservation of oneself, one in effect would not have the capacity, that is the power or liberty, to preserve oneself. Strictly speaking this does not entail a right to everything, only to those things that either are or can be seen to be means to the end of self-preservation.\textsuperscript{210}

Just as was the case before with the principle of equality, we now see Hobbes mention right reason in the context of the presentation of the principle of the right of nature. Hobbes claims that the principle of the right of nature is true insofar as it conforms to right reason, and thus is true to the extent that it is capable of generating the state of nature, and ultimately the sovereign commonwealth.

To interpret the right of nature as a primary principle from which the state of nature is derived, as I have done, is to place the right of nature in a position logically prior to the state of nature in Hobbes’s argument. That Hobbes intends the right of nature to occupy this position is clear from his treatment of it in \textit{The Elements of Law} and \textit{De Cive}. In both of these earlier texts Hobbes treats the state of nature as following directly from the unbridled employment of the right of nature by each individual. But according to some scholars Hobbes changes his position, later, in \textit{Leviathan}.\textsuperscript{211} In \textit{Leviathan}, Hobbes introduces the state of nature in chapter thirteen, the right of nature in chapter fourteen. This would lead one to believe that, at least textually, the state of nature is of more importance than the right of nature. What is more, Hobbes also seems to characterize the right of nature as being derived, and thus as logically dependent upon, the state of nature. To be sure the logical dependence of the right of nature on the state of

\textsuperscript{210} For a helpful analysis of this, see Susan Sreedhar, \textit{Hobbes on Resistance: Defying the Leviathan} (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 11-16.

\textsuperscript{211} Curley, \textit{Leviathan}, 78n.9; Martinich, \textit{Hobbes}, 261.
nature is the only argument of any weight here, as the textual argument, namely that the right of nature is introduced after the state of nature in Hobbes’s argument, is complicated by the fallacy of *post hoc ergo propter hoc*. Nonetheless, the logical dependence of the right of nature on the state of nature would appear to be evidenced by the following: “And because the condition of man, as hath been declared in the precedent chapter, is a condition of war of every one against every one: in which case every one is governed by his own reason; and there is nothing he can make use of, that may not be a help unto him, in preserving his life against his enemies; it followeth, that in such a condition,” as is the state of nature, “every man has a right to everything; even to one another’s body” ([Lev.], *EW* 3, 117; cf. *Elements*, *EW* 4, 83). It is argued by those who pursue this reading that because individuals find themselves in the state of nature those individuals hence have an unlimited right of nature.

While it does seem Hobbes takes the right of nature to follow logically from the state of nature, a closer look shows what Hobbes says in *Leviathan* is no different than what he says in the earlier texts. In the quote just referred to Hobbes says the condition of war is one in which “there is nothing he can make use of that may not be a help unto him in preserving his life against enemies.” This indicates Hobbes takes the concept of the right of nature to be logically prior to the concept of the state of nature in his argument, not vice versa. If individuals did not possess the right of nature, then there would be a limit on an individual’s use of such things. If this were the case, there would exist some things one could not make use of. However, in already possessing the right of nature, there is nothing one cannot possibly make use of for the purpose of preserving one’s life. The unlimited right of nature must be prior to the state of nature if this is to be
so. Thus it is clear from the account in *Leviathan* that the right of nature is prior to the state of nature, the latter being a product, in part, of the former. What this shows is Hobbes consistently posits the right of nature as a primary principle of his political science in each of his political texts, placing it in a position that is logically prior to the state of nature.

The last of the primary principles of Hobbes’s political science is what I will call the principle of scarcity.\(^{212}\) As we have already seen, Hobbes posits as fundamental principles of his politics that individuals each have an unrestricted right to self-preservation, including the means thereto, and that individuals are fundamentally equal in power to one another, all things considered. These are what we have called the principles of natural right, and equality, respectively. But individuals could each possess a natural right to self-preservation, and be equally capable of pursuing what they judge to be good, and yet never be forced to enter into a war of all against all if it is the case that these individuals have unlimited resources at their disposal.\(^ {213}\) If, however, it is the case that resources are not unlimited, but rather finite, then the war of all against all, Hobbes thinks, *is* produced. It is for this reason that Hobbes posits as one of his primary principles the scarcity of resources.

In *De Cive* he claims “the most frequent reason why men desire to hurt each other, ariseth hence, that many men at the same time have an Appetite to the same thing; which yet very often they can neither enjoy in common, nor yet divide it; whence it followes

\(^{212}\) In a moment I will argue that these principles are, for Hobbes, *a priori* and explain why. For now it is enough to say something as to why it is not an *a posteriori* fact that resources are finite. Empirically, this principle is undecidable, as it is impossible to establish empirically the extent of the physical world and, and hence the extent of the resources within it. For Hobbes, it is something that must be postulated as a principle, one which ultimately is *a priori*.

\(^{213}\) By this we mean not only unlimited resources, but also unlimited access to those resources, as will become apparent by what Hobbes says in a moment.
that the strongest must have it; and who is strongest must be decided by the Sword” (*De Cive*, 46). The same principle can be found as early as *The Elements*, where Hobbes writes “considering that men’s appetites carry them to one and the same end; which end sometimes can neither be enjoyed in common, nor divided, it followeth, that the stronger must enjoy it alone, and that it be decided by battle who is the stronger” (*Elements, EW* 4, 82). What is important in each of these instances is Hobbes’s point that what leads to the war of all against all is not that each individual has desires, but that the desires of individuals can come into conflict because there are not enough goods or resources to satisfy the desires of those individuals. The latter is the case, Hobbes tells us, when what is desired “can neither be enjoyed in common, nor divided.” With the scarcity of resources in place as a principle, what is produced or what results is conflict taking the form of what he famously calls a war of all against all.

Before we take a look at how the war of all against all, that is the state of nature, is produced, I need say something about these three primary principles Hobbes has presented. Each principle by itself, as I have said, is not capable of producing or generating the state of nature. Taken together they are. This is because each principle has a unique function in the production of the state of nature. The principle of natural right applies specifically to individuals and the desires that motivate those individuals as individuals. The principle of equality, in turn, applies to the relationship that maintains between individuals. As Pettit has shown, it is a distinctly “positional” principle insofar as it structures the relations that one individual has to any other individual.\(^{214}\) Finally, the principle of scarcity applies to the relationship between these individuals and their environment. Though Hobbes does not say this outright, the logic of his thinking seems

\(^{214}\) Pettit, *Made With Words*, 96.
to be that these three principles function together in such a way as to be comprehensive—
they address individuals as individuals, individuals in relation to other individuals, and
individuals in relation to their environment—and it is this comprehensiveness that
guarantees their capacity to produce or generate the state of nature. The state of nature
then is the condition or state of affairs that obtains as a result of these three primary
principles.

It may be objected that Hobbes does not explicitly state that these are the primary
principles of his philosophy nor that they serve the functions that we have just outlined.
Rather what Hobbes states, this potential objection runs, is that “in the nature of man, we
find three principal causes of quarrel. First, competition; secondly, diffidence; thirdly
glory” (Lev., EW 3, 112). The principles of political science, like all science, are the most
universal causes of things, and here we have Hobbes assert the principal causes of
quarrel. Given that the state of nature is a quarrel of all against all it would seem to
follow that the primary principles are just these principal causes, namely competition,
diffidence, and glory. Upon closer inspection, however, these three causes can be
explained by the three primary principles of equality, of natural right, and of scarcity,
solidifying their status as primary principles of Hobbes’s politics.

Hobbes tells us that it is competition which “maketh men invade for gain,”
diffidence “for safety,” and glory “for reputation” (Lev., EW 3, 112). Let us begin with
competition. Competition results from individuals who “use violence, to make
themselves masters of other men’s persons, wives, children, and cattle” (Lev., EW 3,
112). Competition follows from the principle of scarcity in that competition is present.

Noel Malcolm, Leviathan, vol. 1, 18, explains that Hobbes’s treatment of these three causes of quarrel
are evident in each of Hobbes’s works, but that they undergo a shift in emphasis in each account.
only there were there is something to be competed for, such as “other men’s persons, wives, children, and cattle.” Because there are only a finite amount of resources, there inevitably will be a conflict of desires. If numerous individuals desire a given resource, and there is no way in which all individuals can have access to that resource, then individuals will be forced, that is determined, by the conditions they find themselves in to “endeavour to destroy, or subdue one another” in order to satisfy their desires for that resource (Lev., EW 3, 111). Given the finite nature of these goods, they cannot be had by all, and thus when they are desired by multiple individuals, and there is a conflict of desires, competition ensues as a means to satisfy these desires. Thus the principle of scarcity is a cause of competition.

Likewise it can be seen that diffidence follows from the principle of natural right, such that natural right is a cause of diffidence. The principle of natural right necessitates that each individual has the liberty and power to preserve him or herself. Given the natural right to self-preservation, diffidence is a product of the concern that others either are, or at least may be, a threat to one’s self-preservation. Diffidence thus manifests itself as a certain type of fear that one’s self-preservation is in danger. “And from this diffidence of one another, there is no way for any man to secure himself so reasonable, as anticipation; that is, by force, or wiles, to master the persons of all men he can, so long, till he see no other power great enough to endanger him: and this is no more than his own conservation requireth, and is generally allowed” (Lev., EW 3, 111). Driven by a desire to preserve myself, if I recognize that either it is possible or likely that you will jeopardize my survival, diffidence spurs me to anticipate and attack you before my life is

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216 Where the endeavor to compete is internal to each individual, the external conditions of the environment are what elicit this endeavor.

217 Cf. Rawls, Lectures on the History of Political Philosophy, 44.
actually threatened because it is something my “conservation requireth.” Recall that Hobbes takes the principle of natural right to apply both to the end of self-preservation as well as the means thereto. This is something Hobbes invokes again, this time within the context of his discussion of diffidence:

And from hence it comes to pass, that where an invader hath no more to fear, than another man’s single power; if one plant, sow, build, or possess a convenient seat, others may probably be expected to come prepared with forces united, to dispossess, and deprive him, not only of the fruit of his labour, but also of his life, or liberty. And the invader again is in the like danger of another. (Lev., EW, 3, 111)

It is clear in the passage above that the principle of self-preservation extends not just to one’s life, but to those resources that sustain one’s life, that is the means to life. When either life or the means to life come under attack, this causes fear of others, which is to say diffidence. It follows that the principle of natural right is prior to diffidence insofar as it accounts for the appearance of diffidence as a cause of quarrel.

This brings us to the last of the causes of quarrel Hobbes mentions, glory. “Joy, arising from imagination of a man’s own power and ability, is that exultation of the mind,” Hobbes calls glory. (Lev., EW 3, 45; cf. Elements, EW 4, 40; De Homine, 58). Glory is associated with those individuals who invade “for reputation”, that is, “for trifles, as a word, a smile, a different opinion, and any other sign of undervalue, either direct in their persons, or by reflection in their kindred, their friends, their nation, their profession, or their name” (Lev., EW 3, 112). What is important here is that this type of quarrel is a direct product of any sign of “undervalue”. Hobbes’s conception of value is one tied directly to the notion of one’s power. “The value, or WORTH of a man, is as of all other things, his price; that is to say his power: and therefore is not absolute; but a

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thing dependent on the need and judgment of another” (Lev., EW 3, 76). Remember that Hobbes’s principle of equality pertains primarily to the equality of ability or power that all individuals share in the state of nature “to obtain some future apparent good” (Lev., EW 3, 74). For an individual to be undervalued in the state of nature entails that his or her power is judged to be inferior in some basic respect. It is this undervaluing which ties glory to the principle of equality. When one’s equality is not respected or recognized, when it is undervalued by another individual, the result is a struggle to reassert that equality. “For every man looketh that his companion should value him, at the same rate he sets upon himself: and upon all signs of contempt, or undervaluing, naturally endeavours, as far as he dares […], to extort a greater value from his contemners, by damage; and from others, by the example” (Lev., EW 3, 112). When this equality is ignored, fighting for glory is an act which attempts to bring about, through force, the recognition of the fundamental equality of individuals expressed in the primary principle of equality. The principle of equality, then, accounts for the existence of quarrels pertaining to glory.

Each of these causes of quarrel is related to one another precisely because they are derived from the three primary principles. Glory is a product of the principle of equality, just as diffidence is a product of the principle of self-preservation, and competition is a product of the principle of scarcity. The objection raised above, then, has been met.

So far I have shown that the three primary, genetic principles of Hobbes’s political science are the principle of natural right, the principle of equality, and the principle of scarcity. I have also explained that these principles are structurally related: the principle of natural right applies to individuals *qua* individuals, the principle of
equality to the relationships that maintain between individuals, and the principle of scarcity to the relationship between the multitude of individuals and what is not this multitude, namely their environment. What I have just added to the account is that the principal causes of quarrel are derived from the three primary principles. Competition, diffidence, and glory, as causes of fighting and intrigue, are derived from the three primary principles of natural right, equality, and scarcity.

Given Hobbes’s position that competition, diffidence, and glory are the principal causes of war, I have also established how the war of all against all, and so the state of nature, is to be derived from the three primary principles of Hobbes’s political science. Hobbes provides an additional argument showing that what competition, diffidence, and glory produce is not merely a war here, or a war there, not merely a war between one individual prone to fighting, and another isolated irascible individual, individuals both exceptions to the rule of peace; what competition, diffidence, and glory produce is instead a war of all against all. What he argues for is the thoroughgoing pervasiveness, not just the singular existence, of war in the state of nature. “For WAR, consisteth not in battle only, or the act of fighting; but in a tract of time, wherein the will to contend by battle is sufficiently known” (Lev., EW 3, 113). To explain, he proceeds to draw an analogy with weather: “For as the nature of foul weather, lieth not in a shower or two of rain; but in an inclination thereto of many days together: so the nature of war, consisteth not in actual fighting; but in the known disposition thereto, during all the time there is no assurance to the contrary” (Lev., EW 3, 113). Competition, diffidence, and glory produce a war of all against all insofar as each are constantly a threat to every individual given that every individual is equal, is confronted with finite resources, and is motivated by a
desire for self-preservation. Hobbes acknowledges that a war of all against all is not one in which everyone is always actually invading or being invaded because of competition, diffidence, or glory, but rather one in which such invasion is always, at the very least, a constant threat or possibility. Because the principles of natural right, of equality, and of scarcity produce competition, diffidence, and glory, and because competition, diffidence, and glory are the direct causes of war, and because such war is always, for each individual, a constant threat, the result is a war of all against all, “and the life of man, solitary, poor, nasty, brutish, and short” (Lev., EW 3, 113). This is Hobbes’s a priori synthetic demonstration of the state of nature from the three primary principles of his political science.

Earlier we took a look at the main interpretations of Hobbes’s state of nature. One of the more predominant of these interpretations was put forth by those readers of Hobbes who understand him to derive his political science from his mechanistic psychology and the account of the passions provided therein. They contend that Hobbes’s political science is established empirically by the passions naturally inhering in individuals. As I have demonstrated, however, the passions so central to Hobbes’s explanation of the war of all against all are a product of the primary principles of his political science, not the other way around. Hence those who tend to read Hobbes as deriving the principles of his political science from his account of the passions have it basically backwards.

To derive the state of nature from the passions, and these from the three primary principles of his political science constitutes Hobbes’s a priori synthetic demonstration of the state of nature. To some it may sound odd to say that this demonstration has been one

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219 This is also the case in the account provided by Rawls, Lectures on the History of Political Philosophy, 41.
that is *a priori*. In *Leviathan*, for example, Hobbes provides a lengthy explanation to readers not convinced by his claim that the state of nature is a war of all against all that they may not trusting to this inference, made from the passions, desire perhaps to have the same confirmed by experience. Let him therefore consider with himself, when taking a journey, he arms himself, and seeks to go well accompanied; when going to sleep, he locks his doors; when even in his house, he locks his chests; and this when he knows there be laws, and public officers, armed, to revenge all injuries shall be done to him; what opinion he has of his fellow-subjects, when he rides armed; of his fellow citizens, when he locks his doors; and of his children, and servants, when he locks his chests. Does he not there as much accuse mankind by his actions, as I do by my words? (*Lev.*, *EW* 3, 114; cf. *De Cive*, 45)

Hobbes’s appeal to experience here would appear to call into question the *a priori* interpretation I have been providing because the truth of the state of nature as a war of all against all seems to be derived from, or established, on the basis of one’s own experience regarding other individuals. It looks as though Hobbes says the characterization of the state of nature as a war of all against all rings true to our own experience regarding the wariness we have of other individuals, and it is this which grounds the truth of the state of nature. Does this not force us to accept the *a posteriori* interpretation of the state of nature as the correct interpretation?

Here, as we have seen before, one must be careful when reading Hobbes to distinguish, on the one hand, arguments that he provides to ground or establish the truth of his claims from, on the other, observations he uses to confirm the claims already established. The appeal to locked doors and chests, while it is an empirical observation, is not used by Hobbes to establish as true that the state of nature is a war of all against all. Instead it is used, in his own words, to confirm that its being so is not contrary to experience. The truth that the state of nature is a war of all against all is grounded
instead, he claims, on the “inference made from the passions”. The passions he refers to are none other than the principal causes of quarrel, namely competition, diffidence, and glory, products of the primary principles of his politics. Thus Hobbes’s demonstration of the state of nature, which is to say the generation of the state of nature from the primary principles of his politics, remains one which is thoroughly \textit{a priori}.

The nature of the state of nature is one characterized by individuals at war with one another. These individuals invade for gain, safety, and reputation because they are motivated by competition, diffidence, and glory. Such a war of all against all is perpetual, which follows from the primary principles that generate it. It “is perpetuall in its own nature, because in regard of the equality of those that strive, it cannot be ended by Victory” (\textit{De Cive}, 49). The principle of equality guarantees, at least to an extent, the state of nature as a war of all against all persists because those who attack are met by individuals who possess equal power to defend. Thus the war produced is not only ubiquitous, it is also everlasting.

A perpetual war of this nature, Hobbes contends, is disastrous for everyone involved. After all, “it is easily judg’d how disagreeable a thing to the preservation either of Man-kind, or of each single Man, a perpetuall War is” (\textit{De Cive}, 49). Though the desire for self-preservation, as it is expressed in the principle of natural right, plays a part in generating the war of all against all, the war of all against all is a threat to the lives, and thus the self-preservation, of those individuals who find themselves in the state of nature. This follows from the conjunction of the principle of natural right with the two other

\footnotesize{\textsuperscript{220} This is not to suppose that Hobbes has made an inference from the mechanistic account of the passions one finds in his psychology to the state of nature being a war of all against all, as the first interpretation of the state of nature supposes, for as we have shown, the principal causes of quarrel are derived not from Hobbes’s psychology, but rather from the primary principles of his political science. See also Deigh, “Reason and Ethics in Hobbes’s Leviathan,” 224-225.}
primary principles. Hence “he therefore that desireth to live in such an estate as is the
estate of liberty and right of all to all, contradicteth himself” (*Elements*, *EW* 4, 85). That
the desire for the state of nature is a contradiction is mentioned by him in *De Cive* as
well, (*De Cive*, 49) and in both texts he provides the same argument for why it is a
contradiction to desire the state of nature. The argument runs as follows. Because all
individuals desire what is good for them, including their self-preservation, and the state
of nature is not good for any individual insofar as it threatens this self-preservation,
individuals who desire what is good for them, including their self-preservation must not
desire the state of nature. In short, it is a contradiction both to desire to preserve one’s
self and to desire not to preserve oneself, and because all individuals desire to preserve
themselves, as the principle of natural right maintains, to desire the state of nature is to
contradict the primary principle of natural right. As contradictory, such a desire for the
war of all against all can only be, on Hobbes’s account, irrational.\(^{221}\)

I have here emphasized the logical character of Hobbes’s deduction, the way in
which certain desires either do or do not contradict the principle of natural right.
Hobbes’s deductive system is one that aims at logical consistency, at a body of political
philosophical propositions that cohere with the primary principles of that system. This
corresponds directly to his conception of science we visited last chapter. Reason, as it
factors in political science, is purely formal. Issues of prudence or reasonableness, in
contradistinction to issues of rationality and logic, are ruled out from the start as they are
non-scientific.\(^ {222}\) This is not to say that the propositions of political science have no


\(^{222}\) Objections which point to a discrepancy in Hobbes’s account of rationality, and what may or may not be practically reasonable to do vis-à-vis that rationality, hence miss the mark. Though such issues may be
practical application. It is to say that the issue of application, that is the applicability of such political philosophical propositions, lie beyond the limits of political science proper.

Because it is not rational for an individual to desire the state of nature, a war of all against all, it is rational to desire that which is not war, namely peace. Hobbes’s justification for this statement hinges on his conception of war and peace as contraries. Given Hobbes’s broad conception of war as both actual and potential quarreling, “All other time,” he tells us, “is PEACE” (Lev., EW 3, 113; Cf. Elements, EW 4, 84; De Cive, 49). Thus Hobbes’s logic is that either there is war or there is peace, and where there is not war there is peace, and vice versa. Related to this, it is either rational to desire peace, or it is rational to desire war, and we have seen that it is not rational to desire war given its contradiction with the principle of natural right. It follows that it is only rational, in fact a “dictate of right Reason,” to seek peace insofar as this is possible (De Cive, 50).

Hobbes has thus demonstrated it is rational for individuals in the state of nature to seek peace, and he has demonstrated this “dictate of right Reason” from primary principles that are true according to right reason.

What is remarkable is that in demonstrating the rationality of seeking peace for individuals in a war of all against all, Hobbes has at the same time synthetically demonstrated, or genetically composed, on the basis of the primary principles of political science what he refers to as the first law of nature.

important, they are important for reasons other than political scientific reasons. Related to this, I agree strongly with the definitivist interpretation of Hobbes put forth by John Deigh in his “Reason and Ethics in Hobbes’s Leviathan.” Though Deigh only applies this position to Hobbes’s account of the laws of nature, I think it extends to all of Hobbes’s political thought, of which the laws of nature are one component. For a critical view of definitivism, see Mark Murphy, “Desire and Ethics in Hobbes’s Leviathan: A Response to Professor Deigh,” Journal of the History of Philosophy 38, no. 2 (2000). Deigh’s response to Murphy can be found in his “Reply to Mark Murphy,” Journal of the History of Philosophy 41, no. 1 (2003).
THE LAWS OF NATURE

Hobbes’s employment of the concept of natural law in his political science places him within a long tradition of natural law discourse, a tradition stretching back at least to the Stoics. Natural law theory also formed the basis of much scholastic moral thought, and thus can be found early on in the work of Thomas Aquinas and Francisco Suárez. But theories of natural law were not limited to the scholastics. Both Richard Hooker and Hugo Grotius in the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries developed influential non-scholastic natural law theories that many have claimed influenced Hobbes’s own natural law discourse. Generally speaking, natural law theories postulate that there exist some laws or rules of human conduct and behavior that find their basis in the very nature of what it means to be human. On some natural law accounts the laws of nature are understood to follow from the physical laws of the natural world, as is the case in many Stoic conceptions, while on other accounts, such as the Scholastic accounts of Aquinas and Suárez, they find their basis either in the explicit commands of God, or alternately in God’s ordering of things.

There has been much debate among scholars as to how Hobbes understands natural law. Some argue that Hobbes believes the laws of nature to follow from the commands of God and hence that they possess a divine origin and that Hobbes is some sort of divine command theorist. This position has most notably been defended by Howard Warrender and A.E. Taylor. The prime textual evidence for this position can be found in *Leviathan*.

These dictates of reason, men used to call by the name of laws, but improperly: for they are but conclusions, or theorems concerning what conduceth to the conservation and defence of themselves; whereas law, properly, is the word of him, that by right hath command over others. But yet if we consider the same theorems, as delivered in the word of God, that by right commandeth all things; then are they properly called laws. (*Lev., EW* 3, 147)

Because the laws of nature are called laws, and because laws properly speaking only refer to those things that have been commanded by an authority, then the laws of nature must be commanded by some authority if they truly are laws. However, because there exists no sovereign authority in the state of nature, the only authority that qualifies as having commanded the laws of nature is God. Thus because God commands the laws of nature within the state of nature, the laws of nature are rightly said to be laws.

But a closer look at the passage in question shows this interpretation to be wrong. Hobbes says the laws of nature are *not* properly speaking laws—he writes that “men used to call [them] by the name of laws, but improperly.” To be sure the laws of nature *can* be understood to be laws insofar as God commands them, but strictly speaking they are not laws *because* God commanded them. As Gregory Kavka explains, the sentence which refers to God commanding the laws of nature “most likely means ‘When (or if) these rules are viewed in a religious context, as the commands of God, who has the right to rule all things, then they may properly be called or considered laws in that context.’”

While the “conclusions” or “theorems” that are the laws of nature can be considered *as if* they are laws, strictly speaking they are nothing more than “conclusions” or “theorems”.

What is more, if it is true that God commands these laws, Hobbes mentions this only to verify, rather than establish, their unique status as laws. It is for this reason that Hobbes in *The Elements* follows his demonstration of the laws of nature with a chapter

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titled “A Confirmation out of Holy Scripture of the principal points mentioned in the two last Chapters concerning the Law of Nature” (*Elements, EW* 4, 111). In *De Cive*, Hobbes also follows his demonstration of the laws of nature according to reason, with an attempt to show that the laws do not contradict divine law. Hobbes writes “What therefore by reasoning we have understood above concerning the law of *nature*, we will endeavour to confirme the same in this Chapter by holy writ” (*De Cive*, 77). And even in the later *Leviathan*, Hobbes recognizes that the laws of nature are established independently of God’s command because he acknowledges they have been established by his deduction as theorems with no appeal to God’s command. Hence from his early to late texts, Hobbes establishes the laws of nature without an appeal to God’s command.226 F.S. McNeilly, in his *The Anatomy of Leviathan*, agrees. McNeilly thinks it wrong to read Hobbes as Taylor, Warrender, and others do. “It is not to be concluded from [Hobbes’s reference to God] that Hobbes is giving God a supremely important place in his doctrine of natural law. On the contrary, he is dismissing God from it. It is not of the least importance to Hobbes or to his argument to regard God as the author of the laws of nature, or, for that matter, to regard them as ‘properly’ laws.”227 What is more, Hobbes denies that God can be a fit subject matter for science.228 It seems to me this view that the laws of nature in no way depend upon God’s commands is ultimately correct, and it seems wrong to assume that Hobbes is a divine command theorist.229
It also cannot be the case that Hobbes understands the laws of nature to operate on
the same register as natural physical laws, as would be the case on most Stoic
conceptions of natural law. To claim that the laws of nature are laws in this way would
be to transform them into empirical laws, and I have shown that any empirical
interpretation of the concepts functioning within Hobbes’s political science must be ruled
out from the beginning.

Though the laws of nature are not strictly speaking laws in the sense of the
commands of a justified authority, he does admit that they are conclusions or theorems.
To say they are conclusions or theorems implies that they have been concluded from
something. In *De Cive* Hobbes expounds upon this. There he says the laws of nature are
dictates “collected by right reasoning from true Principles” (*De Cive*, 52). The laws of
nature, then, are conclusions concluded from “true Principles”. The interpretation of
Hobbes I have been putting forth accounts for this view. As I understand Hobbes, and as
I will explain in a moment, the laws of nature are theorems concluded, or deduced, from
the primary principles of his political science. In rejecting the traditional approaches to
natural law theory, which is to say those that see natural law as either having a divine or
physical origin, and offering in their place his own treatment of their origin, Hobbes has
ingeniously crafted a novel account of natural law. With Hobbes what we have for
perhaps the first time is an *a priori* account of natural law.

A moment ago I said that Hobbes denies that the laws of nature are laws in the
strict sense of laws commanded by an authority. Nonetheless he chooses to call them
laws. What are we to make of this? As a first approximation, his choice to call them
laws exhibits the formidable hold the natural law tradition has on the thought of political
theorists in the seventeenth century. This is a tradition he is both part of, and at the same time trying to leave behind. I do not think that this is the only reason though Hobbes feels compelled to call them laws. What he has ruled out is the rationale that they are laws because commanded by an authority. What remains a possibility is they are laws in a less strict sense, and for reasons other than having been commanded by an authority.

As I mentioned earlier, Hobbes defines law not as a command of someone in charge, which is how he characterizes the accepted usage of the term here, but rather he defines it in contrast to right. Where “RIGHT, consisteth in liberty to do, or to forbear,” law “determineth, and bindeth to one of them: so that law, and right, differ as much, as obligation, and liberty; which in one and the same matter are inconsistent” (Lev., EW 3, 117). Where right consists of liberty, law restricts or limits that liberty. It makes sense for Hobbes to say laws of nature are laws not because God commands them, but because they restrict or limit the liberty conveyed in the principle of natural right. The laws of nature are established as laws in that they restrict the unlimited enjoyment of natural right possessed by individuals in the state of nature. What (or who), if not God, restricts natural right?

The logic of Hobbes’s argument shows it is the contradiction inherent in the desire for the state of nature which brings about this restriction. All individuals in the state of nature desire their own preservation, as the principle of natural right maintains. And because the state of nature is a state detrimental to the preservation of individuals, it follows that individuals desire what is contrary to the state of nature, namely peace. It is a fundamental contradiction to desire the state of nature and desire one’s own preservation—in short, the laws of nature outline ways in which individuals can provide

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for their self-preservation and avoid falling into contradiction. The laws of nature are thus laws insofar as they outline the ways in which natural right must be restricted if individuals are not to fall into contradiction. In this sense, Hobbes has aligned the laws of nature with the law of contradiction. Hence Hobbes proceeds to call the laws of nature laws, even if they are not laws because they are the commands of an authority. They are laws in a sense corresponding to the law of contradiction being a law. Where the latter functions as a basic law of the science of logic, Hobbes’s laws of nature function as basic laws of his science of politics.

The precise way Hobbes formulates the first law of nature is for the most part the same in *The Elements*, *De Cive*, and *Leviathan*. For instance in *De Cive* he writes the first law of nature is “That Peace is to be sought after where it may be found; and where not, there to provide our selves for helps of War” (*De Cive*, 53). As we have seen already, the rationality of pursuing peace follows from the contradiction inherent in desiring the war of all against all. However, if peace may not be found, Hobbes suggests it is best “there to provide our selves for helps of War.” How has Hobbes arrived at this portion of the first law of nature? It follows directly from the primary principle of natural right and its corollary, the right to preserve oneself.

As Hobbes explains, the first law of nature contains within itself two portions or “branches”. The first portion or branch, he argues, is the foundation of natural law, namely to seek peace, while the second portion or branch is “the sum of the right of nature; which is, by all means we can, to defend ourselves” (*Lev.*, *EW* 3, 117). Because it is rational to preserve oneself, as the principle of natural right maintains, it is thereby rational to seek peace. Related to this, any attempt not to seek peace contradicts the
principle of natural right. But it is only rational to seek peace so long as doing so preserves oneself. If seeking peace in certain instances risks one’s preservation, then it would not be rational, in other words a contradiction, to seek peace in such instances. Any attempt to arrive at peace that is detrimental to one’s self-preservation is contradictory with respect to the principle of natural right. In the end, seeking peace is according to right reason only where one’s self-preservation is achieved.

Hobbes is clear the remaining laws of nature are all “derived” from the first law of nature, in that “they direct the wayes either to Peace, or self-defence” (De Cive, 53).231 The second law of nature, derived from the first, is presented in Leviathan as “that a man be willing, when others are so too, as far-forth, as for peace, and defence of himself he shall think it necessary, to lay down this right to all things; and be contented with so much liberty against other men, as he would allow other men against himself” (Lev., EW 3, 118). The war of all against all results in part from the unlimited enjoyment of the right of nature, where each individual has a right to everything insofar as everything may be considered a means to the end of self-preservation. The second law of nature states the right of nature must be limited by its transfer to another, if peace is to be achieved and the war of all against all ended.232 “For when divers men having right not only to all things else, but to one another’s persons, if they use the same, there ariseth thereby

231 Tom Sorell, in his “Hobbes’s Persuasive Civil Science,” The Philosophical Quarterly 40, no. 16 (1990): 342–51, argues Hobbes’s civil science is not scientific because of any supposed deduction from his mechanistic psychology, but rather is scientific solely because of Hobbes’s deduction of the remaining laws of nature from this first law of nature. I agree with Sorell’s claim that Hobbes’s political philosophy is not scientific because it is derived from his psychology. I am unable to agree with him, however, that the only thing scientific about Hobbes’s political science is the deductive character of the laws of nature. Sorell misses the way in which all of the laws of nature, including the first law of nature, are deduced from the primary principles of Hobbes’s political science.

232 Hobbes believes right can be limited by either relinquishment or transfer. I mention only transfer because here Hobbes has in mind mutual transfer of right. That natural right must be limited by means of mutual transfer follows from his claim that one limits one’s right “when others are so too”. Only mutual transfer of right is consistent, then, with the second law of nature. For the distinction between the relinquishment and transfer, see Elements, EW 4, 88; De Cive, 53–54; Lev., EW 3, 118–119.
invasion on the one part, and resistance on the other, which is *war*, and therefore contrary to the law of nature, the sum whereof consisteth in making peace” (*Elements*, *EW* 4, 87).

Here Hobbes makes explicit the logic at work in his deduction. The unrestricted nature of natural right, along with the principles of equality and scarcity, causes war. This much was established by Hobbes in his demonstration from his primary principles of the state of nature as a war of all against all. I shall return to the other two of Hobbes’s primary principles in a moment, for as I will explain, the other laws of nature that Hobbes deduces deal explicitly with each of them. In his treatment of the first law of nature, though, Hobbes additionally demonstrates that any desire for war contradicts the principle of natural right, and thus that one must desire what is contrary to war, namely peace, if one is not to fall into contradiction. Now in his treatment of the second law of nature, Hobbes has added that the desire to leave natural right unrestricted effectively brings one into contradiction with the principle of natural right. It is not that the principle of natural right is self-contradictory, as if the unrestricted desire for self-preservation were inherently contradictory. Rather, when this principle of natural right is coupled to the principles of equality and scarcity, what results is a war of all against all, and it is the desire for unrestricted natural right within the context of a war of all against all that is contradictory. Conversely, the restriction of natural right causes that which is contrary to such a war, and we have already seen that what is contrary to war, by definition, is peace. It follows the restriction or limitation of natural right causes or produces a state of peace, and this restriction is consistent with the first law of nature from which it has been derived.
Likewise, when the restriction of one’s natural right is in contradiction with the principle of natural right, when the restriction of one’s natural right jeopardizes the self-preservation for which the restriction is intended, in those instances it is irrational, a contradiction, to restrict one’s natural right by transferring it to another. Here the second law of nature exhibits the form of the two branches of the first law of nature, and accounts for the pursuit of both peace as well as self-defense, or self-preservation, when peace cannot be pursued. Though peace is to be preferred to the state of nature, and the restriction of one’s natural right is the means to this end, “if other men will not lay down their right, as well as he; then there is no reason for anyone to divest himself of his: for that were to expose himself to prey, which no man is bound to, rather than to dispose himself to peace” (Lev., EW 3, 118). It is for this reason that peace can only be brought about or caused if all individuals mutually transfer their right, and so guarantee that the transfer of right does not contradict the principle of natural right. “But the act of two, or more, mutually conveighing their Rights, is call’d a Contract” (De Cive, 55). Having thereby demonstrated the link between contracts and the production of peace, Hobbes proceeds to discuss and demonstrate the third law of nature.

In De Cive he tells us the third law of nature “is, to performe Contracts, or to keep trust,” (De Cive, 62) however in The Elements and Leviathan, when treating the third law of nature Hobbes mentions covenants instead of contracts. Covenants are a type of contract where the performance of the contract is to be accomplished in the future (Elements, EW 4, 90; De Cive, 55; Lev., EW 3, 121). What the third law of nature states is contracts must be performed if they are to accomplish what the contracts intend to

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233 A contract where the performance of the contract is to be accomplished in the future Hobbes defines as a covenant (Elements, EW 4, 90; De Cive, 55; Lev., EW 3, 121).
accomplish. Not to perform a contract—in other words for one or both parties to a contract to break that contract—is “to contradict” the reason for which the contract was made in the first place (*Elements, EW* 4, 96). As Luc Foisneau explains,

> Of course, it is clear that there are people who do not honour their contracts, but from the standpoint of the logic of law it is not coherent both to enter a covenant and to break it. The contractual system of exchange is like a logical system in that contractors have to maintain the relevant kind of consistency. The theory of natural law is presented as a set of axiomatic precepts, which confer rigour on the theory of contracts.\(^{234}\)

As we have seen, the contract that Hobbes is primarily concerned with at this point is the mutual transfer of natural right by individuals in the state of nature. As the second law of nature made clear, in the service of producing peace each individual must contract with every other individual to transfer his or her natural right; only then would such a transfer be consistent with the principle of natural right. What this third law of nature states is peace can only be produced if the contract is performed, that is if natural right is limited by means of mutual transfer. To break this contract is to forgo the limitation of natural right and to return not only natural right to its unlimited status, but also individuals to the state of nature given that the state of nature results, at least in part, from the unlimited status of natural right. But because the unrestricted status of natural right within the context of the state of nature is in contradiction with the principle of natural right, and because the state of nature can only be left by means of mutual contract, or better covenant, the latter must be held to and performed by the parties of the contract. “It is a common saying that nature maketh nothing in vain. And it is most certain, that as the truth of a conclusion, is no more but the truth of the premises that make it; so the force of the command, or law of nature, is no more than the force of the reasons inducing

thereunto” (*Elements, EW* 4, 95). The third law of nature has been demonstrated on the basis of the primary principles, produced by means of the arguments leading up to it, and thus established as true according to right reason and the strictures of *a priori* demonstration.

It is worth noting the precise way in which Hobbes has provided an *a priori* demonstration of these first three laws of nature.\(^2\) The first law of nature instructs that peace must be pursued, the second that the way that it is to be pursued is by means of covenants that restrict the unlimited natural right of each individual, and the third registers the necessity of keeping to the covenants. In each case, however, these three laws of nature address how peace is to be produced at the same time as they outline how individuals are not to fall into contradiction with the primary principles of politics. It is a contradiction to desire the state of nature, and natural laws one through three circumscribe how not to fall into such contradiction.

Earlier I argued that the state of nature is caused ultimately by the primary principles of his politics, but more directly by the central passions which cause quarrel: competition, diffidence, and glory. Because the state of nature is directly caused by these causes of quarrel, it is necessary that these causes of quarrel be eliminated if the war of all against all is to be eliminated as well. The remaining laws of nature are devoted to each of these principle causes of war, outlining the ways in which they can be eliminated, and along with it the war of all against all. Laws four through eight deal primarily with the issues that relate to diffidence as a cause of war and deduce ways that this diffidence can be avoided if peace is to be had, laws nine through eleven deal with glory, while laws twelve through fourteen, again as numbered in *De Cive* and *Leviathan*, deal first and

\(^2\) Harrison, *Confusion’s Masterpiece*, 130, correctly acknowledges their *a priori* status.
foremost with the principle of scarcity, and so address the cause of war known as
conflict.\textsuperscript{236} The remaining laws address each of these causes of quarrel in their own way.
Because I am arguing that Hobbes’s political science can ultimately be deduced from the
three primary principles of his politics, it is important that I show to what extent the laws
of nature follow from his primary principles vis-à-vis the principal causes of quarrel.
Hence I shall now show in detail how each law of nature relates to competition,
diffidence, and glory.

\textbf{THE LAWS OF NATURE, CONTINUED.}

As I mentioned just a moment ago, the laws of nature numbered four through eight are
tailored to the principal cause of war Hobbes names diffidence. Taken together they spell
out the means toward the eradication of diffidence as a cause of war, which is at the same
time the means toward peace given Hobbes’s view on war and peace as contraries.
Remember, Hobbes takes diffidence to be a certain type of wariness or fear that one has
of other individuals insofar as these other individuals may be a threat to one’s self-
preservation. Hence diffidence results in a general distrust of those who may be a threat to one’s preservation, and ultimately to anticipatory attacks aimed at eliminating those threats. If peace is to be produced, and the war of all against all avoided, one must eliminate the distrust which causes the fighting linked to the general diffidence of others.

When one turns to the fourth law of nature, one sees Hobbes immediately address
the distrust of others associated with diffidence that is so detrimental to the well-being of

\textsuperscript{236} I agree with Richard Tuck, “The Utopinaism of \textit{Leviathan},” in \textit{Leviathan After 350 Years}, eds. Tom Sorell and Luc Foisneau (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2004), 134, who writes “in general, if one goes through the list of particular laws of nature in chapters 16 and 17 of the \textit{Elements} one finds them mostly concerned with purging men of the passions listed in chapter 9”.
individuals in their natural state. The fourth law of nature states “that a man which receiveth benefit from another of mere grace, endeavour that he which giveth it, have no reasonable cause to repent him of his good will” (Lev., EW 3, 138; Elements, EW 4, 99; De Cive, 66). What Hobbes wishes to emphasize with this law of nature is the necessity of trust, benevolence, and charity as means to peace. What the fourth law of nature essentially contributes to the discussion of the previous laws of nature is the trust requisite for the performance of covenant. Without the bond of trust, peace is unobtainable. As Hobbes explains in The Elements of Law, if this fourth law of nature is not followed, “men will not dare to confer mutually to each other’s defence, nor put themselves into each other’s mercy upon any terms whatsoever, but rather abide the utmost and worst event of hostility; by which general diffidence, men will not only be enforced to war, but also afraid to come so much within the danger of one another, as to make any overture to peace” (Elements, EW 4, 99). Only by implementing this law will peace be reached, for only when there is trust between the parties who covenant will such a covenant be kept to. The transfer of right, and thus the effective limitation of that right, is a risk that can only be taken on by individuals so long as they can trust that the other individuals will also perform as well. Lack of trust follows from diffidence, and diffidence leads to war. Thus the only way the distrust associated with diffidence can be avoided is if the fourth law of nature is heeded.

Hobbes’s most succinct statement of the fifth law of nature is to be found in De Cive: “That every man render himself usefull unto others” (De Cive, 66; cf. Elements, EW 4, 99; Leviathan, EW 3, 138). His clearest explication of this law of nature, as it is with many of Hobbes’s arguments and explanations, is to be found in The Elements of
Law. There he explains that the state of nature is caused, in part, by each individual seeking to accommodate him- or herself (Elements, EW 4, 99). This is an implicit reference to the principle of natural right. It points to the fact that each individual has a number of desires, the most basic of which is the desire to desire, namely the desire for self-preservation.²³⁷ It is the conflict of these desires that leads to the war of all against all. In this respect the fifth law of nature is closely related to the principle of natural right. As I explained earlier, the principle of natural right corresponds to diffidence when it comes to the principal causes of quarrel. The fifth law of nature proposes that peace is obtained there where individuals begin to accommodate other individuals and the desires of those individuals, their interests. “For seeing the causes of war and desolation proceed from those passions, by which we strive to accommodate ourselves, and to leave others as far as we can behind us, it followeth, that that passion by which we strive mutually to accommodate each other, must be the cause of peace” (Elements, EW 4, 99).

The sixth, seventh, and eight laws of nature resemble one another quite closely and so can be treated in tandem. They establish that a propensity for forgiveness, an abstaining from the desire for revenge, and a forgoing of contempt or hatred of others are preconditions of peace, in that order (Elements, EW 4, 100-101; De Cive, 67; Lev., EW 3, 139-140). Hobbes equates forgiveness or pardon of past offences with peace. Contrarily, for one to fail to forgive another person when that other person seeks forgiveness, and thus seeks peace, is the same as to instill diffidence in the other’s mind, and we know that diffidence leads to war. Thus the sixth law of nature is directed toward the production of peace. So too is the seventh law of nature which dissuades individuals from pursuing

²³⁷ It should be kept in mind that this desire to desire includes the desire to desire the enjoyment of things we desire.
revenge for having been wronged in the past. Because revenge is a type of quarrel, a “retribution of evil for evil”, refraining from revenge must be consistent with peace (Lev., EW 3, 140).238 The eighth law of nature similarly produces peace in that it warns against the declaration of hate or contempt of others. This is because “all signs of hatred, or contempt, provoke to fight; insomuch as most men choose rather to hazard their life, than not be revenged” (Lev., EW 3, 140). Because signs of hatred or contempt are a threat, whether direct or indirect, to the self-preservation of individuals, and because they instill a distrust of others, these signs are a spur to war and fighting, and thus their opposite must be pursued if peace is to be sought, as outlined in the eight law of nature.

In demonstrating how laws four through eight prescribe the means to eradicate diffidence as a determinant cause of war, Hobbes has at the same time shown in what way these laws of nature restrict the unlimited enjoyment of natural right. Diffidence, within the context of the state of nature, can only be desired at the cost of falling into contradiction, and hence he has demonstrated that it is rational to act in accordance with the natural laws that extinguish the flame of diffidence. Hobbes has successfully incorporated them within the deductive framework of his politics insofar as he has established their relationship to the principle of natural right

The ninth through eleventh laws of nature also engage one of the causes of war. Where laws four through eight dealt with diffidence as a cause of war, and hence were derived ultimately from the principle of natural right, laws nine through eleven, as numbered in De Cive and Leviathan, deal primarily with the principle of equality, and so

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238 Hobbes does admit that revenge is allowed so long as it is done “for correction of the offender, or direction of others” (Lev., EW 3, 140). By this he must mean that revenge is allowed only if such revenge dissuades others from performing acts that conduce to war. In such instances, then, it must not really be “revenge”, for revenge is termed an evil by Hobbes, and retribution which aims at the correction of others insofar as it dissuades them from war is classified by him as a good.
address the cause of war known as glory. Hobbes’s strategy here extends that which he employed in the previous laws of nature. If he is to give an a priori account of laws nine through eleven he must show the way in which they resolve necessarily the cause of war known as glory.

The ninth law of nature, as presented in De Cive and Leviathan,\textsuperscript{239} states “That every man be accounted by nature equall to another” (De Cive, 68, my emphasis; Cf. Lev., EW 3, 141). Given that the equality of individuals is established by, or postulated as, the primary principle of his politics, it follows that any and all failure to account for, to recognize, or in short to admit this fundamental equality forces one to fall prey to contradiction with the principle of equality. “If nature therefore have made men equal, that equality is to be acknowledged: or if nature have made men unequal; yet because men that think themselves equal will not enter into conditions of peace but upon equal terms, such equality must be admitted” (Lev., EW 3, 141). Though either of these options leads to the conclusion equality must be admitted if peace is to be achieved, the demonstration Hobbes provides relies on the relationship he has already established between the principle of equality and the principal cause of war known as glory. If the individual pursuit of glory contributes to war, because such individuals do not acknowledge equality and thereby contradict the principle of equality, then the contrary of war, namely peace, must be achieved by the acknowledgement of equality: where rejection of the equality of individuals is contradictory, it is according to right reason to acknowledge their basic equality.

\textsuperscript{239} In De Cive, Hobbes numbers this the eighth “precept of the Law of nature” (68). Perhaps he intends precept to refer to those laws of nature derived from the first law. In The Elements, this ninth law is presented as the eleventh law of nature.
Following from this ninth law of nature is a tenth which pertains foremost to the principle of equality, but as well to the principle of natural right.\textsuperscript{240} If the unbridled enjoyment of natural right contributes to war, then peace must be achieved through a mutual restriction of that right by all individuals via covenant. This much has already been shown in Hobbes’s discussion of the second and third laws of nature we took a look at above. It is nonetheless a contradiction, Hobbes claims, for individuals to give up \textit{all} of their natural right. To transfer the entirety of one’s natural right can never be consistent with the principle of natural right. It is a contradiction in terms to suppose that the eradication of the means to self-preservation could ever contribute to one’s self-preservation given that the preservation of one’s self requires some means. Again the avoidance of contradiction is paramount to the logic of Hobbes’s political scientific argument. Because of this “As it was necessary to the conservation of each man, that he should part with some of his \textit{Rights}, so it is no lesse necessary to the same conservation, that he retain some others, to wit the \textit{Right} of bodily protection, of free enjoyment of ayre, water, and all necessaries for life” (\textit{De Cive}, 68). The transfer of right that takes place in covenant is only a transfer of some right, not all right. It follows some right is not transferred and so retained by the parties that enter into covenant for the production of peace.

What the tenth law of nature posits is “that at the entrance into conditions of peace, no man require to reserve to himself any right, which he is not content should be reserved to every one of the rest” (\textit{Lev.}, \textit{EW} 3, 141; Cf. \textit{Elements}, \textit{EW} 4, 104; \textit{De Cive}, 69). Here supplementing the claim that some right is retained in the covenant, and thus is not transferred, is the additional claim that individuals only retain those rights which they

\textsuperscript{240} In \textit{The Elements}, this law is presented as the twelfth law of nature.
are willing to allow other individuals to retain. What the tenth law introduces is the consideration of the principle of equality appealed to in the ninth law of nature (*De Cive*, 69). The tenth law explicitly assures that covenant is not only a mutual transfer, but also an equitable transfer. A quick look shows the status of this equity in the transfer of right is directly addressed in the following eleventh law of nature.

Recall that glory is an important contributing factor to the state of nature being a war of all against all. When some individuals are judged as inferior, others as superior, what takes place is a fundamental rejection of the principle of equality. In an attempt to reassert this equality, individuals attack one another, and war ensues. Again, by outlining the ways in which the eighth through eleventh laws of nature assuage the cause of fighting known as glory, Hobbes has, on the one hand, successfully shown why it is a contradiction to desire peace and yet also desire to judge individuals as unequal. On the other, he has also shown it to be according to right reason that individuals who desire peace also judge one another as fundamentally equal in nature. In so doing, he has achieved an *a priori* account of these laws by linking them to the primary principles of his politics, most notably the principle of equality.

With laws twelve through fourteen, Hobbes extends his previous analysis. These laws pertain to the cause of war classified as competition. Above we saw Hobbes associate competition as a cause of war with the principle of scarcity. Remember, to have individuals equal to one another in power and who are all motivated by self-preservation does not necessarily bring about a war as pervasive as is the war in the state of nature. The missing ingredient here is the finitude of their resources as a cause of

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241 In fact the tenth makes explicit what was already implicit in the second law of nature’s claim one should lay down one’s right “and be contented with so much liberty against other men, as he would allow other men against himself” (*Lev., EW* 3, 118).
fighting. Because it is a contradiction to desire war, it is also a contradiction to desire that one deal with the scarcity of resources in ways that necessarily lead to war. In these laws of nature, numbered twelve through fourteen, Hobbes spells out, at a very general level, how the scarcity of resources is to be dealt with such that peace and security, rather than competition and war, results.

The twelfth law of nature states “that such things as cannot be divided, be enjoyed in common, if it can be; and if the quantity of the things permit, without stint; otherwise proportionably to the number of them that have right” (Lev., EW 3, 142; Cf. Elements, EW 4, 104; De Cive, 69). Given the finitude of resources, and the acknowledgement of the fundamental equality of individuals addressed in the laws of nature numbered nine through eleven, use of finite resources must be considered in ways consonant with the equality already established. This law of nature does just that, “for otherwise that equality can by no means be observed, which we have shewed in the foregoing Article to be commanded by the Law of Nature” (De Cive, 69). Given the finitude of resources, given the equality of individuals, and given the limitation of natural right produced by covenant, this law lays out the possibilities for adjudicating use by listing the only possible means of having equal use of finite resources—of those things that can be had in common for individuals to have common and equal possession of them, and of those resources that cannot be had in common, to have common and equal use of them. A close look at the following thirteenth and fourteenth laws specify how access to those things which cannot be held in common can be distributed such that equality is maintained. In accounting for these laws of nature, Hobbes has shown in what ways they
contribute to peace, in what ways they are tied to the fundamental principle of scarcity, and so in what sense they have been generated a priori.

The remaining five or so laws of nature shift attention to the issue of private judgment. To understand how these laws fit into the deductive structure of Hobbes’s argument, one must recall his definition of the right of nature, or what I have been calling the principle of natural right. The right of nature is “the liberty each man hath, to use his own power, as he will himself, for the preservation of his own nature; that is to say, of his own life; and consequently, of doing any thing, which, in his own judgment, and reason, he shall conceive to be the aptest means thereunto” (Lev., EW 3, 116). Just as each person is motivated by self-preservation, so too does each individual have the right to judge what are appropriate means to the end of their preservation. Hence private judgment, insofar as it is included in the principle of natural right, too is a contributing cause of the war of all against all. In order to avoid falling into contradiction, it is necessary that one must in some way restrict or limit private judgment insofar as it leads to that which it is contradictory to desire, which is to say war.

Perhaps none of these remaining laws are as important to Hobbes’s political science as the sixteenth law of nature: “That both parties disputing concerning the matter of right submit themselves unto the opinion and judgment of some third” (De Cive, 70; Cf. Elements, EW 4, 106; Lev., EW 3, 142). As in the other laws of nature, the demonstration of this law depends both on the primary principles of his political science, as well as principles derived therefrom.

Because an individual has a right to self-preservation, anything may be judged by that individual as a means to the end of self-preservation, and consequently the individual
has a right to that thing. It is this unlimited right to individual judgment that Hobbes now turns his attention to in the sixteenth law of nature. Though the previous laws of nature have been shown to produce peace, Hobbes writes “yet doubts, and controversies would daily arise concerning the application of them unto their actions, to wit, whether what was done, were against the Law, or not, (which we call, the Question of Right) whence will follow a fight between Parties, either sides supposing themselves wronged,” and such disagreement is conducive to war, not to peace (De Cive, 70). This disagreement is correlated directly to individuals possessing an unlimited right to judgment, including a right to judge whether their actions conform to the laws of nature. Hence peace can be produced only if this unlimited right to judgment is limited.242 As already witnessed, right is limited through transfer of that right in covenant. Hobbes goes on: “it is therefore necessary to the preservation of Peace (because in this case no other fit remedy can possibly be thought on) that both the disagreeing Parties refer the matter unto some third, and oblige themselves by mutuall compacts to stand to his judgment in deciding the controversie. And he to whom they thus refer themselves is called and Arbiter” (De Cive, 70). As we shall see in a bit, the groundwork for the institution of sovereignty is laid by this law of nature which outlines the necessity of an arbiter if peace is to be produced. But at this stage we can see Hobbes has rendered perspicuous the relationship between the restriction of private judgment and its ties to the principle of natural right.

The seventeenth and eighteenth laws of nature demand, for the sake of peace, first “That no man must be Judge or Arbiter in his own cause,” and second “That no man be Judge who propounds unto himself any hope of profit, or glory, from the victory of either part” (De Cive, 71; cf. Lev., EW 3, 143). Both of these are laws of nature for the same

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242 Cf. Harrison, Confusion’s Masterpiece, 87.
reason and both establish the impartiality of the arbiter to disputes. This impartiality is really a function of the equality of individuals, postulated by the primary principle of equality, as well as the laws of nature that focus primarily on the acknowledgment of that inequality in the production of peace, namely laws nine through eleven. If an individual were arbiter in his or her own cause, then he or she would be in an advantageous position with respect to the other party to the dispute. For the arbiter to be a party to a dispute, that is to be judge in his or her own cause, is the same as if that individual continued to have unlimited right to judgment. But we have seen already that conflict of judgment is one of the principal causes of war, and to have an individual be arbiter in his or her own cause leads to conflict of judgment, and in turn war. Since it is a contradiction to desire war, it is equally contradictory to desire conflict of judgment. It is the case that “every man is presumed to seek what is good for himselfe naturally, and what is just, only for Peaces sake, and accidentally; and therefore cannot observe that same equality commanded by the Law of nature so exactly as a third man would do” (De Cive, 70–71). The impartiality of the arbiter is required by the necessity of the recognition of equality for the production of peace. “From the same ground followes in the seventeenth palace,” Hobbes tells us, “That no man must be Judge who propounds unto himself any hope of profit, or glory, from the victory of either part: for the like reason swayes here, as in the foregoing Law” (De Cive, 71). And finally the nineteenth law attends to a procedural issue surrounding this arbitration, ensuring, once again, that equality is acknowledged in it. 243

243 The eighteenth law “injoynes Arbiters, and Judges of fact, That where firm and certain signes of the fact appear not, there they rule their sentence by such witnesses, as seem to be indifferent to both Parts (De Cive, 71).
I have taken the time to look somewhat closely at Hobbes’s treatment of the laws of nature in order to show first how these laws have direct ties to the principles of equality, of self-preservation, and of scarcity of resources. Hobbes conceives of war and peace as binaries. To desire war and the things that lead to it Hobbes conceives as contradictory, as an assault on right reason. The laws of nature are then conclusions, rooted in his primary principles, that detail programmatically how to produce peace and eradicate war. By grounding the laws of nature in the primary principles of his politics, Hobbes has succeeded at providing an a priori demonstration of them. This brings me to the second reason I have looked at them in depth. By showing how it is that Hobbes synthetically demonstrates the laws of nature, I have tried to highlight the way in which he provides a novel account of natural law. Rather than base natural law on the commands of God, or on the laws of the physical world, as is the case with many traditional accounts, Hobbes has instead constructed them on the basis of his political scientific principles. Both of these considerations are available only if one rejects the empirical accounts of Hobbes’s politics, and ventures down the path of an a priori interpretation.

TOWARD SOVEREIGNTY

I said at the beginning Hobbes’s first law of nature contains two branches, one branch delimiting the means to pursue peace, and the other branch suggesting the means for self-defense, which is to say prepare for war, if the pursuit of peace is not possible. In fact, because all the laws of nature suggest means to peace, they all are to be pursued in so far as their pursuit is possible. Because the other laws of nature are deduced from the first
law of nature, its structure—a branch which suggests means to peace paralleled by a branch which suggests to provide for self-defense if peace cannot be had—carries over to the other laws of nature as well. All the laws of nature hence are structured such that they contain one branch pointing to peace, another to fighting and self-defense where peace is occluded. “Therefore,” he writes in *Leviathan*, “notwithstanding the laws of nature, which every one hath then kept, when he has the will to keep them, when he can do it safely, if there be no power erected, or not great enough for our security; every man will, and may lawfully rely on his own strength and art, for caution against all other men” (*Lev.*, *EW* 3, 154). If the laws of nature as a whole are to produce peace, then conditions must be such that individuals need not revert to war in order to defend themselves; conditions must be such that individuals can keep the laws of nature and thereby leave the state of nature and its war of all against all. In short, the one branch of the laws of nature tending to peace must be pursued rather than the other tending to war. As Hobbes claims not only here, but elsewhere, these conditions can only be provided by a common power. Already in *The Elements* we see Hobbes write, “consent, by which I understand the concurrence of many men’s wills to one action, is not sufficient security for their common peace, without the erection of some common power, by the fear whereof they may be compelled both to keep the peace amongst themselves, and to join their strengths together, against a common enemy. And that this may be done, there is no way imaginable, but only union” (*Elements*, *EW* 4, 121). This is a sentiment that Hobbes reiterates in *De Cive* as well (*De Cive*, 86-89). In fact it is at the very heart of Hobbes’s political theory. A common power is necessary if it is the case that individuals who are
equal in power to one another, who are all motivated to preserve themselves, and who
find themselves confronted with scarce resources are to live a safe and secure existence.

The reason Hobbes thinks a common power is essential for peace is that anything
other than a common power necessarily amounts to the conditions of the state of nature,
and hence to a pursuit of the branch that leads to war. Hobbes’s characteristically
“either/or” logic again comes to the fore. Just as individuals are either in a state of war or
a state of peace, so too there either does or does not exist a common power. Now what
he does is link these two disjunctive logics together, such that either one is in a state of
war typified by the non-existence of a common power, or one is in a state of peace
typified by its existence. The difference between these two states ultimately rests on the
particularity of judgments and appetites in the state of nature, and the commonality of the
same in civil society. The possession of natural right includes the corresponding right to
judge what is conducive to one’s preservation. Each individual in the state of nature will
be motivated by his or her own appetites and his or her actions governed by their own
judgment. Difference of judgment pertaining to how best to use one’s power, we saw,
contributes to the dangerous affairs of the state of nature. By pairing this with the other
principles of his politics, Hobbes guarantees that this particularity of individual judgment
and appetite lead to conflict. In other words, the existence of such particularity in the
absence of a common power ultimately leads to war. Because any power that is not a
common power, such as that which Hobbes calls the “multitude of men,” is characterized
by this particularity of judgment and appetite, then any power that is not a common
power amounts to a state of war. In addition, if it were possible for a multitude of
individuals and their differences of judgment and particularity of appetite not to lead to
war, which is to say, if a multitude of individuals were able to live in a state of peace without a common power, then from Hobbes’s perhaps oversimplified perspective, one would lack the sufficient reason or adequate explanation as to why common powers do exist. As I read Hobbes, this is, at least in part, what he means when he writes

For if we could suppose a great multitude of men to consent in the observation of justice, and other laws of nature, without a common power to keep them all in awe; we might as well suppose all mankind to do the same; and then there neither would be, nor need to be any civil government, or commonwealth at all; because there would be peace without subjection. (Lev., EW 3, 155)

The supposition here is precluded precisely because of the relationship between particularity of judgment and conflict within the Hobbesian system. Absent any unification of wills, particularity of judgment remains, and particularity of judgment, as it has been set up, engenders conflict. For Hobbes, therein lies the sufficient reason for the establishment of the commonwealth. As we shall see in the next chapter, the work Hobbes has done here to show that a common power is both necessary and sufficient for the production and maintenance of peace lays the groundwork for his rejection of the mixed form of government cherished by republican theorists.

As was demonstrated in the sixteenth law of nature, the unlimited individual right to judgment was something that must be limited by means of covenant if the state of nature was to be left behind and peace produced. Where conflict of judgment, Hobbes thinks, leads to war, consent opens the door to peace. “When the wills of many concur to one and the same action and effect, this concourse of their wills is called consent; by which we must not understand one will of many men, for every man hath his several will, but many wills to the producing of one effect” (Elements, EW 4, 70). As he describes the process here, the consent which procures the common power is one in which a number of

244 See Lev., EW 3, 156-157, where this logic is behind the list of reasons Hobbes provides there.
discreet wills come together, and in so doing, produce “one effect.” Hobbes cautions against any supposed identification between this and a situation where discreet individuals all possess one and the same will.²⁴⁵ This relates to what we just took a look at a moment ago. Were it the case that discreet individuals possessed unity of will, a common power would not be necessary to produce peace and the common power would lose its principle of sufficient reason. Thus it must be the case that the process of consent entails not one will, but “many wills to the producing of one effect.” The one effect that is produced by this consent is the creation of the common power that marks the exit of individuals from the state of nature to a state of peace and security.²⁴⁶

As to how the production of the common power takes place, it is of course by covenant. The specific features of this covenant are derived from what Hobbes has already demonstrated regarding the laws of nature. Being a covenant we know it entails a mutual transfer of right, for covenant is a type of contract, and contract entails precisely this mutual transfer, as was seen in Hobbes’s treatment of the second law of nature. We also know it is against reason for only a few individuals to covenant to erect a common power. As the second law of nature makes clear, the number of individuals covenanted to erect a common power must be great enough that doing so does not risk their self-preservation and thus contradict the principle of natural right. Hobbes is careful not to specify how many individuals is sufficient to produce a common power, but he does state, at a formal level, that however many individuals it does take, this number will be sufficient if and only if “the odds of the enemy is not of so visible and conspicuous

²⁴⁵ Quentin Skinner, “Hobbes and the Purely Artificial Person of the State,” in Visions of Politics, vol. 3 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press), 197, points out that the contrary position was that of the Monarchomachs.
²⁴⁶ On this issue, and how it relates to the distinction between corporatio and congregatio, see Pettit, Made With Words, 70ff.
moment, to determine the event of war, as to move him to attempt” (Lev., EW 3, 155; cf. 
De Cive, 86). There is a sufficient number for the covenant that produces a common 
power when it is safer to be a part of the multitude that is party to the covenant than not 
to be a member. Only then is covenanting to produce a common power an act that is in 
accord with right reason, and only then can individuals act in such a way that they avoid 
falling into contradiction with the principle of natural right.

It is likewise clear from Hobbes’s demonstration of the seventeenth and 
eighteenth laws of nature that the common power cannot itself be party to the covenant 
that produces it. This must be the case if the principle of equality is to be recognized. 
Recognition of the latter is a necessary condition for peace, as the ninth through eleventh 
laws of nature present in a perspicuous manner. “This submission of the wils of all those 
men to the will of one man, or one Counsell,” to wit a common power, “is then made, 
when each one of them obligeth himself by contract to every one of the rest, not to resist 
the will of that one man, or counsell, to which he hath submitted himselfe” (De Cive, 88; 
cf. Lev., EW 3, 157). The covenant is between or among each individual and every other 
individual, to transfer their right, at least in part, to the common power. The common 
power is produced by this transfer and is an effect of it. As an effect of the transfer, the 
common power is not part of or party to the covenant that causes it.247 The covenant is 
between or among an individual and each other individual, not between individuals 
(whether taken singly or as a group) and the common power. And insofar as the 
covenant is a direct product of the laws of nature governing the actions of individuals, 
and the laws of nature are a direct response to the causes of fighting endemic to the state 
of nature, and these causes of fighting extend from the primary principles of his politics,

Hobbes has demonstrated, in turn, that the covenant that produces the common power is also related to the primary principles of his politics.

When individuals come together and covenant, each with one another, to establish and produce a common power, “This done, the multitude so united in one person is called a COMMONWEALTH, in Latin CIVITAS. This is the generation of that great LEVIATHAN, or rather, to speak more reverently, of that mortal god, to which we owe under the immortal God, our peace and defence” (Lev., EW 3, 158). Hobbes mentions in the passage from Leviathan that the multitude “united” in the way just outlined is “one person.” A moment ago, I said Hobbes understands the covenant to consist of a number of different individuals coming together to produce a singular effect, namely a common power. Prior to, and during, their coming together these individuals do not possess unity of will. As we saw, Hobbes understands each individual to possess his or her own will. However, the singular effect that these individuals produce via the covenant is a common power which itself possesses unity of will. The multitude which covenants does not possess unity of will, but the singular effect that the multitude produces does possess unity of will. In fact, it is this unity of will that is the singular effect produced by the covenant.248

This is because Hobbes understands the effect produced by the covenant to be a civil person. In De Homine, Hobbes defines a person as “he to whom the words and actions of men are attributed, either his own or another’s: if his own, the person is natural; if another’s, it is artificial” (De Homine, 83; OL 2, 130). A person, whether natural or artificial, is determined by unity of will. The distinction between an artificial and a natural person comes down to whose will is being expressed. If one’s own words

248 Cf. Taylor, Thomas Hobbes, 94.
and actions are attributed to oneself, then such a person is natural. If one’s words and actions are attributed to another, then such a person is artificial. Where the individuals in the state of nature are natural persons, the person produced by their covenanting with each other is an artificial person, what Hobbes calls in *De Cive* a “civil person,” which is to say “one Person, whose will, by the compact of many men, is to be received for the will of them all” (*De Cive*, 89). The commonwealth thus consists of a multitude of individuals, united in the will of one person whose will stands in for or represents the wills of the individuals who established, by means of covenant, that artificial person. What has been created or produced, what is the product of this artifice is the artificial person of the sovereign.

Quentin Skinner has offered an alternative treatment of Hobbes’s theory of personation. Skinner argues that the majority of scholars have incorrectly interpreted Hobbes’s position on artificial and natural persons, and how each of these concepts relates to the state and sovereignty. According to Skinner, most interpreters incorrectly take Hobbes to hold that natural persons are always those persons represented, while artificial persons are always those persons who are representatives. While some ambiguous passages in chapter 16 of *Leviathan* may lead one to think this, what Skinner tries to show is that a closer inspection not just of that chapter, but of *De Homine* and the Latin edition of *Leviathan*, shows Hobbes to have clarified his position in an attempt to eliminate any ambiguities in its presentation. “The decisive point is that Hobbes himself subsequently makes it clear that his own considered preference is for using the terminology of artificial persons to describe persons who are represented.”249 If it were the case that a simple symmetry exists between natural persons as those represented, on

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the one hand, and artificial persons and representatives, on the other, then Skinner thinks an absurdity follows. “If we adopt Hobbes’s initial proposal and call representatives artificial persons, then sovereigns are artificial persons while states are not. This is bad enough in itself, since states are obviously not natural persons while sovereigns obviously are.” But is this necessarily the case?

Skinner reasons that if artificial persons are understood to be representatives, and it is true that states are not representatives, then it would follow that states are not artificial persons. Skinner’s implied inference in the statement above is that, insofar as states are not artificial persons, they must therefore be natural persons, which he thinks is absurd. Though Skinner is right that it is absurd to view states as natural persons—in which case states would exist in the state of nature, which truly is absurd within the strictures of Hobbes’s political science—it in no way follows from the fact that states are not artificial persons that they need be natural persons. It is equally possible on this account that they are also not natural persons. In other words, it is possible that states are neither artificial nor natural persons, strictly speaking, though nonetheless persons in some other, loose sense. All that is needed is a conceptualization of the person of the state that does not view it as simply artificial or natural.

We should also take notice of the other flaw in Skinner’s inference. Skinner reasons that if artificial persons are understood to be representatives, then it follows that sovereigns are not representatives, which is simply absurd, as sovereigns are by definition representatives. What allows Skinner to make this move is his assumption that sovereigns are natural persons, a view he takes to be obvious. Far from obvious, I contend that it is in fact wrong. If sovereigns were natural persons, then sovereigns

would exist in the state of nature. But if it is absurd to assume that states exist in the state of nature, which as we just saw Skinner is more than willing to admit, it is equally as absurd to think sovereigns exist in the state of nature. Even if it is the case that natural persons sometimes occupy the position of sovereignty, when they act as sovereign persons, they do not act in their natural capacity. Hobbes is quite clear that when sovereigns act as sovereigns, their actions are owned by those individuals they represent; the actions are strictly speaking the actions of those represented, not the sovereign. However, this would not be the case were sovereigns natural persons, as Skinner suggests. If sovereigns were natural persons, then the entire notion of representation, and with it the distinction between author and actor central to Hobbesian authorization, would be lost. Skinner’s claim that sovereign’s are natural persons is antithetical to Hobbes’s very project. What is worse, as David Runciman has pointed out, it is not even the case that natural persons always occupy the place of sovereign. In the case of monarchy this may be so, but when it comes to assemblies, though natural persons are members of assemblies, assemblies are not strictly speaking natural persons either. So for example, in aristocracies, not only are the actions of the assembly not attributed to the assembly, but to those who have authorized the assembly, the assembly itself is not a natural person at all.

In light of this, I think it makes the most sense to understand the sovereign as an artificial person whose actions are owned and authorized by subjects who are themselves, primarily, natural persons. As I understand Hobbes, the person of the state or commonwealth, as distinct from the person of the sovereign, is not strictly artificial, nor

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natural, but rather the result of the relationship between these two, that is between the artificial person of the sovereign and the natural persons who are subjects. As I will be arguing in the next chapter, the state or commonwealth, for Hobbes, exists as the effect of the relationship between the sovereign power and the power of subjects. Hence, the person of the state consists of both the artificial person who is its representative, as well as the natural persons who are represented by this artificial person. Because both natural and artificial persons are parts of the state or commonwealth, Hobbes, depending on context, will tend to characterize the person of the state or commonwealth accordingly.

That the civil person brought into existence by covenant is an artificial person, rather than a natural person, exhibits why Hobbes conceives political science to be an artificial science. Were the sovereign in essence a natural person, then the science which studies it, political science, would also be a natural science. However, because political science concerns itself with an artificial person, an artificial being, political science belongs to the branch of sciences known as the artificial sciences. And as I explained in chapter two, only those sciences which are artificial possess the status of a priori sciences in Hobbes’s classification of scientia. Hence the a priori status of Hobbes’s political science.

THE CONTENT OF HOBBES’S POLITICS, REVIEWED

Having reached this point, it should be clear that Hobbes has accomplished the complete derivation of the commonwealth and its sovereignty, which is to say the sovereign, sovereign power, and the subjects of the sovereign. I have argued that he has done so on the basis, ultimately, of the three primary principles of equality, of natural right, and of
scarcity. This is the same as to say these three primary principles of his politics contain
the generation of the commonwealth and its sovereignty. He has shown how the three
primary principles of his politics cause or generate competition, diffidence, and glory. In
doing so he has shown the principal causes of the war of all against all, and thus
accounted for the genesis of the state of nature. By means of the contradiction inherent in
the desire for the state of nature, Hobbes in turn has accounted for, we explained, the
generation or cause of the first law of nature from which he deduces the remaining laws
of nature. These laws all bear on the principal causes of war. Some laws address
competition, some diffidence, and some glory, all with an eye toward the elimination of
those causes of war, and the cessation of the war of all against all. Though the laws of
nature provide the means to peace, only a common power can ensure the means to peace
are pursued by providing the security necessary for their pursuit. The multiplicity of
wills that contribute to the war of all against all must be transformed into a unity if there
is to be security, and the cause of this unity, Hobbes shows, is a covenant between or
among each individual in the state of nature, and every other individual. Such a covenant
causes, generates, the common power just mentioned. This common power is the power
of the sovereign whose will expresses the unification of the wills of those individuals
unified by means of covenant. The individuals, no longer conceived of as a multitude
now become subjects of the sovereign, and the commonwealth has been constructed from
Hobbes’s primary political principles. This is, we have argued, Hobbes’s \textit{a priori}
demonstration of the commonwealth and its sovereignty.

That Hobbes has accomplished a synthetic demonstration of the sovereign
commonwealth on the basis of his primary principles solidifies that the principles of his
political science are true political principles, true in Hobbes’s own sense of true principles. Remember what I said in the previous chapter about Hobbes’s account of science and the truth value of primary principles, namely that Hobbes conceives as true those principles which can account for the generation of the thing being defined. In explicitly linking the generation of the commonwealth to his political scientific principles, he has demonstrated that they are true political scientific principles because he has delineated the ways in which the principles of natural right, equality, and scarcity account, in the end, for the production of the commonwealth and sovereign power.

That Hobbes grounds his account of sovereignty and the commonwealth on these three political scientific principles carries with it the implication that Hobbes has shown how it is that political science, at least on his conception of it, not only can, but must necessarily stand independent of the natural sciences. Because the three principles of his political science are able to generate the contents of his political science, including the existence of the sovereign commonwealth, in the process of solidifying the truth of his primary principles he has also elucidated the extent to which not only these principles, but the science deduced from them, are true independent of the empirical sciences, and hence why it is that political science maintains an independent existence. In so doing he has justified his typology of the sciences that we took a look at last chapter.

These considerations taken together show that Hobbes’s thought amounts to a fundamentally unique stance on the nature of what it means to think about politics. What Hobbes has created, perhaps for the first time in the history of political thought, is an a priori account of politics. As I explained in the first chapter, the Aristotelian tradition so dominant at the beginning of the seventeenth century was one that had developed an
account of scientific knowledge which associated certainty and demonstrability only with
the speculative disciplines, not the practical or productive. This, I argued, was rooted in
the passive correspondence theory of truth many Scholastics, such as Zabarella, held.

Toward the beginning of the early modern period I said that one sees a shift in thinking
about truth, from a correspondence toward a constructive theory of certainty. The latter
found advocates in many of the central figures of early modernity, figures such as Bacon,
Descartes, Galileo, and Spinoza. But though these figures mobilized a new conception of
truth, they nonetheless located it within the traditionally speculative or theoretical
disciplines. Political science remained in these accounts a discipline not characterized by
certain demonstrable knowledge. However, Hobbes’s account of scientific method
allows him to transform political science from a science capable of only providing
probable knowledge to one characterized by certainty. As a result, Hobbes credits
himself with having produced the first truly scientific, which is to say demonstrably
certain, political science: “Natural Philosophy is therefore but young; but Civil
Philosophy yet much younger, as being no older (I say it provoked, and that my
detractors may know how little they have wrought upon me) than my own book De Cive”
(De Corp., EW 1, ix).\(^{252}\) Hobbes has not merely accounted for the generation of the
commonwealth and sovereignty on the basis of his three primary principles; he has
ultimately reconfigured what political science, in the end, \(is\).

In conclusion, the last chapter detailed how Hobbes understands science to
proceed synthetically from causes to their effects, and why the scientist’s job is to

\(^{252}\) His remarks here correspond to the fact that De Cive was Hobbes’s first published work of political
science. Where The Elements was circulated in manuscript form some time in 1640, it was never
‘officially’ published, though an unauthorized copy was eventually published in London in 1650, eight
years after De Cive was published in France.
demonstrate how it is that the causes bring about the effects. I explained that to do this is to demonstrate and therefore provide an account of the nature of the effect. It is also the case, we learned, that Hobbes understands the causes from which the synthesis proceeds to be parts of the effect’s nature. Political science as a type of *scientia* conforms to this project. Each step of Hobbes’s demonstration is an account of the nature of each thing that is produced by that demonstration as its conclusion. For example, the very nature of the state of nature consists of individuals who are fundamentally equal to one another, each of whom possesses an unlimited natural right to self-preservation, and who have at their disposal an environment of finite resources, these contributing to their quarreling because of competition, diffidence, and glory. This is, in the technical sense with which Hobbes uses the concept, the nature of the state of nature. Each stage of Hobbes’s demonstration can be explained in these terms. Hence in demonstrating *a priori* the commonwealth and sovereignty on the basis of his primary political principles, Hobbes has outlined the very nature of the commonwealth and sovereignty. The sovereign, as we said, is an artificial person, the commonwealth a body created by artificial means, and political science a science of these artifices. As a science of things artificial, it is a *scientia* capable of certain knowledge. In this chapter I have outlined the foundations of Hobbes’s *a priori* politics, a politics of staggering proportions, though one, as we have seen, so often misunderstood.

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253 Pettit, *Made With Words*, 118, writes that Hobbes’s contractualism is neither historical nor heuristic, rather “Its first job in Hobbes is to reveal to us the true nature of the commonwealth and demonstrate that any commonwealth worthy of the name will have certain characteristics.”
CHAPTER 4
THE POWER OF THE STATE

In the third chapter we took a look at the content of Hobbes’s political science. We began with the state of nature, a concept central to Hobbes’s politics, and discussed three prominent interpretations of that concept. Each of these interpretations, though different from one another, shared a common hermeneutic strategy. Each provided an account of the state of nature that understood it, in some cases explicitly and in others implicitly, to be an *a posteriori* concept. I argued that because of their *a posteriori* approach these treatments were inadequate expositions of Hobbes’s philosophical thought. What they failed to do was provide an account of the state of nature consistent with Hobbes’s stance on what he sees as the *a priori* status of political science. I then proceeded to provide a rendering of his politics more faithful to its *a priori* status. It was argued that Hobbes’s politics is derived from three primary principles—the principle of natural right, the principle of equality, and the principle of scarcity. These three principles form the basis of his politics in that they contain the elements necessary to account for the generation of the commonwealth. What is more, each of these principles possesses a specific function. The principle of natural right concerns individuals, in that it establishes the most basic motivation governing their actions. Likewise, the principle of equality concerns the relationships among individuals, in that it establishes all individuals as equally capable of pursuing what they judge to be good, that is, they possess an equality of power. Lastly, the principle of scarcity says that these individuals, who possess unlimited natural right, are all faced with an environment where the resources at their disposal are limited. We
then saw how the principal causes of quarrel, namely competition, diffidence, and glory, each follow from and relate to the primary principles of the politics: competition from the scarcity of resources, diffidence from natural right, and glory from equality. Having accounted for these principal causes of quarrel, I claimed that Hobbes had demonstrated the causes of the war of all against all and thereby deduced from the primary principles the state of nature. More importantly, this meant Hobbes had done so a priori. Our explication of Hobbes’s argument therefore succeeded at an a priori interpretation of the state of nature where other interpretations had failed.

We then turned to the laws of nature and I explained how Hobbes demonstrated each of them, connecting them directly to the primary principles of politics. As I argued, the laws of nature can be understood to address the principal causes of quarrel, outlining the means to exit the state of nature and enter a state of peace by eliminating the causes of fighting. If the laws of nature are to produce peace, a common power is necessary, and so we took a look at Hobbes’s reasoning as to why a common power must be established if the state of nature is to be left behind. A common power is created by individuals who covenant with one another to limit their natural right, thereby transferring at least a portion of that right to a common sovereign power. As a result the individuals become subjects to the sovereign power. The sovereign, its power, and the subjects, these all constitute the parts of the commonwealth. I claimed that Hobbes, having traced the genesis of the commonwealth ultimately from the three primary principles just mentioned, provided an a priori account of the commonwealth and its sovereignty. The significance of this, given our work in the second chapter on Hobbes’s scientific method,
is Hobbes has explicated the parts of its nature, the very form or structure of the sovereign commonwealth as such.\footnote{Cf. Hannah Arendt, \textit{The Origins of Totalitarianism} (San Diego: Harcourt, 1968), 140, and her claim that Hobbes, in his political philosophy, is “concerned exclusively with the political structure itself.”}

In this chapter I examine the structure of Hobbes’s commonwealth in depth and spell out precisely what Hobbes takes it to be. As I shall argue, Hobbes’s conceptualization of the sovereign commonwealth or state is informed by his theory of causation. For Hobbes, effects come about if and only if there is what he calls a “plenary” or “entire” cause that brings them about. As I will explain, a plenary cause consists of both an active and passive cause. When both the active and passive components are present, they constitute a plenary cause, and when there is a plenary cause it is necessary that an effect follow. Hence if either the active or passive causes is lacking, then there is no plenary cause, and hence no effect. Taken on their own, both the active and passive causes are necessary, though not sufficient, to bring about their effect. Taken together, however, the active and passive causes, united as plenary cause, are necessary and sufficient to bring about their effect. As I explain, Hobbes conceives of sovereign power as an active cause of the state and the power of subjects as its passive cause. I show how what Hobbes calls the “requisite accidents” of both must be present if the commonwealth or state is to exist. In this chapter I intend to show how Hobbes’s theory of causal power and scientific method form the basis of this theory of the state.

**THE TRANSFER OF RIGHT**

A primary task of the sovereign for Hobbes, as I argued in chapter three, is effectively to unify the multitude of wills present in the state of nature. Its task is to transform that
multiplicity into a unity, and, in so doing, solve the problems that result from the conflict of private judgments of individuals. The sovereign must produce civil unity if peace and security is to be achieved, and it can only do this if it has the means or capacity to do so.

Hobbes derives sovereign power from a covenant between individuals in the state of nature. Because the conflict of the state of nature results, in part, from the exercise of private judgment and because the right to private judgment is a component of the principle of natural right, conflict can only be avoided so long as individuals give up a portion of their private judgment, and hence give up a portion of their natural right to all things. I would like, first, to explain Hobbes’s identification of right with liberty. Having done this, I will show that, though Hobbes does not identify right with power, as Spinoza does, what is transferred in the social contract is a right to resist the sovereign’s use of one’s power. This thereby provides the sovereign with a right to make use of one’s power.

What is transferred in the social contract is one’s right. Hobbes, recall, defines “right” as the “liberty to do, or to forbear” (Lev., EW 3, 117). If one possesses a right to x, then this is the same thing as to say one is at liberty to x.255 For Hobbes to be at liberty to do something is to be free to do it, and this freedom or liberty consists of “the absence of external impediments” (Lev., EW 3, 116). An individual who is in good health may have the power to move, and hence be able to walk or run a great distance, but if that individual is confined within a jail cell, though the individual possesses the power to

move, Hobbes would say he or she is not at liberty to move beyond the confines of the cell because the walls are external impediments to the bodily motion of the individual. The liberty of a body is therefore determined by factors external to the body, whereas the power of the body is not. For “when the impediment of motion, is in the constitution of the thing itself, we use not to say; it wants the liberty; but the power to move; as when a stone lieth still, or a man is fastened to his bed by sickness” (Lev., EW 3, 196). So while the healthy man has the power to move beyond the jail cell, though is not at liberty to do so, the sick man who is bed-ridden has neither the power nor the liberty to move beyond the cell walls. Both the sick man and the healthy man are not at liberty to move beyond the walls for the same reason, namely that the walls impede their bodily motion, but while the healthy man’s body is capable of movement, the sick man’s is not. Hence for Hobbes the liberty of a body is externally determined, whereas the power of a body is internally or intrinsically determined. On this account, power and liberty are conceptually distinct. Because Hobbes understands right to mean the same thing as liberty, we can say an individual has the right to $x$ so long as there is nothing externally impeding that individual to $x$.

Because of Hobbes’s identification of right with liberty, it follows that right and power are conceptually distinct as well. For Hobbes, an individual may have the power to do something, but this power can only be used if the power is not impeded by an external force. This is the same as to say that an individual can only use his or her power if he or she has the right, which is to say liberty, to use that power. The distinction between right and power is present in Hobbes’s definition of the right of nature. “The RIGHT OF NATURE, which writers commonly call *jus naturale*, is the liberty each man
hath, to use his own power, as he will himself, for the preservation of his own nature; that is to say, of his own life; and consequently, of doing any thing, which in his own judgment, and reason, he shall conceive to be the aptest means thereunto” (Lev., EW 3, 116). Here Hobbes identifies the right of nature as a liberty that individuals possess. It is a right to make use of one’s strength and power in order to preserve one’s life according to one’s own judgment. Given that the right is a right to make use of one’s power, not the power itself, power and right must be different for Hobbes.

In terms of the transfer of right that takes place as part of the social contract, Hobbes tells us,

To lay down a man’s right to any thing, is to divest himself of the liberty, of hindering another of the benefit of his own right to the same. For he that renounceth, or passeth away his right, giveth not to any other man a right which he had not before; because there is nothing to which every man had not right by nature: but only standeth out of his way, that he may enjoy his own original right, without hindrance from him; not without hindrance from another. So that the effect which redoundeth to one man, by another man’s defect of right, is but so much diminution of impediments to use of his own right original. (Lev., EW 3, 118)

Because the individual or group of individuals who are to become sovereign already, as natural individuals in the state of nature, possess an unlimited natural right, this transfer cannot provide them with something they did not already have. Individuals cannot provide the sovereign with an unlimited natural right if the individual who is to become sovereign already possesses an unlimited natural right. Analogously, if you have unlimited access to a city park, and I transfer to you my unlimited access to that same park, I do not really provide you with anything you did not already have. The same holds when individuals transfer their natural right, creating a sovereign. The sovereign is not, strictly speaking, provided any new right.
Instead, what takes place is individuals mutually agree with one another not to obstruct or hinder the sovereign’s unlimited enjoyment of natural right. In the state of nature, because all individuals possess an unlimited natural right, then all individuals possess the natural right to obstruct or hinder other individuals from enjoying their unlimited natural right. Also, because Hobbes conceives of rights as liberties, the possession of unlimited natural right does not incur any corresponding duty on others to respect this right, as would be the case if Hobbes understood rights to be claim rights.\(^\text{256}\) This, we saw, was a contributing factor to the war of all against all. When it comes to the covenant, this transfer of right requires that individuals agree with one another to lay down or forfeit, “renounceth, or passeth away,” their right to resist or obstruct the sovereign’s enjoyment of its natural right. So while it is true that the sovereign is not provided with a new right, it is nonetheless the case that the sovereign is provided with a new environment within which to exercise this right. By forfeiting their right to resist the sovereign’s unlimited enjoyment of natural right, they remove the external impediments or obstructions to the sovereign’s enjoyment of its unlimited natural right.

What does this non-resistance consist of? Hobbes holds that “when a man covenanteth to subject his will to the command of another, he obligeth himself to this, that he resign his strength and means to him, whom he covenanteth to obey. And hereby he that is to command, may, by the use of all their means and strength, be able by the terror thereof, to frame the will of them all to unity and concord, amongst themselves” (\textit{Elements of Law, EW} 4, 122). Remember Hobbes’s definition of natural right. Natural right is the right one possesses to make use of one’s power in order best to provide for one’s self-preservation. The right is a right to make use of a power, not the power itself.

When individuals covenant with one another not to resist the sovereign power, what they agree to refrain from resisting is the sovereign’s use of their “strength and means,” i.e., their power. As Hobbes puts it in *De Cive*, it is “that he refuse him not the use of his wealth, and strength, against any others whatsoever” (*De Cive*, 88). In *Leviathan*, Hobbes treats this issue in terms of benefit. Individuals agree not to refuse the sovereign “the benefit of his own right to the same” (*Lev.*., *EW* 3, 118). Though they retain their power, individuals forfeit their unlimited right to make use of it according to their own judgment. Put differently, this transfer of right occurs when individuals mutually agree with one another not to resist the sovereign’s unlimited right to make use of their own means, strength, and power.

One of the most significant changes that takes place in the development of Hobbes’s political science is his appeal to a theory of authorization in *Leviathan*. Authorization is an essential component of his later account of political legitimacy—sovereign power is legitimated as a result of individuals in the state of nature authorizing an individual or group of individuals to represent them and act in their name, to bear their person. It is “as if every man should say to every man, I *authorize and give up my right of governing myself, to this man, or to this assembly of men, on this condition, that thou give up thy right to him, and authorize all his actions in like manner.* This done, the multitude so united in one person, is called a COMMONWEALTH, in Latin CIVITAS” (*Lev.*., *EW* 3, 158).²⁵⁷ It is clear from this that at least the procedure at play in

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²⁵⁷ Hobbes’s claim that one transfer one’s right on the condition that others do the same has given rise to a large body of literature analyzing it from the perspective of rational choice theory. Much of this work has been devoted to an analysis of Hobbes’s remarks regarding the fool in chapter 15 of *Leviathan*, and the possibility that this is a non-starter problem for Hobbes’s position. For example, see Gauthier, *The Logic of Leviathan*; Hampton, *Hobbes and the Social Contract Tradition*; Kinch Hoekstra, “Hobbes and the Foole,” *Political Theory* 25, no. 5 (1997): 620-654. For an alternative position to that of Gauthier and Hampton, see Gregory Kavka, “The Rationality of Rule-Following: Hobbes’s Dispute with the Foole,” *Law and
authorization is the same as that in the other works. In the social contract, when individual A authorizes individual B to represent individual A, individual A becomes author by giving up the right to self-governance. That is, one forfeits the right to use one’s power in order to preserve oneself according to one’s own best judgment. This right is transferred to the representative, the actor, and this provides the actor with political authority. “So that by authority, is always understood a right of doing any act” (Lev., EW 3, 148). What, in particular, is the right ceded to the representative? Just as in the previous texts, the Leviathan account has it that it is a right to make use of the power of the subjects. Individuals authorize the representative such that,

he may use the strength and means of them all, as he shall think expedient, for their peace and common defence.
And he that carrieth this person is called SOVEREIGN, and said to have sovereign power; and everyone besides, his subject. (Lev., EW 3, 158)

The sovereign, therefore, is authorized by the subjects to make use of their power for the common peace and security.

Hobbes, in a sense, identifies this transfer of right with a transfer of power. This is not because power and right are identical concepts for him, for they are not, but because the right that is being transferred is a right to make use of one’s power. If the right being transferred were not a right to make use of one’s power, but some other right, then such a transfer would not amount to a transfer of power. What this means is Hobbes is able to identify this transfer of right as a transfer of power simply because of what the right being transferred is a right to: the power and strength of the individuals who, as a

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result of this transfer, are to become subjects of the commonwealth. It is in this way that Hobbes derives sovereign power from a transfer of right.

But there is more. According to Hobbes, sovereign power, consisteth in the power and the strength, that every of the members have transferred to him from themselves by covenant. And because it is impossible for any man really to transfer his own strength to another, or for that other to receive it; it is to be understood, that to transfer a man’s power and strength, is no more but to lay by, or relinquish his own right of resisting him to whom he so transferreth it. (Elements of Law, EW 4, 123)

Here we see Hobbes admit that an actual transfer of power is impossible. Instead, the right to make use of that power is transferred to an individual or group of individuals, thereby making them sovereign. What is more, we have already seen Hobbes argue that individuals cannot really transfer to the sovereign their unlimited natural right, for the sovereign already possesses an unlimited natural right. This means that what really must be transferred is a right to resist the sovereign’s use of their power. Read in this way, individuals in the state of nature create a sovereign power by transferring their unlimited right to make use of their own power, and this transfer is accomplished when they mutually agree not to resist the sovereign’s use of their own power for their common peace and benefit.

This event brings about a double transformation. The individuals, having agreed to a pact of non-resistance, thereby become subjects of the commonwealth. At the same time, the individual or individuals who they agree not to resist thereby becomes sovereign of the commonwealth. These two components, that is, the sovereign, on the one hand, and the subjects, on the other, are two halves of the whole that is the commonwealth. Both the power of the sovereign as well as the power of the subjects that the sovereign

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has a right to make use of, I contend, are integral structural components of the Hobbesian commonwealth or state. To make this case, I must now turn to Hobbes’s theory of causation.

**HOBBESE’S THEORY OF CAUSAL POWER**

Hobbes’s conceptualization of the structure of the commonwealth as consisting of both sovereign power and the power of the subjects, that is, their strength and means, is influenced by his theory of causal power. According to his theory of causation, all effects have causes and all causes have effects, however, effects are caused if and only if their cause is what he refers to as an *entire*, or plenary, cause. In *De Corpore* he tells us,

>a CAUSE simply, or *an entire cause*, *is the aggregate of all the accidents both of the agents how many soever they be, and of the patient, put together; which when they are all supposed to be present, it cannot be understood but that the effect is produced at the same instant; and if any one of them be wanting, it cannot be understood but that the effect is not produced. (De Corpore, EW 1, 121-122)*

On this account, an entire or plenary cause consists of both an active cause and a passive cause, what Hobbes refers to here as the agent and the patient.

In order for an effect to be brought about, the active cause, the agent, must possess all of the accidents or properties that are necessary to bring about the effect. So too must the passive cause, the patient, possess all of the accidents or properties that are necessary to bring about the effect. When both the active cause and the passive cause

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262 For an account of Hobbes’s theory of causal power that is in many ways complimentary to my own, see Samantha Frost, *Lessons From a Materialist Thinker: Hobbesian Reflections on Ethics and Politics* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2008), 133-172.
possess the accidents necessary to bring about the effect, they together constitute an entire, or plenary, cause. If either the active cause or the passive cause lacks the necessary accidents to bring about the effect, then there will be no entire, or plenary, cause. An entire cause, then, exists if and only if both the active and passive causes possess all of their requisite accidents. It is for this reason, according to A. Don Sorensen, that “causation,” for Hobbes, “is strictly relational.” An entire or plenary cause consists of the relationship between active and passive causes. When the entire or plenary cause is present, “it cannot be understood but that the effect is produced at the same instant” (De Corp., EW 1, 122). A plenary cause necessarily produces its effect at the moment that the plenary cause exists, and cannot but produce its effect. Conversely, if the accidents of either the active or passive cause “be wanting, it cannot be understood but that the effect is not produced” (De Corp., EW 1, 122).

The language Hobbes uses here is that of cause and effect. The same holds, he thinks, for the relationship between power and act. Acts, just like effects, come about if and only if the power is plenary, and plenary powers similarly require both an active and passive component. With respect to the active component, “whensoever any agent has all those accidents which are necessarily requisite for the production of some effect in the patient, then we say that agent has power to produce that effect, if it be applied to a patient” (De Corp., EW 1, 128). This active power Hobbes identifies with the efficient cause of the act. Regarding the passive component, “whensoever any patient has all those accidents which it is requisite it should have, for the production of some effect in it, we say it is in the power of that patient to produce that effect, if it be applied to a fitting

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agent” (*De Corp. EW* 1, 128). This passive power Hobbes refers to as the act’s material cause. When all of the accidents of the active and passive powers that are necessary to bring about an act are present, that is to say, when both the efficient and material conditions obtain, it is necessary that the act will occur. If, however, either the power of the patient or agent is lacking, or put differently, if either the efficient or material conditions are wanting, then there will not be a plenary or entire power. Without an entire or plenary power, no act will occur.

Ultimately for Hobbes, cause and power, like effect and act, are two words that refer to the same thing. Their difference pertains to a difference of temporal perspective. *“Cause is so called in respect of the effect already produced, and power in respect of the same effect to be produced hereafter; so that cause respects the past, power the future time”* (*De Corp., EW* 1, 127-128). As Hobbes parses these terms here, past plenary causes bring about current effects, just as current plenary powers bring about future acts. Taken together these terms constitute the basic elements of Hobbes’s theory of causal power.

This theory carries with it a distinct modal logic, one that we shall see in a moment has important implications for Hobbes’s theory of the state. As I have explained, it is Hobbes’s position that acts are brought about if and only if there is a plenary causal power capable of bringing them about. Absent such a plenary causal power, no act will take place. What this means, therefore, is that “if the power shall never be plenary, there will always be wanting some of those things, without which the act cannot be produced; that is, that act is IMPOSSIBLE: and every act which is not impossible, is POSSIBLE” (*De Corp., EW* 1, 129). Because all acts require a plenary

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cause, all acts without a plenary cause are impossible, that is they will never take place without that plenary cause. From this it follows that all acts that are not impossible must be possible, and “Every act, therefore, which is possible, shall at some time be produced; for if it shall never be produced, then those things shall never concur which are requisite for the production of it; wherefore that act is impossible, by the definition; which is contrary to what was supposed” (De Corp., EW 1, 129). Hobbes’s believes, fairly uncontroversially, that for an act to be possible, it must not be impossible. Impossible are those acts that lack a plenary causal power capable of bringing them about. Hence possible acts must possess a plenary causal power capable of bringing them about, if they are not to be impossible acts. This uncontroversial position, however, accompanies something much more radical. As we have already seen, when there is a plenary causal power present, “it cannot be understood but that the effect is produced at the same instant” (De Corpore, EW 1, 121-122). Because all possible acts must necessarily possess a plenary causal power capable of bringing them about, and all plenary causal powers cannot but bring about their effects, it follows that all possible acts, for Hobbes, are necessary acts:

A necessary act is that, the production whereof it is impossible to hinder; and therefore every act, that shall be produced, shall necessarily be produced; for, that it shall not be produced, is impossible; because, as is already demonstrated, every possible act shall at some time be produced; nay, this proposition, what shall be, shall be, is as necessary a proposition as this, a man is a man. (De Corp., EW 1, 129-130)

Given Hobbes’s theory of causal power, all acts that are possible are necessary, and all acts that are not necessary are impossible. In short, Hobbes’s theory of causal power has it that all acts be either necessary or impossible. It is this logic, of course, that grounds his determinism.
THE ACTIVE AND PASSIVE CAUSAL POWERS OF THE STATE

Though this account of causation is taken from De Corpore, a work of natural science, the overall perspective organizes Hobbes’s theory of the structure of the state. As A. Don Sorensen has shown, Hobbes’s theory of causation “serves as a logical model for his theory of political power and thus of civil society.”266 By this he means “the generalizations or laws in his theory of causation are structurally similar to those in his theory of political power even though their descriptive contents are different,” that is to say, “the theory of causation in his philosophy proper is isomorphic with the theory of political power in the Leviathan.”267 By this, I understand Sorensen to mean that De Corpore provides us with a general philosophical theory of causation that can be used in, or applied to, both the natural and artificial sciences. Though the theory of causation in both the natural and artificial sciences is the same, that is it is isomorphic, because these sciences study different types of bodies, the content of those theories of causation will be different. Seen in this way, Hobbes’s theory of causation runs parallel to his theory of scientific method. As I argued in the second chapter, De Corpore provides us with Hobbes account of scientific method, and this method, for Hobbes, organizes the natural and artificial sciences, though in different ways given that the former has as its content natural bodies, the latter artificial bodies. I think we can say the same holds for Hobbes’s theory of causation.268

267 Ibid., 282-283.
268 I agree with Sorensen that the theories are isomorphic. He goes on to say that by “logical model” he also means that “the structure of the latter theory,” that is the theory of causation in political science, “is logically derived from” the “theory of causation in his philosophy proper” (283). It is difficult to understand how Sorensen can hold both that the theories of causation are isomorphic with one another, and yet that the political scientific theory of causation is derived from the natural scientific theory of causation, but not vice versa. In line with this, Sorensen writes, “Hobbes’s theory of motion and causation is logically more fundamental than his theory of political power. It has greater scope and range and therefore broader
I have been defending the view that Hobbes’s political science is organized by means of the synthetic method that proceeds from cause to effect, from the parts of a thing’s nature to the thing constituted on the basis of those parts. If one incorporates Hobbes’s theory of causation, this means that the synthetic method traces how an effect or act is brought about from its entire or plenary cause, that is, how the plenary causal power produces its effect. Hobbes’s synthetic derivation of the state is accomplished in precisely this manner. “A CITY therefore (that we may define it) is one Person, whose will, by the compact of many men, is to be received for the will of them all; so as he may use all the power and faculties of each particular person, to the maintenance of peace, and for common defence” (De Cive, 89). A commonwealth, or as Hobbes says here, a city, includes a sovereign power that, by right, can make use of the strength and resources, in short, the power, of subjects for the peace and defense of all. These two parts, I explained, are derived from a mutual transfer of right amongst individuals in the state of nature. When this transfer of right occurs, what is produced is a commonwealth or state, and this commonwealth or state consists of both the sovereign power, as well as the power of the subjects that the sovereign, by right, can make use of for the purpose of providing for their peace and security.

The state, like all effects, exists if and only if there is a plenary cause capable of bringing it about. As I have explained, for Hobbes plenary causes require both an active cause and a passive cause, and each of these causes must possess the requisite attributes or properties to bring about the effect. To say, then, that both the power of the sovereign and the power of the people are necessary causes of the state means they both must

appliability than to the political arena” (283). If this is what Sorensen means when he says Hobbes’s political scientific theory of causation is derived from his natural scientific theory of causation, then it seems to me those theories must be different from, not isomorphic with, one another.
possess certain requisite attributes. When both the active and passive causes do possess such attributes, then together these causes, united as plenary power, are necessary and sufficient to bring about or constitute the state.269

But which of these powers is the active, and which the passive, cause of the state? As I read Hobbes, the power of the sovereign is the active power of the state and the power of the subjects its passive cause. As we saw Hobbes define it a moment ago, the state consists of both the power of the sovereign as well as the power of the subjects, where the former makes use of the latter in order to provide for the common peace and defense. This definition of the state incorporates both its material and efficient conditions such that the power and strength of subjects is the former, the sovereign power the latter. As I explained, Hobbes equates the material cause with the passive causal power and the efficient cause with the active causal power. It follows from this that the power of subjects is the passive causal power of the state, the sovereign power its active causal power.270 But if the state as effect requires that both its active and passive causes possess all necessary accidents, we must make some sense out of the requisite accidents of each of these.

In terms of the sovereign right to provide a state of peace and security, because the sovereign possesses an unlimited right to this end, so too does the sovereign possess an unlimited right to the necessary means.

And because the end of this institution, is the peace and defence of them all; and whosoever has right to the end, has right to the means; it belongeth of right, to whatsoever man, or assembly that hath the sovereignty, to be judge both of the means of peace and defence, and also of the hindrances, and disturbances of the same; and to do whatsoever he shall think necessary to be done, both beforehand,

269 According to Sorensen, “Hobbes’s Theory of Real Power and Civil Order,” 288, “When the sovereign’s means are effectively joined with the subjects’ needs, common power is complete or plenary.”
270 Ibid., 287.
for the preserving of peace and security, by prevention of discord at home, and hostility from abroad; and, when peace and security are lost, for the recovery of the same. (Lev., EW 3, 164)

This is the same line of thinking that Hobbes employed in his account of natural right in the state of nature, where an unlimited right to the end included an unlimited right to the means. Likewise, if the sovereign possesses the right to provide peace and security, then the sovereign must be at liberty to do so, which is to say must not be impeded from providing it. To lack the means to provide for the peace and security of subjects would impede the sovereign’s accomplishment of that end. Hence the sovereign must necessarily possess, by right, the means to the end of the peace and security of subjects.

In Elements and De Cive, Hobbes lists five sovereign rights the sovereign must necessarily possess if it is to accomplish its purpose. The sovereign, he tells us, must possess the right to coerce and punish citizens, the right to wage war, the right to make and abrogate laws, the right to judicature, and the right to magistrates and ministers. The possession of each of these rights affords the sovereign the liberty to use the strength and means of subjects for the end of their common peace and security. The sovereign must possess a right to punish citizens who behave in ways that threaten the peace and security of the state, and this is what Hobbes refers to as the sword of justice. Likewise, the sovereign must be at liberty to use the powers and capacities of subjects to protect the commonwealth from external threats to its peace and security, for instance from other commonwealths, as well as individuals who are not its own subjects. Hence the sovereign must possess what Hobbes calls the sword of war. In addition to this, the sovereign must possess the right to make and change civil laws. Because the sovereign

271 In Leviathan Hobbes lists twelve rights (Lev., EW 3, 159-167). The additional rights there can be understood to be corollaries to the five rights mentioned in The Elements and De Cive, that is, they can be understood to be implied in the five basic rights of sovereignty.
was instituted in order to unify the multiplicity of divergent and discordant wills at the heart of the war of all against all, the civil laws provide the sovereign the means to organize the wills of subjects. In other words, this right affords the sovereign the liberty to provide a program for the actions and behaviors of its citizens as a means toward civil unity. In addition to these rights, the sovereign must also possess the right of judicature. The right of judicature facilitates the application of civil law to particular cases, and where there is discrepancy, provides the sovereign the means to decide whether civil law has been correctly followed or not. This means the sovereign is at liberty not only to determine what the civil laws are, but also whether or not particular actions are legal with respect to the civil law. Lastly, the sovereign must be at liberty to appoint magistrates and ministers. For if the sovereign is unable to adjudicate controversies concerning laws in person, or personally to write legislation, or to attend directly to the swords of justice and war, then the sovereign must have the right to appoint other individuals to do so in the name of the sovereign.

Hobbes’s discussion of sovereign right possesses a single argumentative thread. In each case, Hobbes argues that a specific sovereign right is necessary precisely because without the possession of such a right, the sovereign would be unable to accomplish its intended purpose. In short, the sovereign would not be sovereign without these rights. He also claims that each sovereign right would be of no use without possession of the others. For instance, the sword of justice would be meaningless if the sovereign did not also possess the sword of war. “In vain doe they worship peace at home, who cannot defend themselves against, forrainers; neither is it possible for them to protect themselves against forrainers, whose forces are not united” (*De Cive*, 94). Similarly, to possess the right to
make civil laws, but not the right to judicature, would hinder the application of those laws, and hence negate them as means to the production of civil unity, peace, and security. Hobbes’s position is one where the sovereign must either possess all of these rights or none, and if none, then the sovereign is not, by definition, sovereign. As such, sovereign power must be undivided, that is these five rights ultimately form a unified whole coextensive with the exercise of sovereign power.272

In addition to being undivided, Hobbes claims it is necessary that the sovereign power be unlimited. He contends the sovereign power must be unlimited, for if it were limited, then it must be limited by some greater power. This greater power, in turn, must either be itself unlimited, or limited by some other greater power, and “so we shall at length arrive to a power which hath no other limit, but that which is the terminus ultimus of the forces of all the Citizens together. The same is called the supreme command, and if it bee committed to a councell, a supreme councell, but if to one man, the supreme Lord of the City” (De Cive, 103). Hobbes’s regress argument, as Jean Hampton has called it, shows the sovereign power that is undivided is not itself limited by any power greater than it.273 Sovereign power by its very nature must be absolute, and if it is not absolute, it is not sovereign, but some other form of corporate or communal organization. Undivided in its possession of the above five rights, unlimited by any power greater than it in its enjoyment of these rights, sovereign power is necessarily absolute.

As I understand Hobbes, these five rights are none other than the requisite accidents of sovereign power. We know, for him, a plenary cause requires that both its active and passive cause possess their respective requisite accidents. This means that as

the active cause of the commonwealth, sovereign power must possess certain requisite accidents if it is to be a causal power capable of bringing about the state. Hobbes defines an accident, as we saw in the second chapter, as “the manner by which any body is conceived; which is all one as if they should say, an accident is that faculty of any body, by which it works in us a conception of itself” (De Corp., EW 1, 103). Though all that exists are bodies in motion, the precise way in which these bodies are arranged and structured allows us to distinguish or differentiate the bodies we encounter and hence to identify them. When it comes to the five rights of sovereignty, Hobbes tells us “These are the rights, which make the essence of sovereignty; and which are the marks, whereby a man may discern in what man, or assembly of men, the sovereign power is placed, and resideth. For these are incommunicable and inseparable” (Lev., EW 3, 167).274 Here we see Hobbes refer to the rights of sovereignty as marks, that is, distinguishing features that allow one to discern or identify who the sovereign is. Given that the distinguishing features of a given thing are its accidents, it makes sense to view these five rights of sovereignty as the accidents by which it can be identified. Moreover, to say that these five rights of sovereignty “make the essence of sovereignty” is to say that these rights are necessary features of sovereign power. To lack any of these rights is to lack all of them, and to lack all of them is not to be sovereign.275 Hence the sovereign must possess all five of these rights, these accidents, if it is to accomplish its end. As such, these five rights are best understood as the requisite accidents of sovereign power, the requisite accidents of the active cause of the commonwealth.

274 In De Cive, Hobbes says that these five rights of sovereignty are the “notes of supreme command,” (De Cive, 103) and in The Elements he tells us that they are the “marks, whereby it [sovereignty] may be discerned” (Elements of Law, EW 4, 137).
If it is true that the state or commonwealth, as effect, requires its active cause to possess these requisite attributes, it is equally true that it requires its passive cause to possess its respective requisite attributes; for if either active or passive cause is lacking its requisite attributes, the commonwealth or state will lack its plenary or entire cause, and all effects, we know, require a plenary or entire cause. We must make some sense, then, of the requisite attributes of the passive cause of the state or commonwealth.

When individuals in the state of nature cede their right to the sovereign, it is to the end that the sovereign can use their strength and power to provide for their common peace and safety. As I explained in the third chapter, it would contradict the principle of natural right for individuals to create a sovereign if doing so would be a threat to their self-preservation. Hence it is according to right reason that they transfer their right to the sovereign only so long as doing so does not threaten their self-preservation, which is to say so long as doing so provides them with a peaceful and secure existence. In other words, for Hobbes the state is predicated upon the notion that individuals are provided with a safe and peaceful existence.

Hobbes’s stance on what counts as a safe and peaceful existence may come as something of a surprise.\textsuperscript{276} Hobbes writes “But by safety must be understood, not the sole preservation of life in what condition soever, but in order to its happines. For to this end did men freely assemble themselves, and institute a government, that they might, as much as their humane condition would afford, live delightfully” (\textit{De Cive}, 158). In this passage it is evident that Hobbes holds that individuals create a state not merely in order that they may live, but that they live well. They do so in order that they may live a happy

or felicitous existence, one that is delightful. Hobbes’s conception of felicity, or happiness, is distinctly Epicurean rather than eudaemonist. As he defines it in *Leviathan*, felicity is “Continual success in obtaining those things which a man from time to time desireth, that is to say, continual prospering” (*Lev.*, *EW* 3, 51). Felicity for Hobbes is thus a state accompanied both by sensual pleasure and mental joy, and includes a life of abundance and ease (*Elements of Law*, *EW* 4, 34; cf. *Lev.*, *EW* 3, 86). Individuals create a state in order to live a quality of life not obtainable in the state of nature. It is, then, contrary to right reason for individuals to desire to live in the state of nature not simply because it threatens the bare existence of individuals, but also because it threatens their happiness. As such, it is according to right reason that individuals create a sovereign power in order to provide them with what was lacking, even impossible, in the state of nature, and so it is necessary that, as members of the commonwealth, they be provided with a safe, secure, and felicitous existence.

As we discussed in chapter two and returned to earlier in this chapter, Hobbes understands accidents to be certain features of bodies that allow us to distinguish them from other bodies, that is, they are certain marks by which we can conceptualize or differentiate the bodies we encounter, and hence identify them. I take the safety, security, and felicity of subjects to be the requisite accidents of the passive cause of the commonwealth or state. To say the requisite accidents of subjects are their safety, security, and felicity is to say that these are the marks by which we can distinguish subjects from mere individuals in the state of nature. This means that when individuals mutually agree with one another to transfer their right, they do this in order to modify

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themselves such that they will possess these accidents, accidents difficult if not
impossible to possess in the middle of a war of all against all.\textsuperscript{278} If individuals are to be
subjects, they must necessarily possess these accidents, that is, they must have a safe,
secure, and felicitous existence. Just as the state or commonwealth necessarily requires
that the sovereign possess five absolute rights, so too does it require that its subjects be
afforded safe, secure, and felicitous lives.

This puts us in a position to grasp how the requisite accidents of both the active
and passive causes of the commonwealth relate to one another—that is how the five
rights of sovereignty correspond to the safety, security, and felicity of subjects, such that
taken together, they constitute the entire or plenary cause of the commonwealth or state.
Remember, Hobbes tells us that both the active and passive causes of the commonwealth
must necessarily possess all of their requisite accidents, for if either the active or passive
cause lacks its requisite accidents, then so too does the commonwealth or state lack its
entire or plenary cause. It is also the case that active and passive causes must be
consistent with one another if they are to coexist as two halves of a plenary or entire
cause. This requires that the five rights of sovereignty exist in harmony with the safety,
security, and felicity of subjects if there is to be a commonwealth or state. Hobbes
orchestrates this harmony through his treatment of the duties of the sovereign and the
corresponding obligations of subjects.\textsuperscript{279}

Hobbes distinguishes between right and the enjoyment or exercise of right, and it
is Hobbes’s view that with the possession of sovereign right comes certain sovereign
duties that pertain to its exercise (\textit{De Cive}, 156-157). Because individuals mutually agree

\textsuperscript{278} J. Judd Owen, “The Tolerant Leviathan: Hobbes and the Paradox of Liberalism,” \textit{Polity} 37, no. 1

\textsuperscript{279} Cf. Morrow, \textit{A History of Political Thought}, 262.
with one another to transfer their right to the sovereign to the end that the sovereign
provides them with a safe, secure, and peaceful existence, the sovereign possesses a duty
to promote this for them. In the Elements we are told,

For the duty of a sovereign consisteth in the good government of the people. And
even though the acts of sovereign power be no injuries to the subjects who have consented to the same by their implicit wills, yet when they tend to the hurt of the
people in general, they be breaches of the law of nature, and of the divine law;
and consequently, the contrary acts are the duties of sovereigns, and required at
t heir hands to the utmost of their endeavour, by God Almighty, under the pain of
eternal death. (Elements of Law, EW 4, 213)

I argued in the third chapter that Hobbes’s account to natural law is not theistic, but is
instead derived from the three primary principles of his political science, and Hobbes’s
remarks regarding God here are, for the same reasons, ancillary to the argument he is
putting forth. In this passage Hobbes tells us that “the good government of the people” is
the sovereign’s duty, and that this duty is derived from natural law. For sovereign power
to be used in ways that promote the good government of the people is for it to be used in
ways that are consistent with natural law. Put differently, when sovereign power is
employed for the “good government of the people,” then it is used according to right
reason. By contrast, to use sovereign power in ways inconsistent with the “good
government of the people” is to use it in ways contrary to the laws of nature, and hence in
ways that are contrary to right reason. The sovereign has a duty, then, to exercise
sovereign power, and hence enjoy sovereign right, in ways that promote the “good
government of the people."

The good government of the people, Hobbes claims, is “contained in this
sentence, Salus populi suprema lex. By which must be understood, not the mere
preservation of their lives, but generally their benefit and good. So that this is the general
law for sovereigns, *That they procure to the uttermost of their endeavour, the good of the people*” (*Elements of Law, EW 4, 214*). Hobbes identifies the good government of the people with “procurement” of their good, and it follows from this that the sovereign has a duty to procure the good of the people. Any use of sovereign power that does not procure the good of the people is contrary to the purpose of sovereignty, is contrary to the laws of nature, and thus is not according to right reason.

The *salus populi* that it is the duty of the sovereign to procure is not only their basic biological existence, but instead “generally their benefit and good,” which is to say their temporal good. “For the temporal good of people, it consisteth in four points: 1. Multitude: 2. Commodity of living: 3. Peace amongst themselves: 4. Defence against foreign power” (*Elements of Law, EW 4, 214*). The sovereign has a duty to “increase the people” in number, that is to sustain a healthy number of subjects, to promote their “liberty and wealth,” and to provide for their safety against both internal and external threats (*Elements of Law, EW 4, 214, 215*). A close inspection of what Hobbes has to say about each of these components of the temporal good of the people makes it clear that their temporal good is to be identified with what I before referred to as their peace and security, where security is to be understood in the robust sense that includes their felicity. This view, expressed in the *Elements*, is one that appears again in *De Cive*, where Hobbes writes

> The benefits of subjects respecting this life only, may be distributed into four kindes. 1. That they may be defended against forraign enemies. 2. That Peace be preserved at home. 3. That they be enrich’t as much as may consist with publique security. 4. That they enjoy a harmelesse liberty; For supreme Commanders can conferre no more to their civill happinesse, then that being preserved from forraign and civill warres, they may quietly enjoy that wealth which they have purchased by their own industry. (*De Cive*, 159)
Though Hobbes presents the components of the good or benefit of the people in a
different order, all of the components that are present in the *Elements* are present here as
well. Moreover, in this passage from *De Cive* Hobbes makes it explicit that this temporal
good is to be identified with their security *qua* civil happiness, thereby confirming my
association of them. This view continues to find resonance in *Leviathan*, where we see
Hobbes write,

> THE OFFICE of the sovereign, be it a monarch or an assembly, consisteth in the
> end, for which he was trusted with the sovereign power, namely the procuration
> of the safety of the people; to which he is obliged by the law of nature, and to
> render an account thereof to God, the author of that law, and to none other but
> him. But by safety here, is not meant a bare preservation, but also all other
> contentments of life, which every man by lawful industry, without danger, or hurt
to the commonwealth, shall acquire to himself. (*Lev.*, *EW* 3, 322)

Thus, in each iteration of his political philosophy, Hobbes defends the view that the
sovereign has a duty to promote the good of the people, where the good of the people is
understood as their safety, security, and felicity.  

> It would be a mistake to assume that, for Hobbes, because the sovereign possesses
a duty to procure the safety, security, and felicity of subjects, the sovereign therefore
*lacks* the right *not* to procure such things. Given the absolute nature of sovereign right, it
is completely up to the sovereign’s judgment as to how best to use its power. Because
Hobbes defines justice and injustice in terms of adherence and violation of civil law, and
because the sovereign is not subject to civil law, but is instead its source, nothing the
sovereign does, including things which compromise or eradicate the peace, security, and
felicity of subjects, is, strictly speaking, unjust. As such, nothing the sovereign does can
be construed as an injury to subjects, in Hobbes’s technical sense of the term.  

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sovereign’s duties stem from natural law, not from any obligations that obtain with respect to subjects.²⁸² Given this, possession of absolute sovereign right requires that the sovereign have the right not to use its power in ways that promote the safety, security, and felicity of subjects. This is a point to which I will return in a moment.

Just as possession of sovereign right carries with it corresponding duties that pertain to the exercise of that right, so too does the transfer of right that forms the basis of the social contract create certain duties or obligations on the part of subjects. Earlier, I explained that this transfer of right takes place when individuals mutually agree with one another not to resist the sovereign’s use of their strength and means, their power. “It followeth therefore, that no man in any commonwealth whatsoever, hath right to resist him, or them, to whom they have transferred this power coercive, or (as men use to call it) the sword of justice, supposing the not-resistance possible. For… covenants bind but to the utmost of our endeavour” (Elements of Law, EW 4, 130). When individuals mutually agree with one another not to resist the sovereign’s use of their power, they at the same time become bound, that is obligated, not to resist the sovereign’s use of their power. Sovereign right, recall, is predicated upon this non-obstruction. This means that subjects, in turn, have a duty “to do those actions, which the said man or council shall command them to do, and to do no action which he or they shall forbid, or command them not to do” (Elements of Law, EW 4, 122). Hence, as a result of the transfer of right that creates sovereign power, subjects incur a duty not to resist the sovereign’s use of their power to the end of producing a state of peace and security, and this includes both refraining from obstruction, as well as active participation in the form of compliance.

It is important to notice that Hobbes places a condition on this duty or obligation of non-resistance. In the passage just cited from the *Elements*, he says the mutual agreement not to resist the sovereign power binds to the extent that the non-resistance is *possible*. As we have seen, the modal logic of Hobbes’s conception of causal power has it that all possibles are necessary, and all non-necessaries are impossible. With respect to the issue at hand, it follows that the mutual agreement of non-resistance binds to the extent that the non-resistance is necessary, and the resistance not possible. In short, subjects have a duty to obey the sovereign so long as their resistance is impossible.

In Hobbes’s discussion of the things that lead to the dissolution of the commonwealth, one finds his views regarding the factors that contribute to the possibility, and hence necessity, of resistance on the part of subjects. It is here, I think, that one can also extrapolate what determines the impossibility of said resistance. According to him, there are three factors that lead to the dissolution of the commonwealth: discontent on the part of subjects, the belief that resistance on their part is justified, and the hope that resistance or rebellion will succeed. “Without these, discontent, pretence, and hope, there can be no rebellion: and where the same are all together, there wanteth nothing thereto, but a man of credit to set up the standard, and to blow the trumpet” (*Elements of Law, EW* 4, 201). Each of these is a necessary condition of rebellion, though the most fundamental of these is discontent on the part of subjects, as the other two conditions are of significance on the condition that there is discontent among the populace.

In the *Elements*, Hobbes tells us discontent can take both a bodily as well as mental form (*Elements of Law, EW* 4, 201). In *De Cive*, Hobbes associates this discontent
with poverty, broadly construed. “There is nothing more afflicts the mind of man then
*Poverty*, or the *want* of those things which are necessary for the preservation of life, and
honour” (*De Cive*, 152). When subjects are discontent and their lives impoverished,
when they feel as though they have a right to resist and the means to do so, then rebellion
against the state becomes a possibility. Without discontent, however, pretense of right
and hope of success will lead to nothing. Thus discontent or unhappiness among subjects
is the *causa sine qua non* of rebellion (*De Corp.*, *EW* 1, 121). But “as long as a man
thinketh himself well, and that the present government standeth not in his way to hinder
his proceeding from well to better, it is impossible for him to desire the change thereof”
(*Elements of Law*, *EW* 4, 200). Hobbes here evokes his definition of felicity or happiness
as “*Continual success* in obtaining those things which a man from time to time desireth,
that is to say, continual prospering” (*Lev.*, *EW* 3, 51). What Hobbes is saying is that so
long as individuals are felicitous, which is to say secure in the robust sense we outlined
earlier, it is impossible that they have the desire to rebel against the state. If, however,
their existence is not safe or felicitous, in other words if they are discontent, then
rebellion thereby becomes possible.\(^{283}\) Again, because of Hobbes’s identification of
possibility with necessity, this is the same as to say that if the existence of subjects is not
safe or felicitous, then it is *necessary* that rebellion shall occur, and the commonwealth
dissolve.\(^{284}\)

\(^{283}\) According to Sreedhar, *Hobbes on Resistance*, 142, “a subject’s condition is insecure (or unprotected) if,
(1) he has reasonable cause to fear violence at the hands of others, or (2) he lacks one or more of the basic
necessities of life.” I agree with Sreedhar that these, in general, are the conditions, but I disagree with her
as to what these basic necessities of subjects are. For Sreedhar, these merely include food, water, air, and
medicine. As I have shown, this list ought also to be extended to include their felicity.

\(^{284}\) Cf. Sorell, *Hobbes*, 118, “By making themselves subject to one judgment and one will—that of the
person to whom they right of self-governance is transferred—they do more than minimize the risk of
contention: they rule out the possibility of contention.” See also Hampton, *Hobbes and the Social Contract
Tradition*, 199, 201.
Read in this way, Hobbes’s remarks regarding the limits and extent of the obedience of subjects become clear. Hobbes claims that individuals agree to a mutual pact of non-resistance, but do so only to the extent that this non-resistance is possible. Put differently, individuals agree to a mutual pact of non-resistance so long as the non-resistance is necessary, and the resistance impossible. As I have just explained, however, Hobbes understands resistance to be impossible if subjects are provided with a safe and felicitous existence. Conversely, the possibility of the non-resistance of subjects is guaranteed if and only if they lead safe and felicitous lives. It follows from this that subjects have a duty to obey, and not resist, the sovereign so long as they are provided with safe and felicitous lives.285 “How far therefore in the making of a commonwealth, man subjecteth his will to the power of others, must appear from the end, namely, security” (Elements of Law, EW 4, 129). To take away the condition of their non-resistance is ultimately to take away the condition of their obedience, and according to Leviathan, “Take away in any kind of state, the obedience, and consequently the concord of the people, and they shall not only not flourish, but in short time be dissolved” (Lev., EW 3, 326).286

When one compares the duties pertaining to the exercise of sovereign right with the obligations on the part of subjects, it becomes apparent how both the active and passive causes of the commonwealth or state come to coexist with one another as the latter’s plenary or entire cause. The sovereign, as I have explained, has the duty to provide for the safety and felicity of subjects. Though the sovereign has every right not

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285 It could be objected at this point that at the most subjects are obligated insofar as the sovereign provides them with simply the possibility of safe and felicitous lives. If one holds to Hobbes’s modal logic, the possibility of safe and felicitous lives implies its necessity.

286 As Hobbes puts it in De Cive, “without obedience, the Cities Right would be frustrate, and by consequence there would be no City constituted” (De Cive, 98).
to do so, Hobbes holds that it would be contrary to right reason for the sovereign not to. Likewise, subjects possess the obligation not to resist the sovereign’s use of their power. This obligation, however, binds only so long as their non-resistance is possible and their resistance impossible. This, as we have seen, is determined by whether or not their existence is safe and felicitous. It follows from this that subjects have a duty not to resist the sovereign only so long as the sovereign exercises sovereign right according to sovereign duty. In other words, subjects have a duty to obey the sovereign only so long as the sovereign procures their safety and felicity.287

As I mentioned earlier, though the sovereign has a duty to exercise its right in order to procure the safety, security, and felicity of subjects, it has every right not to, and I said that this was something to which I would return. Because sovereign right is absolute, the sovereign has every right to use its power as it sees fit, including in ways that do not procure, even compromise or eliminate, the safety, security, and felicity of subjects. Given what we have seen, we now know that for the sovereign to exercise its absolute right contrary to its duty, however, is to use sovereign power in a way that eradicates the obligations of subjects not to resist the sovereign power. In other words, when the sovereign exercises sovereign right contrary to its duty, doing so thereby eliminates the obligations of subjects not to resist, and hence makes it possible, and thus necessary, that subjects resist, even rebel against, that power. So though the sovereign has every right to use its power contrary to its duty, when it does so, it is necessary that subjects shall resist or rebel. What Hobbes has demonstrated is if and only if the sovereign exercises sovereign right according to its duty will resistance and rebellion on the part of subjects be impossible.

This puts us in a position to understand precisely how sovereign power and the power of subjects relate to one another as active and passive causes of the commonwealth or state. I have argued that sovereign power is the active cause of the state or commonwealth, the power of subjects its passive cause. According to Hobbes’s theory of causal power, both active and passive causes must possess certain requisite attributes if they are to form an entire or plenary cause capable of bringing about their effect. As I understand Hobbes, the requisite accidents of the active cause of the state are the five absolute rights of sovereignty, whereas the requisite accidents of the passive cause of the state are the safety, security, and felicity of subjects. Both must be present if the state or commonwealth is to exist, for if either the active or passive cause of the state is to lack any of its requisite attributes, then so too will the state lack an entire or plenary cause. I have said that this entails the active cause of the state and its requisite attributes must coexist with the passive cause of the state and its requisite attributes—the five rights of sovereignty must coexist with the safety, security, and felicity of subjects. It seems to me the only way this is possible is if the sovereign exercise sovereign right in such a way that the safety, security, and felicity of subjects is actually produced, for if the sovereign were to exercise sovereign right contrary to the safety, security, and felicity of subjects, this would eliminate the requisite accidents of the passive cause of the commonwealth or state. This is because the safety, security, and felicity of subjects are the requisite accidents of the passive cause of the state. What is more, we have seen that Hobbes’s position is that subjects are obliged not to resist the sovereign power only to the extent that the sovereign power provide them with a safe, secure, and felicitous existence. As soon as sovereign right is exercised contrary to their safety, security, and felicity, the
obligations of subjects cease to bind, and we know that for Hobbes to dissolve the obligations of subjects is to dissolve the state or commonwealth. In other words, it is impossible that the state or commonwealth exist so long as the sovereign exercise its absolute right in ways contrary to its duty. Hobbes’s theory of causal power, when transposed to the terrain of his political theory, has it that the state or commonwealth will exist if and only if the sovereign exercise its absolute power in accordance with its duty, that is in accordance with the procurement or production of the requisite accidents of the passive cause of the commonwealth, that is the safety, security, and felicity of subjects.

It may be objected, however, that the reading I have provided is incompatible with Hobbes’s doctrine of absolutism, arguably the defining feature of his political science. Jean Hampton, for instance, argues Hobbes’s treatment of the obligation of subjects compromises the absoluteness of sovereign power. Because Hobbes holds that subjects are obliged to obey the sovereign power only so long as the sovereign provides for their safety and security, it follows that their obligation is dependent upon this provision, and hence conditional. This conditional obedience, Hampton claims, in turn renders the power of sovereignty conditional. As conditional, sovereignty is not, then, absolute. In other words, Hobbes’s views regarding the scope of the obedience of subjects is incompatible with his views regarding the absolute nature of sovereign power—either sovereign power must be absolute, in which case the obedience of subjects is necessarily unconditional, or the obedience of subjects is conditional, and hence sovereign power is not absolute. Hobbes’s political science mistakenly tries to have it both ways.

Objections such as Hampton’s, far from jeopardizing the reading I have
developed in this chapter, in fact highlight the importance, even necessity, of reading
Hobbes’s stance on absolutism as having been informed by his accounts of scientific
method and causal power. As we have seen, the absolute nature of the sovereign is in no
way compromised by the conditions that delimit the obedience of subjects. According to
Hobbes’s theory of causal power, it is entirely possible for an active cause to possess its
requisite attributes without a corresponding passive cause possessing its requisite
attributes, that is, it is thoroughly possible for the sovereign to exercise its absolute right
in ways that eliminate the safety and felicity of subjects. I have argued that when this
occurs, the conditions under which subjects are obliged to obey the sovereign no longer
obtain, and resistance thereby becomes possible, and hence necessary. It is clear, then,
that absolutism and the obedience of subjects, though intimately related, are, for Hobbes,
conceptually distinct. In this, I agree with Sreedhar who writes “unlike many absolutists,
Hobbes does not think that absolute sovereignty requires absolute obedience.”289 Though
the obedience of subjects is conditional upon the sovereign’s maintenance of their safety
and security, the absoluteness of sovereignty is not conditional, strictly speaking, upon
the obedience of subjects.

The upshot of the approach I have developed is that it uncovers exactly how this
is so. Moreover, it accounts for how, though the absolute power of the sovereign is not
conditional, the power of the state or commonwealth is. Though it is possible for an
active cause to possess its requisite accidents while its corresponding passive cause does
not, it is not possible for this active cause to bring about its effect without its
corresponding passive cause also in possession of its respective requisite accidents. The

state or commonwealth requires that both its active and passive causal parts possess their requisite accidents, and this includes, as I have explained, the conditions under which the obedience of subjects holds. The state or commonwealth exists, as effect, only if conditions are such that subjects are obliged to obey the sovereign, and this, as we have seen requires that they be provided with a safe, secure, and felicitous existence.

It may nevertheless be the case that this displaces the issue raised by Hampton to another register. Rather than the problem being, as Hampton thinks it is, that the conditional obedience of subjects limits the power of sovereignty, it is nonetheless the case, the objection would run, that my reading forces the power of the state or commonwealth to be limited, and hence not absolute, insofar as it demands sovereign power be wielded in such a way as to procure the safety, security, and felicity of subjects. This would be just as worrisome, for Hobbes expressly declares that the power of the state or commonwealth is absolute, which is to say unlimited (Lev., EW 3, 201; De Cive, 103).

This version of the objection, though, fails to take into proper consideration the varied ways in which a thing, for Hobbes, can be limited. In one sense, something can be limited by some external agent or force. This can be seen in Hobbes’s definition of freedom as it is found in Leviathan. “LIBERTY, or FREEDOM, signifieth, properly, the absence of opposition; by opposition, I mean external impediments of motion; and may be applied no less to irrational, and inanimate creatures, than to rational” (Lev., EW 3, 196). For example, water is limited in this sense when it is bounded by something else, for instance, “whilst it is kept in by banks, or vessels, that otherwise would spread itself into a larger space” (Lev., EW 3, 196). This is the sense of “limitation” at work in
Hobbes’s account of the absolute nature of the state. The state, insofar as it is not dependent upon any other state, is at liberty to act according to its own judgment (Lev., EW 3, 201). It is, of course, the sovereign whose judgment represents the judgment of the state on these matters, insofar as the sovereign is its active cause, but it is the state, Hobbes says, that is unlimited in this sense. This means that the state is absolute insofar as its power to act is not obstructed, is not limited, by any external agent or force, such as other commonwealths. Let us, following Hobbes, call this form of limitation (or lack thereof in the case of the state) “opposition.”

In another sense, though, a thing can be limited intrinsically or internally. This type of limitation arises from the very nature of the thing concerned, and is thus a product of its very constitution. There are, for example, certain things that water can and cannot do, and this because of its very nature. Because it is made of hydrogen and oxygen, arranged in a specific way, water is bound to interact with other substances in a particular manner but not others. This limitation is inherent in its very constitution, which is to say “the impediment is in the nature of the water and intrinsical” (Liberty, Necessity, Chance, EW 5, 368; cf. Lev., EW 3, 196). Where the external limitation of a thing we have called “opposition,” let us call this intrinsic or internal limitation of a thing “restriction.”

When it comes to the state, I have argued that its existence is conditional upon sovereign right being exercised in such a way that the safety, security, and felicity of subjects is produced, given that these are the requisite accidents of both the active and passive causes of the state. Insofar as its existence is not unconditional, but is instead conditioned by the parts that constitute its very nature, it follows that the state is limited. However, because this limitation stems from the very nature of the state, rather than from
an external source, it would be incorrect to conceive of this limitation in terms of opposition. Rather, it is best understood as a form of intrinsic or internal limitation, that is to say, it is best understood as a form of restriction.

Distinguishing between two ways in which a thing can be limited provides one the means to grasp in what manner the Hobbesian state is absolute. While the state is not opposed by any power or force external to it, it is nonetheless restricted by its very nature (De Cive, 103). This distinction allows Hobbes to maintain both that the state is absolute, and yet that it be necessarily focused on the peace, security, and happiness of its subjects, and to do so consistently. The reading I have provided, far from rendering Hobbes’s account of absolutism inconsistent, in fact explains why it is not. To provide the conditions of an absolute state is not to provide a conditional and hence not absolute state. Hobbes’s critics, such as Hampton, take him to be doing the latter, when in fact he is doing the former. What Hobbes provides is a ‘scientific’ account of the conditions for the possibility of an absolute state, the conditions that are necessary if such an absolute state is to exist.

This restriction of the power of the state—that it is part of the very nature of the state that the safety, security, and felicity of subjects be provided for—has largely gone unnoticed, even ignored, by those who see in Hobbes’s politics a theoretical justification of the authoritarian state. For instance, John Locke believed that Hobbes’s derivation of the absolute state implied “that men are so foolish, that they take care to avoid what mischiefs may be done them by pole-cats, or foxes; but are content, nay think it safety, to

be devoured by lions.” For Locke it made little sense that people would willingly choose to suffer the unlimited violence and power of a sovereign over and above the much more manageable violence and power of their fellows in the state of nature. The creation of an absolute sovereign means that the sovereign would, or at least could, in turn, coerce absolutely. This, in part, led Locke to create his theory of a distributed, divided, and hence limited state, one that would come to be the very heart of modern liberalist theory. More recently, Hannah Arendt, writing about the Hobbesian state and the function it has played in the development of totalitarian ideology, has said “In regard to the law of the state—that is, the accumulated power of society as monopolized by the state—there is no question of right or wrong, but only of absolute obedience, the blind conformism of bourgeois society.” Though Arendt is interested in how Hobbes’s politics grounds the rise of bourgeois ideology, she is concerned in this passage, primarily, with the way in which that politics necessitates obedience on the part of subjects. For Arendt, Hobbes’s deduction of the absolute state carries with it a corresponding duty on the part of subjects to obey, even to suffer, absolutely and without question, to “blindly” obey, the will of the state as represented by the sovereign. Locke and Arendt are by no means alone in their assessment of Hobbes’s political theory.

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The power conferred upon the sovereign in Hobbes’s theory, for many, is inherently problematic.

I believe that these views, however, rely on an essential misrecognition of the central role that the power of the people plays in Hobbes’s theory of the state. Only if one extracts Hobbes’s theory of the absolute power of the sovereign from the context of the state, and with it the power of subjects, does an analysis like Locke’s or Arendt’s make sense. Though the sovereign possesses every right, in Locke’s words, to “devour” its subjects, Hobbes’s theory of causal power has it that what is being devoured with every bite is the strength and means, that is the power, of subjects, and so too, then, the state. Seen in this way, Locke’s ‘lion’ is not the epitome of the Hobbesian state, but rather its antithesis. The same, in fact, can be said for Arendt’s views regarding the blind obedience of subjects and their essential powerlessness in the face of absolute sovereign power. Though Arendt is correct that subjects are thoroughly obliged to obey that power, she is wrong to think that this obedience has no limits, and is unconditional. We have seen that, for Hobbes, the obedience of subjects is tied directly to the extent to which the sovereign has provided for not merely their safety and security, but also the conditions of a commodious life, that is their felicity. Hobbesian absolutism, I have argued, is consistent with the conditional obedience of subjects. Hobbes’s politics, pace Arendt, does not seek to eradicate the power of the people, but to outline the delicate conditions under which this power can find expression as a constitutive cause of the state. Taken together, it follows that Hobbesian absolutism is not an authoritarianism. Hobbes, it is true, sought a recipe for political and social stability, one that would provide individuals a refuge from internecine violence and strife. His solution, however, requires that the
power of the state be restricted such that the power of the people flourishes. Only within these limits can the Hobbesian state properly be said to exist.

I argued in the second chapter that Hobbes’s synthetic method proceeds from cause to effect, from the parts of a thing’s nature to the thing constituted on the basis of these parts, and elucidated in chapter three how this method is put to work by him in his account of political science. The work we have done here in chapter four takes this analysis further, in that it allows us to make sense of, first, what the parts of the commonwealth’s nature are, and second, exactly how these parts work together to constitute the commonwealth as their effect. The active and passive causes of a thing, along with each of these cause’s respective requisite accidents, constitute the parts of the thing’s nature. When one comes to Hobbes’s theory of the state, this means that sovereign power, the power of subjects, and the requisite accidents of each, constitute the nature of the commonwealth. The commonwealth or state is nothing other than the effect of its plenary or entire cause. In other words, the state necessarily exists there where an absolute sovereign power exercises its sovereign right in a manner that actually does produce or procure the safety, security, and felicity of subjects.

Hobbes provides a unified theory of power in the state by making use of both his theory of causal power and his account of scientific method. The power of the state, for Hobbes, does not consist exclusively of sovereign power, or of the power of subjects. Rather, the power of the state consists of both sovereign power and the power of subjects, and is defined by the relationship between these two causal powers. This helps clarify Hobbes’s remark in *Leviathan* that “the good of the sovereign and people, cannot be separated. It is a weak sovereign, that has weak subjects; and a weak people, whose
sovereign wanteth power to rule them at his will” (*Lev.*, *EW* 3, 336). As we have seen, the commonwealth is derived from both its active and causal powers, from both the power of sovereignty as well as the power of subjects. If either of these causal powers is found wanting, then so too will the power of the commonwealth or state be wanting. However, the greater the strength and means of subjects, the greater the strength and means at the sovereign’s disposal to provide for their common peace and defense, that is their common good, their commonwealth. Hence, within the framework of Hobbes’s synthetic method, Hobbes’s theory of causal power entails that the power of the state or commonwealth is not simply that of the sovereign, nor that of the subjects, but instead the effect of the complex set of relations between the sovereign power and the power of the people.
I explained in Chapter 4 that Hobbes derives the structure of the commonwealth from the mechanism of social contract, that is, from the power of subjects and the power of the sovereign. The contract, I said, consists of a transfer of right from individuals in the state of nature to another individual, or group of individuals. Having benefitted from this transfer of right, this individual or group of individuals thereby becomes sovereign. As I showed, this transfer of right consists of a mutual pact of non-resistance. Individuals agree with one another not to resist the sovereign’s use of their power in order that the sovereign can provide for their common peace and security. The agreement not to resist the sovereign amounted to an obligation on the part of subjects to obey the sovereign’s commands.

In this chapter I turn to Hobbes’s account of retained rights, or what he calls the true liberties of subjects. I provide an account of both why Hobbes’s thinks individuals retain some rights upon becoming subjects of the commonwealth and what rights, in particular, they retain. As I shall show, though these rights are, strictly speaking, *individual* rights, they can nonetheless be exercised collectively. I argue that instances of collective action on the basis of these retained rights poses a problem for Hobbes’s account, as they cannot be properly attributed to any of the standard Hobbesian categories of political actors. I explain that if one is to make sense of such collective acts, one must make use of a non-standard category of political actor. This category is that of the “multitude.” Though Hobbes denies that the “multitude” can act in any significant sense,
I show that this concept plays an important role at a number of significant points of Hobbes’s argument. I hold, contrary to what I take to be some of Hobbes’s most interesting contemporary readers, that the concept of the “multitude” is an essential element of Hobbes’s political thought insofar as it plays a structural role in his argument.294 I then demonstrate that the concept of the multitude embodies a decidedly non-representative form of democratic political organization. In short, I argue that the concept of the democratic multitude has profound implications for how we understand the orientation and scope of Hobbesian politics.

**Retained Rights, or, the True Liberties of Subjects**

According to Hobbes, though the creation of sovereign power requires that each individual relinquish or forfeit natural right, it does not involve the relinquishment or forfeiture of the *entirety* of an individual’s natural right. Instead, when individuals agree with one another to transfer their right, Hobbes holds they agree only to transfer a *portion* of it. This is because it is a voluntary act, “and of the voluntary acts of every man, the object is some *good to himself*. And therefore there be some rights, which no man can be understood by any words, or other signs to have abandoned, or transferred” (*Lev.*, *EW* 3, 120). Some rights cannot be abandoned or transferred because it would be against right

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reason for them to be transferred. Put differently, it would contradict the principle of natural right for individuals to transfer all of their natural right, whether it be transferred to another individual or group of individuals.295 According to Hobbes, this is because the complete relinquishment of the right to provide for one’s safety and security can never serve that self-preservation. Thus, it is impossible to covenant to transfer all of one’s natural right. Hence it is necessarily in accordance with right reason, which is to say the primary principles of Hobbes’s a priori politics, that individuals retain a portion of their natural right when they covenant with one another to create a common power. As to what portion of natural right is retained, Hobbes writes, “it is manifest, that every subject has liberty in all those things, the right whereof cannot by covenant be transferred” (Lev., EW 3, 204). Subjects retain precisely and only those rights it is impossible for them to transfer.

Hobbes refers to these retained rights as the “true liberties” of subjects, and defines them as “the things, which though commanded by the sovereign, he may nevertheless, without injustice, refuse to do” (Lev., EW 3, 203). Because it is impossible for individuals to transfer these rights, it is also impossible for those same individuals to be obliged by covenant to refrain from exercising them. Hence, when subjects exercise “true liberties,” it is impossible for this exercise to be a violation of any covenant. This leads to a surprising conclusion: it is impossible for a subject’s exercise of “true liberties” to be unjust, even when their exercise amounts to disobedience.

Hobbes identifies four of these rights: self-defense, freedom from self-incrimination, refusal of dangerous and dishonorable commands, and the action in silence of the sovereign. The first liberty subjects retain is the right to defend or protect

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295 Sreedhar, Hobbes on Resistance, 47, refers to this as the Fidelity Principle of valid covenants.
themselves from harm. “If the sovereign command a man, though justly condemned, to kill, wound, or maim himself; or not to resist those that assault him; or to abstain from the use of food, air, medicine, or any other thing, without which he cannot live; yet hath that man the liberty to disobey” (Lev., EW 3, 204). It is evident from this that Hobbes includes the right to defend oneself from bodily harm and other threats to one’s life. Because individuals covenant with one another in order to live secure lives, it would contradict the purpose of this covenant to give up this right, and so it is retained by subjects. Whether it be against the sovereign or another subject, subjects have the right to defend their lives against threats to their personal safety and security.

When it comes to the second right that subjects possess, Hobbes tells us they are at liberty not to condemn themselves. This liberty amounts to a right to resist self-incrimination. “If a man be interrogated by the sovereign, or his authority, concerning a crime done by himself, he is not bound, without assurance of pardon, to confess it; because no man […] can be obliged by covenant to accuse himself” (Lev., EW 3, 204). The reasoning behind this liberty is characteristically Hobbesian and should come as no surprise: the second liberty relates to the first liberty as means to end (Lev., EW 3, 128). Because subjects have the right to resist corporal punishment, as the first liberty of subjects states, so too do they have the right to resist that which leads to corporal punishment. If the confession of a crime entails corporal punishment, which would be the case in instances where pardon is denied, then it would be against right reason for a subject to incriminate him or herself. Self-incrimination here amounts to an action that would inevitably lead to self-harm, but as the first liberty of subjects states, subjects
retain a right to resist such harm—the right to resist self-incrimination is therefore a means to resist bodily harm. Subjects thus retain this right not to condemn themselves.

The third liberty that subjects retain in the commonwealth is a right to refuse to do things either dangerous or dishonorable, including the right to resist compulsory military service. Hobbes writes that within the context of the social contract,

No man is bound by the words themselves, either to kill himself, or any other man; and consequently, that the obligation a man may sometimes have, upon the command of the sovereign to execute any dangerous, or dishonourable office, dependeth not on the words of our submission; but on the intention, which is to be understood by the end thereof. When therefore our refusal to obey frustrates the end for which the sovereignty was ordained; then there is no liberty to refuse: otherwise there is. (Lev., EW 3, 204–205)

As Sreedhar points out, this third liberty of subjects is conditional, whereas the first two are unconditional. Subjects have a right to resist these dangerous or dishonorable commands so long as doing so does not conflict with the end for which sovereignty was instituted. This is therefore a situational right, that is, a liberty that only exists under certain conditions. If a subject’s refusal of a sovereign command of this sort frustrates the very purpose for which the commonwealth was instituted, then the subject is not at liberty to refuse to do what is commanded of him or her. However, if such a refusal does not frustrate this purpose of peace and security, then the subject is at liberty to refuse.

The example of military service is instructive. As I discussed earlier, one of the duties of the sovereign is to provide for the peace and security of citizens vis-à-vis a defense against both internal and external threats to that peace and security. This duty entails the sovereign’s right to command a military in service of this end. But in certain

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296 Ibid., 75-76.
instances “a man that is commanded as a soldier to fight against the enemy, though his sovereign have right enough to punish his refusal with death, may nevertheless in many cases refuse, without injustice,” so long as the telos of sovereignty is not frustrated by the individual’s refusal (Lev., EW 3, 205). An example would be “when he substituteth a sufficient soldier in his place: for in this case he deserteth not the service of the commonwealth” (Lev., EW 3, 205). Though the sovereign commands this individual to fight, so long as the individual is able to find a qualified substitute, he or she has the liberty to disobey the sovereign command to fight, because doing so does not contradict the purpose of covenant, and by extension, does not contradict the primary political principles. 298

On Hobbes’s account, subjects have the obligation to follow the sovereign unless they possess the liberty to disobey. If, however, individuals are at liberty to disobey, then one of the three liberties just discussed must obtain. By Hobbes’s reasoning, individuals must necessarily hold the right to resist the sovereign power in certain instances, for it would contradict the principle of natural right for them not to resist in these instances. Constituting, in part, that portion of natural right that subjects necessarily retain upon entering the state, these three liberties amount to ‘resistance rights’ individuals possess within the commonwealth.

The sovereign, as I discussed in Chapter 4, has the right to make and abrogate laws. This, I argued, was one of the main mechanisms at the sovereign’s disposal to unify the wills of subjects. On Hobbes’s account, subjects have the obligation to follow civil laws so long as they do not have the liberty not to do so. If they did have the liberty

298 This certainly opens up the thorny issue, among others, of who does and who does not have the means to find replacements to fight in his or her stead.
to break a civil law, it would be a liberty in one of the three senses I just discussed. However, given the infinite possibilities available for human action, Hobbes points out that it is “a thing impossible” that the sovereign legislates regarding all of them (Lev., EW 3, 199). In other words, Hobbes recognizes that sovereign legal pronouncements are always outstripped by the infinite diversity of human conduct. The sovereign can only make so many laws, so it is inevitable that the sovereign will not make laws concerning certain types of behaviors and actions. Hence “it is necessary that there be infinite cases, which are neither commanded, nor prohibited, but every man may either doe, or not doe them, as he lists himselfe” (De Cive, 165). Neither commanded nor prohibited, neither legal nor illegal, neither just nor unjust, these behaviors and practices are circumscribed by the silence of the law.

It is in these spaces of sovereign silence that Hobbes locates the fourth of the true liberties of subjects. “As for other liberties, they depend on the silence of the law. In cases where the sovereign has prescribed no rule, there the subject hath the liberty to do or forbear, according to his own discretion” (Lev., EW 3, 206; cf. De Cive, 165). Individuals, having instituted a sovereign power through the social contract, are obliged to act and behave according to the sovereign’s civil laws. That is, they are not at liberty to disobey these civil laws. However, when it comes to these spaces of sovereign silence, because there are no laws either commanding or prohibiting certain courses of conduct, individuals are not obliged, that is, not bound, to behave one way rather than another. Instead, they possess a complete and total liberty to act according to their own judgment. Of course, the comprehensiveness of this liberty will be inversely proportional to the comprehensiveness of the civil laws in any particular commonwealth. The more
civil laws, the less comprehensive is this liberty will be, and conversely, the fewer civil laws, the more comprehensive this liberty (Lev., EW 3, 206). Nonetheless, Hobbes holds that in all commonwealths, individuals necessarily possess this fourth liberty of subjects at least to some degree.\textsuperscript{299} In these spaces of sovereign silence that, in principle, cannot be foreclosed by the commonwealth, individuals are free to construct their own identities and are at liberty to act and do as they wish.

It cannot be emphasized enough that Hobbes understands rights in terms of determinate liberties either to do or not to do something. As I have explained, rights are characterized by the absence of external impediments or obstructions. What is more, rights pertain to the use of one’s own power or means. For Hobbes, the possession of a right really means being at liberty to use one’s power or means according to one’s own judgment. When individuals in the state of nature transfer to the sovereign their natural right, what the sovereign is provided with, I argued, is an environment in which the sovereign is not obstructed in its use of the power or means of subjects. Individuals do not actually give the sovereign their power. Rather, they remove the obstructions limiting the sovereign’s use of their power, that is, they refrain from resisting the sovereign’s use of their strength and means. This, of course, concerns that portion of natural right that is transferred as part of the social contract. With respect to that portion of natural right that is retained, individuals continue to possess the right to use their own power as they see fit. Hence, to speak of the ‘retained rights’ of individuals within the commonwealth is to speak of their being at liberty, in certain instances, to exercise their own power according to their own judgment.

\textsuperscript{299} Pettit, Made With Words, 138.
Hobbes insists these retained rights are possessed by individuals, not by any collective group. For Hobbes, a simple group or crowd of individuals lacks any form of unity. It is this lack of unity that distinguishes such a group from the “people.” As Hobbes defines it, the “people” is “somewhat that is one, having one will, and to whom one action may be attributed” (De Cive, 151). When individuals authorize a sovereign representative, the actions of the sovereign stand in for or represent the actions of the “people” understood in this way. Though it is the sovereign that performs the actions, these acts are the acts not of the natural individual or group of individuals who hold sovereign power; instead they are to be attributed to the “people”, the acts of those who have authorized the sovereign to act in their name. The many individuals who have authorized the sovereign are thereby united as the people insofar as the sovereign bears their person, which is to say, insofar as they authorize the actions of the sovereign actor. The people exists as a unity given that these individuals mutually agree with one another to be represented as a unity. Lacking this unity, however, one is left with only a group or crowd of individuals. Because a group or crowd of individuals is nothing other than the individuals that comprise it, the rights of a group or crowd are nothing other than the rights of the particular members of which it is comprised. There are no collective retained rights in Hobbes, simply the retained rights of individual subjects.

Nevertheless, I hold that the individuality of these retained rights does not negate the possibility of their collective exercise by a group of individuals. Possession of an individual right cannot be equated with the right to exercise it only as an individual. Rather, there is good evidence in Hobbes that these individual rights can be the grounds
for a collective expression of power, so long as this collective expression of power is not attributed to the exercise of a collective right.\textsuperscript{300}

The view that individual right can be the ground for collective action is supported by Hobbes’s distinction between consent and union, which I first introduced in Chapter 3. The commonwealth, of course, is characterized by union. As Hobbes puts it in the

\textit{Elements}, “When many wills are involved or included in the will of one or more consenting […] then is that involving of many wills in one or more, called union” (\textit{Elements of Law, EW} 4, 70). Union, as I explained, is achieved when a group of individuals are represented by a sovereign representative. This is what Hobbes has in mind when he refers to the involvement of their wills in the sovereign will. This is to be distinguished, Hobbes tells us, from consent, for consent does not entail the inclusion of many wills in one will. “When the wills of many concur to one and the same action and effect, this \textit{concourse} of their \textit{wills} is called \textit{consent}; by which we must not understand one will of many men, for every man hath his several will, but many wills to the producing of one effect” (\textit{Elements of Law, EW} 4, 70; cf. \textit{De Cive}, 87-88). To bring this distinction to bear on the notion of the collective exercise of individual right, a couple of things are worth nothing about Hobbes’s treatment of consent. The first is that Hobbes understands consent not to consist of the exercise of one will, as would be the case with union, but rather the exercise of many wills. Hence, when individuals consent with one another, they do so on the basis of each individual’s will. The second is what Hobbes says about the act that is brought about. Though there are many individuals, each with his or her own will, what results from consent is not the production of as many effects as there are wills. Instead, what is produced is \textit{one effect}, that is to say, \textit{one act}. Both union

\textsuperscript{300} On this I agree with Sreedhar, \textit{Hobbes on Resistance}, 149.
and consent, then, result in the production of one effect, but the former does it on the
basis of one will, the latter on the basis of multiple wills.

As I explained in Chapter 3, Hobbes holds that when individuals consent to
covenant with one another in the state of nature, their doing so is to be understood as an
exercise of their power on the basis of their natural right. I also explained in Chapter 4
that on Hobbes’s theory of causal power, cause is to effect as power is to act. To say that
an act is an expression of power is to say that the power is exercised in such a way as to
bring about that act, just as a cause brings about its effect. So when individuals each
exercise their own power on the basis of their individual natural right, and do so
collectively, such that this produces one effect—as is the case, for instance, in consent or
concord—then the effect or act that is brought about can be understood to be an
expression of collective power. In other words, Hobbes’s treatment of consent and
concord indicates he does think individual right can be the ground for collective action,
which is to say for collective expressions of power. Hobbes’s distinction between
consent and union and everything in his argument that is derived from this distinction,
including the derivation of the commonwealth, depends upon the possibility that
individual right can ground collective expressions of power. This is important, and
something to which I will return.

When it comes to the true liberties, that is retained rights, all this entails that
though they are only possessed by individual subjects, they can be exercised collectively
to the end that they produce a single effect, that is, that they constitute a single act. I
shall now demonstrate that this is supported by what Hobbes in fact says in his treatment
of these retained rights.
I have explained that the first three retained rights can be understood as resistance rights. Discussing these resistance rights, Hobbes writes,

To resist the sword of the commonwealth, in defence of another man, guilty, or innocent, no man hath liberty; because such liberty, takes away from the sovereign, the means of protecting us; and is therefore destructive of the very essence of government. But in case a great many men together, have already resisted the sovereign power unjustly, or committed some capital crime, for which every one of them expecteth death, whether have they not the liberty to join together, and assist, and defend one another? Certainly they have; for they but defend their lives, which the guilty man may as well do, as the innocent. There was indeed injustice in the first breach of their duty; their bearing of arms subsequent to it, though it be to maintain what they have done, is no new unjust act. And if it be only to defend their persons, it is not unjust at all. *(Lev., EW3, 205-206)*

Much is going on in this passage, but I would like to focus on whether or not individuals can exercise their individual resistance rights collectively, such that this exercise produces a single act or effect. Hobbes begins with a statement suggesting that nobody has the right to help another individual resist the sovereign power. On the face of it, this would seem to jeopardize my attempt to establish a right to collective resistance in Hobbes. However, he proceeds to qualify this claim, unequivocally stating that when “a great many men together, have already resisted the sovereign power” and have done so *either* justly or unjustly, they *do* have the right. Whether it be justly or unjustly done, these individuals do possess “the liberty to join together, and assist, and defend one another” *(Lev., EW 3, 206)*. To incorporate what I have said regarding the logic behind the retention of these rights, all individuals, whether guilty or innocent, necessarily have this right of resistance for it would contradict the principle of natural right for them to transfer such a right to the sovereign (or anyone else for that matter). What Hobbes explains in this passage is that this retained right includes, in some instances, the right that it be exercised together, that is, jointly or collectively.
What Hobbes has said, up to this point only pertains to acts of resistance already under way, that is, acts of resistance already initiated. I think it can be justifiably extended, however, to encompass the inauguration of acts of collective resistance as well. Hobbes tells us that some who engage in collective acts of resistance violate their obligations toward their sovereign, insofar as they “breach their duty” (Lev., EW 3, 206). It stands to reason that in such instances, these subjects possess duties not to resist the sovereign, given that the sovereign has not exercised sovereign power such that their obligations no longer bind. Hence, in these cases, the initiation of collective resistance is a violation of their duty to obey, and, as such, is categorized as unjust. But Hobbes goes on: “And if it be only to defend their persons, it is not unjust at all” (Lev., EW 3, 206, my emphasis). I just explained that in many cases, though the initial act of collective resistance is unjust, it is not unjust for individuals to continue to engage in such acts. Yet what Hobbes says here suggests that, in other cases, neither the continuation of such acts, nor the initial act of collective resistance is unjust; instead, as he says, “it is not unjust at all.” When Hobbes says that it is not unjust, this means that it does not violate the terms and conditions of the social contract, for justice and injustice are defined by him in terms of adherence and violation of contract. The reason such acts do not violate the social contract is that these resistance rights, as retained, are not given up as part of that contract. To exercise them cannot be understood as a violation of that contract, and so their exercise cannot be unjust. Thus in instances where collective resistance is initiated as a means to defend the lives of the individuals engaged in such acts, not only the continuance, but also the inauguration of such collective resistance, is done with right.
In Chapter 4 I showed that Hobbes’s theory of causal power is integral to his theory of the commonwealth. I claimed that the commonwealth, as effect, requires that sovereign power be deployed in a manner that actually produces and sustains the safety, security, and felicity of subjects. Additionally, I explained that when sovereignty does not do this, the resistance of subjects becomes inevitable. It could be objected that here, in his discussion of the retained rights of individuals and the conditions under which their collective exercise can be said to be just, Hobbes makes no mention of felicity as a just ground for instigating an act of collective resistance. What Hobbes says is: “And if it be only to defend their persons, it is not unjust at all” (Lev., EW 3, 206, my emphasis). The argument could be made that the only instance in which collective acts of resistance are justified is when they are done for the sake of self-defense. If so, his position here would seem to clash with his account of causal power that I discussed last chapter. There I argued that Hobbes understands the commonwealth to consist of both an active and passive power. Both must be present, I explained, for the commonwealth to exist. If, however, sovereign power is wielded in such a way that it does not provide for the safety, security, and felicity of subjects, then, Hobbes holds, resistance on the part of subjects becomes necessary, and the dissolution of the commonwealth inevitable. Such resistance is only possible, though, if subjects are at liberty to resist. More specifically, this means that subjects must be at liberty to resist not simply on the grounds that their physical safety, their lives, are under threat, but also that their general happiness, that is their felicity, is as well. If Hobbes’s account of retained rights does not include felicity as a just ground for resisting the exercise of sovereign power, then his account of political causal power falls apart.
While it is quite true that Hobbes does not mention felicity in this passage, it is found elsewhere in his doctrine of retained rights. I mentioned that Hobbes’s stance on retained rights is organized around the idea that individuals retain precisely and only those rights it is impossible for them to transfer. I explained that this is because a contract is a voluntary act, and all voluntary acts aim at some good to the agent. As I have argued, this good includes a felicitous or contented life. In Chapter 11 of *Leviathan*, Hobbes writes that “the voluntary actions, and inclinations of all men, tend, not only to the procuring, but also to the assuring of a contented life” (*Lev.*., *EW* 3, 85). Put in this way, individuals retain precisely those rights the forfeiture of which cannot be seen to serve this end of achieving a contented or felicitous life. After having introduced this notion, Hobbes goes on to provide examples of such rights. The first two examples he provides pertain to the defense of one’s person, and so do not establish any important link with the concept of felicity. But the third example does establish such a link:

And lastly the motive, and end for which this renouncing, and transferring of right is introduced, is nothing else but the security of a man’s person, in his life, and in the means of so preserving life, as not to be weary of it. And therefore if a man by words, or other signs, seem to despoil himself of the end, for which those signs were intended; he is not to be understood as if he meant it, or that it was his will; but that he was ignorant of how such words and actions were to be interpreted. (*Lev.*., *EW* 3, 120)

What is important here is not Hobbes’s mention of individuals covenanting in order to secure their person; rather it is his insistence that, in addition to this, they do so as a “means of so preserving life, as not to be weary of it.” By referring to a life that is not cause for weariness, Hobbes raises the issue of the quality of one’s life. Moreover, it is particularly important that the quality of life is indexed to weariness.
Weariness, as Hobbes treats it, is defined as the contrary of felicity. In Chapter 2 of *Leviathan*, entitled “Of Imagination,” Hobbes provides an account of how sensation is transformed into imagination, and how this process gives rise to the production of memories. According to Hobbes, just as moving objects tend to continue in motion unless another object causes its motion to cease, so too do the “internal parts of a man” continue to move after having sensed an object—the inertial force of sensation thus gives rise to our imaginations, where the latter is “nothing but decaying sense” (*Lev.*, *EW* 3, 4). Most people, Hobbes asserts, fail to grasp properly the nature of this propensity for things to continue in their movement. While they easily admit that a thing at rest will continue to remain at rest until moved, they fail to see how this principle also applies to moving objects and their remaining in motion. This is because, Hobbes explains,

> Men measure, not only other men, but all other things, by themselves; and because they find themselves subject after motion to pain, and lassitude, think every thing else grows weary of motion, and seeks repose of its own accord; little considering, whether it be not some other motion, wherein that desire of rest they find in themselves, consisteth. (*Lev.*, *EW* 3, 4)

Though his explanation for this misunderstanding is interesting in its own right, what is important for my argument here is his mention of both weariness and its synonym, lassitude, and their connection to a certain form of movement. Hobbes equates weariness of motion with a tendency toward rest. Hence in this context, Hobbes identifies weariness with the tendency toward cessation of motion. I will return to this in a moment.

When one turns to Hobbes’s discussion of felicity, one sees him explain it in terms of motion as well. Recall Hobbes’s definition of felicity (as discussed in Chapter 4): “Continual success in obtaining those things which a man from time to time desireth, that is to say, continual prospering […]”; I mean felicity of this life. For there is no such
thing as a perpetual tranquility of mind, while we live here; because life itself is but motion, and can never be without desire, nor without fear, no more than without sense” (Lev., EW 3, 51). Felicity is characterized by Hobbes as a continual motion and he juxtaposes this continual motion with tranquility of mind. A completely tranquil mind is one that is entirely restful. But because life is itself a type of motion, perpetual restfulness amounts to the cessation of life itself. Felicity, if it is to be achieved while we are alive, must not be the cessation of motion, but a certain continual motion. This is why Hobbes writes, now in Chapter 11 of Leviathan,

felicity of this life, consisteth not in the repose of a mind satisfied. […] Nor can a man any more live, whose desires are at an end, than he, whose senses and imaginations are at a stand. Felicity is a continual progress of the desire, from one object to another; the attaining of the former, being still but the way to the latter. The cause whereof is, that the object of man’s desire, is not to enjoy once only, and for one instant of time; but to assure for ever, the way of his future desire. (Lev., EW 3, 85)

Here felicity is treated as a continual progression of motion in the form of desire. Hobbes distinguishes this continual progress from a mind reposed. The latter, if it is in complete repose, lacks any motion, and Hobbes again identifies this lack of motion with the cessation of life itself. If there is life, however, there must be motion, and if this life is to be felicitous, this motion must continue in a sustained progression. This is why, as we have already seen, Hobbes holds that “the voluntary actions, and inclinations of all men, tend, not only to the procuring, but also the assuring of a contented life” (Lev., EW 3, 85).

Where all voluntary actions aim at a life of continual progression of motion in the form of desire, men at the same time seek to avoid a life where this motion tends toward rest and repose. This tendency toward rest, I have explained, is what Hobbes terms “weariness”. This means that insofar as all voluntary actions aim at a felicitous life, they aim to avoid a
wearisome life. As such it follows that a wearisome life is one that is infelicitous and that a felicitous life is one devoid of weariness.

I believe this helps clarify the problem of retained rights I have been discussing. As I have argued, contracts, for Hobbes, are voluntary actions, and all voluntary actions have as their end not simply the assurance of safety, but also of a felicitous life. Such a felicitous life, as I have just shown, has as its contrary a life of weariness. Given this, it should follow for Hobbes that all voluntary actions, including contracts, have as their end the avoidance of a life of weariness. And, in fact, this is what we see Hobbes state in the passage with which I began this discussion:

And lastly the motive, and end for which this renouncing, and transferring of right is introduced, is nothing else but the security of a man’s person, in his life, and in the means of so preserving life, as not to be weary of it. And therefore if a man by words, or other signs, seem to despoil himself of the end, for which those signs were intended; he is not to be understood as if he meant it, or that it was his will; but that he was ignorant of how such words and actions were to be interpreted. (Lev., EW 3, 120, my emphasis)

Hobbes’s reference to a life of weariness, and the avoidance thereof as the end for which individuals contract with one another, thus establishes felicity as an integral component of Hobbes’s doctrine of retained resistance rights, and thus as a legitimate ground for both individual and collective forms of resistance. Contrary to the above objection, Hobbes’s doctrine of retained rights, insofar as it incorporates a conception of felicity as a just ground for resistance, is consistent with his account of political causal power.

I have been making the case that Hobbes does believe individual rights can be the ground for collective expressions of power on their basis. So far, however, I have only shown this to be the case when it comes to the first three retained rights, that is, when it comes to the Hobbesian rights of resistance. I will now proceed to the fourth true liberty
of subjects, arguing that it too can be exercised collectively. Like the first three, this fourth right is possessed by individuals, not by any collective group of individuals as a collective group. As was the case with the first three, however, Hobbes does recognize the possibility of the collective exercise of this individual right and hence does allow for a collective expression of power on its basis. This can be seen in his remarks in Chapter 22 of *Leviathan*, where he categorizes the variety of possible political systems.

By “political systems,” Hobbes means “any numbers of men joined in one interest, or one business” (*Lev.*, *EW* 3, 210). Political systems, by definition, therefore have to do with joint action, *not* individual action. For Hobbes, some political systems are regular, whereas others are irregular. “Regular are those, where one man, or assembly of men, is constituted representative of the whole number. All other are *irregular*” (*Lev.*, *EW* 3, 210). What all regular political systems have in common is their representative structure, where the words and actions of some individual or group of individuals stand in for the words and actions of those represented.\(^{301}\) We can say they are regular insofar as they possess this representative structure, and it is the latter that characterizes them as a unity. Regular political systems, in turn, can be divided into those that are “absolute, and independent,” such as states or commonwealths, and those that are dependent, where the latter are thoroughly subject to the absolute and independent regular systems. Such dependent regular political systems include “those, which are made by authority from the sovereign power of the commonwealth,” such as a

\(^{301}\) By structure here, I simply mean the relationship between individuals and the effects or acts of those individuals. As will become clear in what follows, these relationships, for Hobbes, take on a number of distinct forms or patterns, and this, I will argue, distinguishes the different types of Hobbesian political subjects.
council of advisors, as well as those made by private groups, “constituted by subjects amongst themselves,” such as families (Lev., EW 3, 210).

When it comes to irregular systems, however, Hobbes tells us they are “in their nature but leagues, or sometimes mere concourse of people, without union to any particular design, not by obligation of one to another, but proceeding only from a similitude of wills and inclinations” (Lev., EW 3, 222). Irregular political systems exist, Hobbes tells us, as a “concourse” of activity. As I have already shown, “concourse” is a technical term for Hobbes, and consists of multiple wills engaged in the production of a single effect or act, that is, of a cooperative assemblage without unity. This means that irregular political systems consist of many individuals engaged not in unified, but instead, in concurrent action, that is, in a collective expression of their power.

In the case of irregular political systems, because what connects them is similitude of will rather than absolute difference, it would be wrong to understand them to be nothing more than a collection of isolated, atomistic individuals. In fact, where many wills are engaged in multiple discreet acts, each with their own effects, for Hobbes there can be no political system, whether regular or irregular. Political systems involve joint, not individual, action. However, those systems of joint action that involve concourse rather than unity cannot be classified as either absolute or dependent regular political systems. Such irregular political groups occupy a decidedly different terrain, beyond the representative structure that gives unity to commonwealths and other regular political systems.

The fourth liberty of subjects states that individuals possess the right to exercise their own power according to their own judgment, and to do so there where the civil law is silent, which is to say, insofar as the sovereign has neither commanded nor prohibited. Turning to Hobbes’s treatment of irregular political systems, one finds them painted in the same light. Regarding the status of these irregular political systems, Hobbes tells us that they are lawful “if not forbidden by the commonwealth, nor made on evil design, such as are conflux of people to markets, or shows, or any other harmless end” (Lev., EW 3, 211). If certain irregular political systems are forbidden by civil law, then they are “unlawful,” or illegal (Lev., EW 3, 211). However, if they are not forbidden, then they must not be illegal. Hobbes here says they are therefore “lawful.” By “lawful” Hobbes must not mean legal, in the sense that such irregular political systems are commanded by the sovereign. This is because “legal” groups would not be categorized as irregular systems, but instead as lawful private regular systems, insofar as the latter are dependent upon sovereign command (Lev., EW 3, 222). It follows that “lawful” should not be taken to imply that the sovereign has commanded they exist. Instead, I believe “lawful” should be taken in the minimal sense of “not unlawful,” or “not forbidden.” To say they are “not unlawful” means that they have not been prohibited by the sovereign. Hence, neither legal, in the sense of commanded by the sovereign, nor unlawful, in the sense of having been prohibited, such irregular political systems consist of individuals engaged in joint action beyond the reaches of sovereign pronouncement. Read in this way, when individuals engage in a collective exercise of their power in what I have called the spaces of sovereign silence, this amounts to a collective exercise of the fourth true liberty of subjects.
It is clear from this not only that individual right can be the ground for collective expressions of power, but so too can the retained rights of individuals (their true liberties). This raises the question: To whom or to what is this collective expression of power to be attributed? By this I do not mean to whom or what ought one attribute the rights that ground the collective expressions of power. The issue of the attribution of right, or more specifically, the attribution of retained right, is quite straightforward, for as I have already explained, these rights are possessed by individuals. Rather, the problem is, having attributed retained rights to individuals, how are we to understand the power that is expressed on their basis when this expression is one that is collective? On the face of it, there are three possible candidates: individuals, the “people”, and the sovereign. As I will explain now, each of these is problematic when it comes to the attribution of collective expressions of power that concern the true liberties.

Because of the collective nature of the expression of power in question, it would be incorrect to attribute this power to an individual. When an individual acts, and thereby expresses his or her power, this act or expression of power is the product of the individual’s single will. The structure here is that of one will producing one effect. In the case of the collective exercise of power on the basis of the true liberties, one neither has one will producing one effect, nor many wills producing many effects, but instead many wills producing one effect. Hence the structure of this form of collective action is distinct from both cases of individual action and cases that consist of many individuals acting individually.

But what of the category Hobbes names the “people”? If the collective expression of power cannot be identified with individuals, it also cannot be identified
with the “people”. Earlier in this chapter, I explained that for Hobbes, the “people is a collective that is a unity. When the “people” acts, its actions are the product or effect of one will. When the power of the “people” is expressed, its expression must be the effect or product of one will. Yet in the case of the collective exercise of the true liberties, one does not find this structure. There, instead of one will there are many wills that conduce to produce one effect. Because the collective exercise of true liberties is the result of many wills, rather than one, it is wrong to identify the power expressed with the collective unity that is the “people”.

This leaves, it would seem, the sovereign. The sovereign, though, is the least appealing of the three candidates available to serve as the bearer of collective power. There are two significant reasons that the power expressed in the collective exercise of true liberties should not be attributed to the sovereign, both having to do with the nature of the rights themselves. In the case of the first three retained rights, their exercise is directed against sovereign power. Insofar as they are resistance rights, it makes little sense to attribute the power expressed in such acts of collective resistance to the power that is resisted, that is, to the sovereign. This would result in the awkward implication that, when these resistance rights are exercised, sovereign power engages in an act of resistance against itself. But this, according to Hobbes, is impossible (De Cive, 151-152).

In the case of the fourth true liberty, collective expressions of power on its basis also should not be attributed to sovereign power, but for a different reason than was the case with the other true liberties. The fourth true liberty, recall, has to do with action and conduct that is neither prohibited nor commanded by the sovereign. Beyond the reach of civil law, those behaviors, actions, and practices stand beyond the sovereign’s power to
make and abrogate laws. Hence when power is expressed collectively on the basis of the fourth true liberty, because this power exists beyond sovereign power, it follows that it, like instances associated with the other true liberties, should not be identified with sovereignty.

Thus, the expression of collective power grounded in retained rights can be attributed neither to individuals, the “people”, nor the sovereign. This exhausts the main Hobbesian categories of political persons, and might lead to the suspicion that there is something incoherent in the notion of such power, since it would be a power to act that could be attributed to no conceivable actor. I will now argue, however, that Hobbes does in fact provide the resources to discern another political kind of subject, one to whom such power can properly be attributed. This, I shall argue, is the “multitude.” Hobbes’s explicit stance toward the multitude is that, strictly speaking, it does not exist. As will show, the concept of the multitude nonetheless performs an integral structural function in Hobbes’s argument, one that can be seen to play a role in his account of the state of nature, the genesis of the commonwealth, and, ultimately, his account of the true liberties.

**THE MULTITUDE**

Hobbes introduces the concept of the “multitude” by distinguishing it from the concept of the “people.” The latter, recall, may signify “somewhat that is one, having one will, and to whom one action may be attributed” (*De Cive* 151). However “By Multitude, because it is a collective word, we understand more then one, so as a multitude of men is the same with many men” (*De Cive*, 92). Where both the “people” and the “multitude” are terms that refer to groups of individuals, the former is characterized by unity of will,
the latter by multiplicity of wills. According to Hobbes, because the “multitude” does not have unity of will, one must not “ascribe any action to the multitude, as it’s one, but (if all, or more of them doe agree) it will not be an Action, but as many actions, as Men” (De Cive, 91). It would be wrong to ascribe “an action” to the multitude given that there is not a will, but many wills. Because there are multiple wills, each of these wills is to be understood to be the cause of its own action, respectively. The multitude, according to Hobbes’s treatment here, is really just a name that refers to multiple individuals, each of whom is engaged in an individual, and hence not collective, act. Hobbes’s distinction between the “people” and the “multitude” thus implies the following. Either an act is properly attributed to a group of individuals, in which case that group of individuals must possess unity of will, and hence it must be the “people,” or, it cannot be attributed properly to a group or collective of individuals at all. If it cannot be attributed properly to a group or collective, then it follows that the act must instead be attributed to an individual. To summarize, Hobbes’s explicit position is that the “multitude” cannot properly be said to bring about a single effect or act (De Cive, 151-152; cf. The Elements of Law, EW 4, 126; Lev., EW 3, 151). The problem, I believe, is that his overt stance on the multitude belies the use he makes of the concept in his argument.304

Earlier I introduced Hobbes’s distinction between consent and union. Remember, the specific difference that distinguishes consent from union is that the former possesses the structure of many wills, whereas the latter possesses the structure of a single will.

304 By differentiating between an explicit and implicit position in Hobbes, I do not mean to suggest, as Strauss does, that there is an esoteric political doctrine that Hobbes has hidden and that stands in need of uncovering if we are to discover Hobbes’s secret message. Rather, by these terms I intend to draw attention to a tension between what Hobbes says regarding the concept of the multitude as a viable political actor, and what his arguments regarding the establishment of the commonwealth and his doctrine of retained rights requires him to say of it, in spite of himself. The former I consider to be the explicit position of his argument, the latter the position his argument implies. Cf. Leo Strauss, Persecution and the Art of Writing (Glencoe, IL: The Free Press, 1952), esp. 34. See also his The Political Philosophy of Hobbes, 75.
Transposed to the context of Hobbes’s overt stance concerning the distinction between the “people” and the “multitude,” one would expect Hobbes to say that only a union is able to act, and hence produce one effect. That is, one would expect Hobbes to declare that the structure of consent is unable to produce a single effect, and this because of the multitude of wills involved in that structure. This, however, is not what Hobbes says. In fact, one finds something quite different: “When the wills of many concur to one and the same action and effect, this concourse of their wills is called consent; by which we must not understand one will of many men, for every man hath his several will, but many wills to the producing of one effect” (The Elements of Law, EW 4, 70; cf., De Cive, 86-88).

Consent here is defined as consisting of a multitude engaged in the production of a single effect or act. Though Hobbes’s explicit stance regarding the multitude is that it is capable of neither the possession of a single will, nor the production of a single effect or act, an examination of Hobbes’s discussion of consent shows only the former to be true. Though it is certainly true that the multitude that consents does not possess unity of will—this is, after all, what makes it a multitude, rather than the “people”—it is not true that it is thereby incapable of producing a single effect or act. Rather, the Hobbesian concept of consent requires that the multitude is able to produce a single effect or act. This shows that the concept of the multitude has a fundamental structural role in Hobbes’s account of consent. I will to show how consent – and thus the multitude – is at the heart of Hobbes’s discussion of the state of nature and his explanation of how that state is to be left behind and the commonwealth created.

The state of nature is populated by individuals. The “people,” insofar as its unity consists in the will of the sovereign, is, there, nowhere to be found. Hobbes suggests that
these individuals are able, nonetheless, to engage in some degree of collective action.

One of the most prevalent instances of such action in the state of nature consists of multiple individuals who have joined together for collaborative protection.

And supposing how great a number soever of men assembled together for their mutual defence, yet shall not the effect follow, unless they all direct their actions to one and the same end; which direction to one and the same end is that which, [...] is called consent. This consent, or concord, amongst so many men, though it may be made by the fear of a present invader, or by the hope of a present conquest, or booty, and endure as long as that action endureth, nevertheless, by the diversity of judgments and passions in so many men contending naturally for honour and advantage one above another, it is impossible, not only that their consent to aid each other against an enemy, but also that the peace should last between themselves, without some mutual and common fear to rule them. (Elements, 119-120)

Hobbes here refers to multiple individuals engaged in mutual aid. In De Cive he calls such individuals “fellowes” and in Leviathan, he refers to them as “confederates” (De Cive, 50; Lev., EW 3, 110, 133). It is important to note that in such instances, multiple individuals act for the sake of one end, not many. On the basis of acting for the sake of this shared end, what results, Hobbes says, is one act of mutual defense, not many distinct actions. This indicates that in the state of nature, at least in instances of mutual defense, the multitude is able to produce a single act or effect.

The problem at this stage, according to Hobbes, is that when the multitude do engage in collective acts of defense, such action is ultimately unable to provide enough security to satisfy the injunction of natural law to seek peace. Though they may be able to protect themselves from an invader or a band of enemies, the safety and security that results is only temporary and fleeting (De Cive, 86-87; Lev., EW 3, 155). This means that the consent structure that attends the multitude’s performance of concerted acts of self-defense is inadequate as a source of sustained safety and security. “Since therefore the
conspiring of many wills to the same end doth not suffice to preserve peace, and to make a lasting defence, it is requisite that in those necessary matters which concern Peace and selfe-defence, there be but one will of all men” (De Cive, 88). In place of this consent structure, what is needed for peace is unity, and this unity, as I detailed in Chapters 3 and 4, requires that individuals create a social contract. This contract, however, requires the multitude and its consent structure at two significant points.

In order for the contract between each individual and every other individual to take place, these individuals must come together, that is, they must congregate, meet, or negotiate an encounter, such that they are in close enough proximity to contract with one another. At this point, this group of individuals is not yet a multitude engaged in the production of one act or effect. They are simply many individuals who happen to occupy the same locale. What these individuals do next, however, does possess the structure of consent, and hence does qualify them as the multitude engaged in a collective form of action. Having come together, these individuals agree to formulate a contract or covenant. Here, it is important to distinguish between the agreement these individuals make to contract with one another, on the one hand, and the actual contract that results from this agreement, on the other (to transfer natural right or authorize a sovereign, thereby instituting a commonwealth). The agreement to covenant, according to Hobbes, implies that the multitude has “consented for the common good, to peace and mutuall help” (De Cive, 87). That they have agreed, and hence consented, to contract in order to produce a commonwealth does not, in itself, establish the conditions of peace, security, and felicity that they all desire. These conditions require, of course, that the individuals actually do contract with one another, and hence actually do produce a commonwealth.
Nonetheless, it is important that this contract would not take place without the agreement to contract in the first place, that is, without their consent with one another. Hobbes’s argument thus has it not only that the multitude may engage in collective action (as is the case in acts of mutual defense), but that the multitude must so act if the commonwealth is to be created.

Moreover, one can also show that the multitude plays a structural role in the contract itself. Having “consented for the common good, to peace and mutuall help,” individuals next proceed to contract with one another, and thereby produce conditions sufficient for their peace and security. As I have explained, in Hobbes’s earlier works, this contract consists of a mutual transfer of right, whereas in Leviathan, it consists in the authorization of a sovereign, mutually agreed upon. In either case, though, a multitude of individuals, each with their distinct wills, contract and become a unity. What results, Hobbes says, “is more than consent, or concord; it is a real unity of them all, in one and the same person, made by covenant of every man with every man” (Lev., EW 3, 158). The contract creates the commonwealth, and the latter possesses the structure of unity rather than consent. The reason is that once the commonwealth exists, when it acts it does not consist of many persons engaged in a single act; rather, it consists of one person engaged in one act, where this person is the “people.” “The People rules in all Governments, for even in Monarchies the People Commands; for the People wills by the will of one man” (De Cive, 151). This unity, however, must be produced. It must be an effect of the contract if the contract is to provide these individuals an exit from the state of nature. How then should this unity, as an effect of the covenant, be understood?
There are three possible explanations, only one of which is adequate. It cannot be the effect of a structure that itself possesses unity, for as I explained in Chapters 3 and 4, the state of nature contains a multitude of individuals, each with his or her own distinct will. These individuals, taken together, do not possess unity of will. Given that unity is not to be found in the state of nature at a global level, that is, in terms of the individuals taken together, the unity produced must not itself be the effect of such unity. This unity can, however, be found at the local level: Hobbes holds that each individual \textit{qua} individual possesses unity of will. Following this line of thought, it may make sense to say that each individual who contracts produces a distinct effect different from the others who contract, and so each individual produces his or her own structure of unity. But this cannot be correct, for if they did, then there would be as many sovereign representatives created or produced as there are individuals who contract. This would merely replicate the state of nature, and so provide them with no resolution. Instead, the contract must result in the creation of one person with one will (even if that ‘person’ is a democratic council or an aristocratic assembly), not many persons with many wills. Taken together, the structure of unity that attends the commonwealth is thus not the product of something already united, whether it be individuals taken as individuals, or individuals taken as a group that itself possesses unity.

So how is one to understand this unity? The answer, I believe, is that the contract consists of many individuals who agree, collectively, to be transformed by that contract into a unity. As I understand Hobbes, the unity produced is the singular effect of their multiple, discreet wills. Because there are many individuals with a multitude of wills, they cannot be conceived, at least not yet, as a unity. Yet, because they are engaged in
the production of a single effect, where this effect is unity, these multiple individuals cannot be understood to be performing distinct and different acts. Instead, the social contract possesses a structure where a multitude of individuals are engaged in the production of unity, a singular effect. The structure present, therefore, is precisely that of consent, and is the same as that which, I have argued, characterizes the multitude engaged in collective action.

It is clear from this that Hobbes’s argument relies on the concept of the multitude and its capacity to engage in collective action at pivotal points. As I have shown, both the agreement to covenant, as well as the unity produced by the covenant, stand as effects or products, in short, as expressions of the power of the multitude engaged in collective action. Hobbes’s explicit views regarding the attribution of actions or expressions of power to the multitude are therefore contradicted by the political philosophical argument he puts forth. That argument depends on the multitude, its capacity to engage in collective action, and the power it expresses when it does so. Given Hobbes’s reliance on the concept of the multitude in his argument, something at odds with his explicit position that the multitude cannot engage in collective action, I believe it makes sense to attribute single acts or expressions of power to the multitude when those acts or expressions possess the structure of consent.

We are now in a position to return to Hobbes’s account of the true liberties. Earlier I explained that this account has a problem. When many individuals collectively exercise their true liberties, this act stands as an expression of power. The problem, as I explained, is that this power cannot properly be attributed to any of the traditional Hobbesian political subjects. I explained that it is wrong to attribute the power to
particular individuals, the “people,” or the sovereign. In order to explain the bearer of this power, one must instead, I have argued, integrate a non-standard subject into Hobbes’s typology of political bodies, one that *is* able to subtend the power expressed in these instances. As I discussed, when individuals exercise their true liberties collectively, this exercise has the structure of consent. Given this structure and its functional relationship to the concept of the multitude, I hold it is best to ascribe this power to the multitude. Therefore, the multitude is a central feature of Hobbes’s politics and its power an integral political force. In the remainder of this chapter, I will both critique and expand a classical argument by Alexander Matheron, making the case that the political power of the Hobbesian multitude harbors stands, or qualifies, as a non-representative form of democracy.\footnote{305 Alexandre Matheron, “The Theoretical Function of Democracy in Spinoza and Hobbes,” in *The New Spinoza*, eds. Warren Montag and Ted Stolze (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1997).}

**Pre-Sovereign Democracy**

According to Hobbes, commonwealths are created in one of two ways, either by institution or acquisition (*Lev.*, *EW* 3, 158-159). The former is the more fundamental, as commonwealths by acquisition presuppose commonwealths by institution. Commonwealths must be created before they can be acquired; so while commonwealths by institution do not depend on commonwealths by acquisition for their existence, commonwealths by acquisition do depend upon commonwealths by institution. For this reason, Hobbes is more interested in commonwealths by institution from a theoretical perspective. Commonwealths by institution are exemplified, of course, in Hobbes’s account of the transition out of the state of nature.
Earlier, I provided a quick treatment of the ways consent functions in the institution of the commonwealth. But there is more to Hobbes’s treatment of the procedure of institution. Hobbes writes in the Latin *Leviathan* that

A commonwealth is instituted when men, coming together voluntarily, agree, every one with every one, that they will all obey whatever man or assembly the greater part, by their votes, shall give the right of bearing the person of them all. Each of them, then, is obliged to obey him whom the greater part elected, and is to be considered the author of all his actions, whether he voted for him or not. For unless the votes of all are understood to be included in the majority of votes, they have come together in vain, and contrary to the end each one proposed for himself, viz., the peace and protection of all. (*Lev.*, OL 3, 132. Translation is Curley, *Leviathan*, 110n.1)

Here Hobbes provides more detail as to what, in particular, the multitude consent to when, in the state of nature, they inaugurate the institution of a commonwealth. Having voluntarily come together [*sponte sua convenientes*], what the members of the multitude consent or agree to, at the initial stage, is a *determinate procedure* for appointing a sovereign representative. The particular procedure every member of the multitude agrees to, according to Hobbes, is to have the sovereign chosen by the majority, and for each member of the multitude to be obliged to obey who it is that this majority happens to choose. This choice would include, it would seem, not only what form of sovereignty to institute, such as monarchy, aristocracy, or democracy, but, especially in the cases of monarchies and aristocracies, which individuals are to hold that office. However, because every member agrees to the same procedure for the creation of a sovereign, it follows that *all* members of the multitude are *included or involved* in that creation. This is why Hobbes claims that the sovereign is not created only by those members of the multitude who happened to vote for that particular instantiation of sovereignty, but *also* by those who did not vote for that instantiation. *All* members of the multitude create the
sovereign because they \textit{all} have agreed that they will be obliged to obey the sovereign chosen by the majority.

Hobbes\textquotesingle s account in the English edition of \textit{Leviathan} is noteworthy for its explicit incorporation of the concept of authorization:

A \textit{commonwealth} is said to be \textit{instituted}, when a \textit{multitude} of men do agree, and \textit{covenant, every one, with every one}, that to whatsoever \textit{man}, or \textit{assembly of men}, shall be given by the major part, the \textit{right to present} the person of them all, that is to say, to be their \textit{representative}; every one, as well he that \textit{voted for it}, as he that \textit{voted against it}, shall \textit{authorize} all the actions and judgments, of that man, or assembly of men, in the same manner, as if they were his own, to the end, to live peaceably amongst themselves, and be protected against other men. (\textit{Lev.}, \textit{EW} 3, 159)

In the Latin edition, the multitude agree to be obliged to \textit{obey} the sovereign determined by the major part. In the English, however, Hobbes position is slightly different: the multitude consent to \textit{authorize} the sovereign determined by the major part. Because every member of the multitude consents to this procedure, every member of the multitude thereby becomes author of the sovereign actor. Hence in this account the political authority of the sovereign is legitimated as a result, at least in part, of the multitude and their mutual consent to be bound by the procedure of majority vote.

\textit{De Cive} and \textit{The Elements of Law} resemble both the Latin and English \textit{Leviathan} in that they, too, make use of the notion of the multitude and their consent to abide by the views of the majority. What is especially important about them, however, is Hobbes\textquotesingle s \textit{assessment} of this consent. I believe this assessment bears directly on how one ought to understand the power of the multitude as a political force in Hobbes.

In \textit{De Cive}, Hobbes writes that \textquoteleft\textquoteleft Those who came together [\textit{qui coierunt}] in order to erect a city, almost in the very act of coming together [\textit{pene eo ipso quod coierunt}], were a Democracy [\textit{Democratia sunt}]\textquoteright\ (\textit{De Cive}, Latin edition, 152). Here Hobbes
introduces the concept of democracy, and relates it directly to the coming together of the multitude in the state of nature. It is first important to note that Hobbes understands this multitude to be a democracy. He says quite clearly that they are one: “Democratia sunt.” But why? He explains that it is a democracy for the most part [penē] by its coming together. In other words, the multitude is a democracy largely insofar as they have come together, but this coming together is not sufficient to make them a democracy. He then proceeds to provide the sufficient condition. Because “they willingly met, they are suppos’d oblig’d to the observation of what shall be determin’d by the major part [in the Latin edition: intelliguntur obligati ad id quod consensus maioris partis decernetur]: which, while that convent lasts, or is adjourn’d to some certain dayes, and places, is a clear Democracy [Democratia est]” (De Cive, 109; De Cive, Latin Edition, 152). Because the multitude not only has come together, but in coming together has also consented to a mechanism by which a sovereign is to be created, this multitude thereby is a democracy.

This is a view already expressed by Hobbes in his discussion of commonwealths by institution in The Elements of Law. There he explains that because sovereignty can take multiple forms, the multitude must, in some way, come to a consensus as to which form they will make. That is, they must engage in a collective act of agreement, “which agreement in a great multitude of men, must consist in the consent of the major part; and where the votes of the major part involve the votes of the rest, there is actually a democracy” (The Elements of Law, EW 4, 139). Once again we see Hobbes claim that the multitude consents to be obliged by what the majority decides. In such instances, they are a democracy insofar as “the votes of the major part involve the votes of the rest.” The votes of the major part involve the votes of the rest only if the rest agree or consent
to have their votes be included or involved in the major part. This indicates that, for Hobbes, it is not the voting procedure, as such, that constitutes the multitude as a democracy, rather, it is their collective consent to such a process, where this process is a single effect, that constitutes them as a democracy.

Matheron refers to this as Hobbes’s “hypothesis of an original democracy,” adding that it implies that “every political society of institution… is necessarily democratic at the beginning.”

Matheron speaks of Hobbes’s notion of an original democracy as a “hypothesis”. I have argued that given Hobbes’s understanding of political philosophy as an a priori science, it makes no sense to speak of the state of nature and the propositions concerning it as hypotheses in the sense that Hobbes understands that term. Nonetheless, Matheron is right that the concept of original democracy has a structural role in Hobbes’s argument. All forms of sovereignty, whether monarchical, aristocratic, or democratic, derive from the multitude’s coming together in the state of nature and their consent to abide by a shared procedural mechanism of sovereign creation. As Matheron explains, “From the fact alone that individuals are assembled in order to designate together a sovereign, even if this sovereign is finally a king, they have implicitly agreed to submit to the decision of the majority, and consequently, by this fact alone, they have established a democracy, even if it must last only an infinitesimal moment.”

I agree with Matheron, at least with respect to this point, that the original pre-sovereign form of democracy, a democracy I have shown to be associated with the

multitude, occupies a place of theoretical priority when compared to the forms of sovereignty that are established on its basis.  

According to Matheron, however, Hobbes’s theory of an original democracy is isolated to his earlier works. *Leviathan*, Matheron argues, bears no trace of the original pre-sovereign form of democracy as it is found in *The Elements* and *De Cive*. According to him, this is because Hobbes substitutes a new theory of authorization that sidesteps the need for an original democracy in the appointment of the sovereign. Matheron is not alone in his view. For instance, Malcolm holds that “In *Leviathan*, this explicit claim about the priority of democracy is entirely abandoned, and the majoritarian principle which applies to the original assembly is treated merely as a necessary procedural assumption.”  

Those who share this position, I argue, cannot be correct.  

To begin with, Malcolm’s claim that Hobbes completely abandons the original democracy in *Leviathan* is puzzling given his assertion that original democracy continues to function in Hobbes’s argument as an intrinsic or necessary part of the procedure that produces sovereignty. If it is a necessary component of the argument, it makes little sense to say that Hobbes completely abandons it. Rather, the fact that it is a necessary component of the *Leviathan* account is evidence, not in favor of Hobbes’s having abandoned the theory of an original democracy, but his having retained it. Secondly, when one turns to Matheron, he is of course right that Hobbes introduces the concept of authorization in *Leviathan*. Yet, while this may be one of the most important shifts in Hobbes’s account, Matheron is wrong that its appearance is connected with an

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308 Cf. Martinich, *Hobbes*, 227, and his claim that “Hobbes subscribed to the bottom-up theory of democracy or popular sovereignty.”  
elimination of the logical priority of pre-sovereign democracy. It is true Hobbes does not name the coming together of individuals and their consent to a common procedure ‘democracy’, but as I have shown, this coming together is identical to the structure that he refers to as a democracy in The Elements and De Cive. So though Hobbes does not call this consensual coming together of the multitude an original democracy in Leviathan, all its elements are nevertheless present. Thus, pre-sovereign democracy and its theoretical priority are consistent structural features of Hobbes’s political thought, where this democracy consists of the multitude engaged in a collective act of consent.311

One should be careful not to confuse the democracy of the democratic multitude with democracy as a form of sovereignty. For Hobbes, the democratic multitude is conceptually prior to all forms of sovereignty, including those forms that are democratic. If the democratic multitude were a democratic sovereign, then there would be sovereignty in the state of nature, which on Hobbes’s view is absurd. So the democracy of the multitude must be different from democracy as a form of sovereign politics. The difference, I believe, resides in the fact that the democratic multitude does not and cannot possess a representative structure. This is the case for two interrelated reasons. First, the democratic multitude is democratic due to the consent of its members to commit to a shared mechanism of sovereign institution. Having agreed to this mechanism, they are then able to contract with one another, and in turn, create the sovereign by giving the sovereign, as we have seen, “the right to present the person of them all, that is to say, to be their representative” (Lev., EW3, 159). That is, the democratic multitude fabricates a representative political structure. This representative structure, as I explained in Chapter

4, consists of both the sovereign representative and the “people” who are represented. But, prior to this fabrication there is no such representative structure. As such, the democracy of the democratic multitude must be a non-representative configuration if it is to bring into being a representative configuration where before there was none. The second reason the democratic multitude embodies a non-representative form of democracy is intimately connected with the first, and has to do with Hobbes’s distinction between consent and unity. The multitude, by definition, does not possess unity. Unity can only take one of two forms, for Hobbes. Either this unity belongs to a single individual with one will, or it belongs to many individuals who possess one will. The only way that multiple individuals can possess one will is if they agree to have one will represent the will of them all. Hobbes holds, though, that such unity requires a representative structure. Because the original democracy is a multitude, and a multitude lacks unity, it follows that it also must lack a representative configuration. In the end, it is clear that both these reasons are really one. For Hobbes, unity as a feature of collective political organization requires a representative structure, and neither unity nor a representative structure belongs to the democratic multitude. The Hobbesian democratic multitude thus embodies a non-representative form of democracy.

**The Democratic Multitude**

Hobbes only mentions this non-representative form of democracy within the context of the state of nature. However, it can be shown to exist within the commonwealth as well. That is, the creation of the commonwealth does not carry with it a corresponding
elimination of the democratic multitude and its political power. Rather, this power continues to find expression within the context of the commonwealth.

The consent structure, as I explained, consists of many individuals engaged in the production of a singular effect, and I have shown that this structure is present at important stages of Hobbes’s argument, especially those regarding the state of nature. As I have just argued, Hobbes conceives of the consenting multitude at these stages as a non-representative form of democracy *insofar as* it possesses the structure of consent. In these instances, the power of the multitude is expressed in the agreement to submit to a shared procedural mechanism of sovereign election, and the creation of the sovereign is an effect of their concerted action. As we have seen, however, this consent structure is also present in Hobbes’s doctrine of retained rights. Recall that, having created the commonwealth, individuals possess certain retained rights that are impossible for them to transfer. As I demonstrated, though these rights are possessed only by individuals, these individual rights can be exercised collectively. I showed that in instances of their collective exercise, the power expressed on the basis of these retained rights is best understood as the power of the multitude. Because Hobbes’s consent structure constitutes a non-representative form of democracy, and that the collective exercise of the true liberties follows from this same consent structure, it is reasonable to understand the multitude’s exercise of true liberties to be instances of a non-representative form of democracy. This transposition is justified, I believe, given the structural identity between the consent structure and the collective exercise of true liberties.

That collective expressions of power on the basis of the true liberties possess a distinctly *non-representative* democratic structure can be gathered from some of the
arguments I have already presented. The first three true liberties, recall, consist of resistance rights. When the multitude exercises these first three rights collectively, their exercise is directed against sovereign power. When I first introduced this notion, I explained that because such rights take sovereign power as their object of contestation, it would be wrong to identify the power expressed when such rights are exercised to be the power of the sovereign. Sovereign power is the power being resisted, not the power resisting. It was also the case, however, that this power could not be identified with the “people” either. The “people”, as defined by Hobbes, possess the structure of unity as part of the representative structure of the commonwealth. But, because such collective acts of resistance are carried out by the multitude, these collectivities do not possess unity of will, and hence cannot be identified with the “people.” But if they cannot be identified either with the sovereign representative or the represented “people,” then they cannot be identified with this representative structure at all. As such, the democratic multitude must be non-representative in form when it engages in acts of resistance on the basis of the first three true liberties. A similar line of thinking explains why this also holds for the fourth of the true liberties. When the multitude consent to act collectively, and do so on the basis of this fourth right, they express their power in what I have called the spaces of sovereign silence. That is, their collective acts, behaviors, and practices are neither commanded nor prohibited by the sovereign. As we have seen, Hobbes categorizes these collectivities as irregular political systems, and I explained that what distinguishes irregular political systems from their regular counterparts is that the irregular systems possess a non-representative structure, whereas the regular systems are representative. This means that when the multitude consent and thus express their power on the basis of
the fourth true liberty, their irregular status entails they must possess a \textit{non-representative} democratic configuration, as was the case in the other true liberties.

It is clear from all of this that the multitude occupies a central place in Hobbes’s political science and that it embodies a distinctly non-representative form of democracy. I have shown that the concept of the democratic multitude is a constitutive element of his theory of the state of nature, is at the heart of his account of the generation of the commonwealth, and that it can be located within the commonwealth, there where individuals collectively exercise their true liberties.

Over the course of the preceding chapters, I argued that Hobbes’s \textit{a priori} politics employs the synthetic method. This method proceeds from cause to effect, that is, from the parts of a thing’s nature to the thing constituted out of those parts. In Chapter 4, I demonstrated that sovereign power and the power of the people are the parts of the commonwealth’s nature. Where sovereign power is its active cause, the power of the people is its passive cause. Together these constitute the commonwealth’s plenary or entire cause. In this chapter I have shown that the Hobbesian political landscape is more complex. Alongside these two constitutive powers of the commonwealth lays the power of the democratic multitude. Contrary to the view of many recent readers of Hobbes, I have demonstrated that the concept of the democratic multitude and its power occupies a central structural position in his political thought. I have argued that the democratic multitude consists of many individuals engaged in collective action on the basis of their true liberties. That the power of the democratic multitude cannot be reduced to either sovereign power or the power of the people requires that we expand our conception of
what the political *is* for Hobbes. I would now like to close this dissertation with some thoughts regarding this issue.
CONCLUSION

During the seventeenth century, Thomas Hobbes found himself immersed in an ever-changing landscape, both politically and philosophically. Hobbes was part of a world closely, even directly, involved in the dynamics of the English Civil War. His was a life shaped and molded by a conflict-ridden England he called home. He witnessed closely the destruction and pain the war brought to his fellow countrymen and women, and he knew personally the anguish that accompanied exile abroad. From afar, Hobbes kept tabs on an England moving closer and closer to dissolution.

But if his exile in Paris took him far away from this conflict, it also brought him closer to some of the greatest philosophical minds of his generation. Hobbes, because of his contact with Marin Mersenne, quickly became part of the inner circle of intellectuals concerned with developing the new science. In Paris he was in conversation, either directly or through correspondence, with the likes of Gassendi and Descartes. All of these figures, Hobbes included, were wrestling with new investigative methods and trying to discern the promises they held for a greater understanding of the world in all its diversity. The brilliance of Hobbes is to be found in the way he brought these two worlds, the one of political turmoil, the other of scientific discovery, together.

In Chapters 1 through 3, I made the case that the scientific status of Hobbes’s political science required a proper understanding of his account of scientific method. As I argued, though Hobbes’s method shared a number of similarities with renaissance Aristotelian methodologies, he was able to transform these methodologies in significant ways. This transformation owed itself, largely, to Hobbes’s appropriation of the
constructive conception of certainty that was central to the maker’s knowledge tradition. It was this constructivism, I argued, that led Hobbes to view the \textit{a priori} sciences of geometry and political science as the only sciences worthy of the name. It was in these sciences, Hobbes believed, that the scientist could achieve epistemological certainty regarding his or her object of study. This was done by employing the synthetic method. For Hobbes, the synthetic method proceeds from cause to effect, tracing how the effect is generated or created on the basis of its cause. This could be seen, in the case of Hobbes’s politics, in the way in which Hobbes derived the state of nature, and ultimately the commonwealth, from the primary principles of his politics, namely the principle of natural right, the principle of equality, and the principle of scarcity.

In Chapter 4 I made the case that this aspect of his method directly informed his beliefs regarding the nature of the commonwealth. For Hobbes, to move from cause to effect via the synthetic method is the same thing as to outline the parts of a given thing’s nature. Incorporating his views on causal power, I argued that both sovereign power and the power of the people constituted the entire or plenary cause of the commonwealth, that is, that the commonwealth was best understood as an effect of its constitutive causes. Rooted in his account of scientific method, this interpretation had the benefit, I explained, of making sense of Hobbes’s views regarding the conditions that both lead to, and perhaps more importantly, guard against, the dissolution of the commonwealth.

In Hobbes’s synthesis of scientific method and political insight, one finds not only a revolutionary conception of the scientific status of political philosophy, but also a radical thinking of politics. Over the course of the preceding chapters, I have tried to show how the latter depends upon a proper understanding of the former. What emerges
from such a reading has profound implications, I believe, for how we understand Hobbesian politics, as it forces us to reassess our conceptual and theoretical genealogies.

As was explained in Chapter 5, what surfaces is the multitude and its centrality for Hobbes’s political project. Certain important moments of Hobbes’s argument rely on, and specific forms of action can only be explained in terms of, the concept of the multitude. Its presence bears directly on the significance of Hobbesian politics and its location within the topography of political thought.

For some time, it has become commonplace to view Hobbes’s politics as colored by a certain form of individualism.312 This individualism can be seen in the way he conceives of natural right, in his atomistic characterization of the state of nature, and in his view on the individual person of the sovereign representative. It seems to go without saying that, for Hobbes, the only form of political subject or actor imaginable is that of the individual. Even the “people” as political subject is individual, for as I have explained, its existence and activity is constituted in and through the individual will of the sovereign. The presence of the multitude in Hobbes’s thought challenges this individualist interpretation. As I have shown, the multitude is distinctly collective in configuration—it consists of many. Yet, though it is inherently multiple in its constitution, it is nonetheless singular in its effect. When many engage in a concerted expression of their power, the power produced, that is the act that results, can only be understood in terms of a subject that is itself manifold. Whatever its particular merits,

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and there may be some, the individualist reading of Hobbes is unable to account for the variegated, collective subject of the multitude. This relates directly, I believe, to Hobbes’s politics and its place within the history of political thought.

Hobbes’s political legacy is a complicated matter. This, perhaps, is due to the complexity of his politics itself. As we have seen, Hobbes’s political philosophy has been viewed as an ardent defense of authoritarianism, despotism, even (anachronistically) totalitarianism. In Chapter 4, I argued against this reading. By making use of his account of causal power, I tried to show that the commonwealth stands as the effect of a confluence of forces—the power of the people, on the one hand, and sovereign power, on the other—and that any authoritarian, despotic, or totalitarian abuse of sovereign power could not but lead to civil war and the dissolution of the commonwealth. Hobbes’s political thought, on the reading I provided, is thus anti-authoritarian, anti-despotic, anti-totalitarian.

And yet, from a different angle, Hobbes’s politics has also been seen to harbor some of the central tenets of modern liberalism. According to Leo Strauss, for instance, Hobbes “is the founder of liberalism.”\(^{\text{313}}\) For Strauss, and others like him, the semblance between Hobbes’s thought and liberalism resides largely in his emphasis on the priority of the individual in his account of the state of nature, in his stance on the natural equality amongst individuals, in his treatment of the individual nature of obligation, and in the representative telos of government, where the purpose of government is to represent the

individual interests of subjects. In short, it is Hobbes’s *individualism* that provides the point of contact between his political thought and modern liberalism. But, if it is true that the multitude plays a significant role in Hobbes’s politics, and that this calls into question any identification of his thought with individualism, then so too does the presence of the multitude complicate any simple connection between Hobbes’s thought and modern liberalism. Thus, even if it is the case that liberalism sees much of itself in Hobbes, the Hobbesian multitude reflects a form of politics somehow beyond liberalism. The work I have presented in the foregoing chapters, I believe, provides us the means to discern what this might be.

I explained in the opening chapters that Hobbes’s *a priori* political science proceeds from cause to effect, from the genetic elements of a thing to the thing generated on the basis of those elements. Hobbes understands the causes of a thing to be the parts of its nature. In Chapter 4, I showed how this treatment of method finds expression in his account of the commonwealth or state. The commonwealth exists as the effect of its plenary or entire cause, where this plenary cause consists of both the active cause of sovereign power, and the passive cause of the power of the people. That is, sovereign power and the power of the people constitute the parts of the commonwealth’s or state’s nature. Understood in this way, Hobbes’s political science *qua* science outlines the fundamentally representative structure of the commonwealth.

As I said a moment ago, this representative nature of the state is one of the defining features of liberalism. According to this liberal conception, the state exists as a means to satisfy the interests of its individual subjects. In Hobbes, this can be seen most

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314 According to Chantal Mouffe, *On the Political* (London: Routledge, 2005), 10, the “dominant tendency” of liberalism is “a rationalist and individualist approach which forecloses acknowledging the nature of collective identities.”
clearly in his later account of sovereign authorization. The sovereign is established in order to satisfy the interests and desires of those who contract with one another to establish it—in so doing, they become authors of all of the sovereign’s actions. As such, the commonwealth is unified insofar as the people identify with the will of the sovereign representative. The sovereign’s will is the will of the people, and the people’s interests are the interests of the sovereign. But as I argued in Chapter 5, the concept of the multitude is irreducible to this representative structure. Both the sovereign and the people possess a unified configuration, whereas the multitude, because of its collective arrangement, does not. This is why, in the case of the fourth true liberty, Hobbes understands its collective exercise to embody an irregular, rather than regular, political system. Moreover, the distance between the multitude and representationalism is evident in the case of the first three resistance rights. As I argued, the collective exercise of these rights by the multitude cannot be understood to be part and parcel of the representative structure of the commonwealth insofar as such acts are attacks against that structure.

Placed within the context of Hobbes’s account of method, what follows is that the multitude is not part of the nature of the commonwealth or state, for the latter is defined by its representative structure.

This is not to say that the multitude is not. As I have tried to show, Hobbes’s explicit declarations notwithstanding, its presence is to be found throughout his political thought. Yet, if it is part of Hobbes’s political science, this means that Hobbes’s science of the political has as its object a domain that includes, but is not limited to, the politics, which is to say the institutions and functions, of the representative commonwealth or state. Hence, though the commonwealth or state is political, the nature of the political
extends beyond the state and its politics of representation. There is in Hobbes, then, a difference between a politics of the state and the field of the political.

The theoretical distinction between politics and the political, as it informs our current political philosophical landscape, can be traced back to the work of Carl Schmitt, a close reader of Hobbes. Schmitt, in his *The Concept of the Political*, argues that the identification of the political with the state and party politics, which is to say with “the scramble for office and the politics of patronage,” attempts to mask, though does not erase, the fundamental antagonisms that constitute the political.315 For Schmitt, the basic form of these antagonisms is that of the friend-enemy distinction, where groups are formed and distinguished from one another according to an identification with friends, and a corresponding dissociation from enemies. 316 Because all political identities, therefore, consist of a relationship between friend and enemy, this means that such identities are not self-sufficient, but are instead inherently relational in character. For Schmitt, because of the constitutive difference between friend and enemy that is at the root of the political, antagonisms are always possible. That is, the unity of the state can never do away with political difference insofar as political difference is part of the very nature of the political. As it concerns the argument I am putting forth, this implies that the modern liberal state and its institutional procedures and mechanisms does not, and cannot, hold a monopoly on the political—in fact, the very identity, or as Hobbes would have it, the essential unity, of the state presupposes that it cannot. The political and politics are necessarily distinct.

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315 Schmitt, *The Concept of the Political*, 32.
316 Ibid., 26.
This “political difference,” as Oliver Marchart has called it, that is the difference between politics and the political, has formed something of a horizon for a variety of recent radical democratic political theorists.\textsuperscript{317} What they have seen in this distinction is a valuable theoretical critique of the modern liberal state, and a conceptual resource for the articulation of a form of democracy, of democratic action, not wedded to its unified representative structure. This distinction has been mobilized, for instance, by Chantal Mouffe. Where for Schmitt the political is defined by antagonism, for Mouffe it is essentially \textit{agonistic}. According to Mouffe, the “task for democratic theorists and politicians should be to envisage the creation of a vibrant ‘agonistic’ public sphere of contestation where different hegemonic political projects can be confronted. This is, in my view, the \textit{sine qua non} for an effective exercise of democracy.”\textsuperscript{318} The modern liberal democratic conception of the state, because of its emphasis on the politics of representative consensus and the institutional consolidation of power, is unable to account for the way in which \textit{difference}—different powers, different subjectivities, different collectivities—grounds the political. Such a view, based as it is on the distinction between politics and the political, finds expression in a number of other theorists as well. From Jacques Rancière’s theory of the police and the \textit{demos}, to Jean-Luc Nancy’s and Philippe Lacoue-Labarthe’s differentiation of \textit{le politique} and \textit{la politque}, from Claude Lefort’s work in \textit{Democracy and Political Theory} to Alain Badiou’s in \textit{Metapolitics}, radical democratic theory has embraced the conceptual distinction between politics and the political in order to move beyond modern liberal

\textsuperscript{318} Mouffe, \textit{On the Political}, 3.
democratic theory and its representative conception of the state, and in so doing, present a democratic theory worthy of the name.\textsuperscript{319}

The implication of the reading I have presented is that Hobbes’s theory of the political and its irreducibility to the politics of liberal representationalism places him squarely within this tradition of radical democratic theory. Hobbes’s political thought, far from being a bygone relic of the past, a museum piece representing a mummified monarchism, is one pertinent to our own contemporary politico-philosophical horizons, and this because we, too, are still trying to come to terms with what, precisely, the political is and the place of democracy within it.

WORKS CITED

WORKS BY THOMAS HOBBES


OTHER WORKS


