Webs of Association:
the Textual Construction of a Commonwealth
in Thomas Hobbes's *Leviathan*

by

Brian William Richardson
B.A. (Political Science), University of Victoria, 1989
B.A. (Philosophy), University of Victoria, 1989

A Dissertation Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the
Requirements for Degree of

MASTER OF ARTS

in the Department of Political Science
(Contemporary Social and Political Theory)

[redacted]

We accept this thesis as conforming to the required standard

[redacted]

Dr. R. B. J. Walker, Supervisor (Department of Political Science)

[redacted]

Dr. W. Magnusson, Departmental Member (Department of Political Science)

[redacted]

Dr. E. Cobley, Outside Member (Department of English)

[redacted]

Dr. J. Rayner, External Examiner
(Department of Political Science, Malaspina University College)

University of Victoria

Supervisor: Dr. R. B. J. Walker

Abstract

Thomas Hobbes's *Leviathan* is an extended consideration of the nature of political order. How is a multitude distinct from a unity? To understand Hobbes's answer, it is important to understand what he thought a scientific analysis of the commonwealth should be like. The account must be composed of clearly defined words and deductions. The argument ought to be a clear progression from premise to conclusion. Science must not include metaphors or rhetorical tropes, which are confusing and potentially seditious. However, despite his own ideal, metaphors occur throughout Hobbes's work. For example, the commonwealth is compared to a building, the human mind is likened to a river, and sedition is discussed as a disease.

Many commentators use Hobbes's attack on the use of metaphors to justify ignoring or altering the passages in his work that they label metaphorical. Hobbes's position becomes clear because much of what he writes, well over half the text, is irrelevant to his scientific account. Other commentators acknowledge his metaphors, but do not move beyond claiming that he is a contradictory thinker. Because both positions do not adequately consider Hobbes's epistemology, they overemphasize the place of metaphors in his work.

Knowledge begins with experience, out of which humans construct ideas. People use words as signs for their ideas. Science is primarily concerned with locating general ideas in a hierarchical structure. The more universal the idea, the higher it is located. Within this web, any particular object can be compared to other objects that share some quality. While Hobbes rejects metaphors, he bases scientific knowledge on the associations of ideas.

Hobbes approached the problem of political order by comparing the commonwealth to things such as buildings, machines, human bodies and stage actors. Two dominant patterns that structure Hobbes's associations are, first, a division between physical, animate and symbolic objects and, second, a division between material, final, efficient and formal causality. How the commonwealth is created, how it acts, and how people can act within it are all delineated by the ideas that contribute to the idea of the commonwealth. Therefore, after closely considering Hobbes's epistemology, it is necessary to reject some of the categories that are frequently used to characterize his texts, and to rethink how we understand the scientific account of the commonwealth that Hobbes constructed.

[redacted]

Dr. R. B. J. Walker, Supervisor (Department of Political Science)

[redacted]

Dr. W. Magnusson, Departmental Member (Department of Political Science)

[redacted]

Dr. E. Cobley, Outside Member (Department of English)

[redacted]

Dr. J. Rayner, External Examiner
(Department of Political Science, Malaspina University College)

List of Illustrations

Index

To my mother

Introduction
The Fascination of *Leviathan*

> Philosophy, as we use the word, is a fight against the fascination which forms of expression exert upon us.
>
> Ludwig Wittgenstein

The works of Thomas Hobbes have dominated the vocabulary of modern political thought. He is himself part of the western philosophical tradition and has been treated as such for centuries. His works have been constantly analysed, dissected, positioned and reconditioned. As a result, to say anything about his work is to risk repeating what has been written before. How can anything new be said about Hobbes? Is what he attempted to say and his place in the history of thought not as secure as the geometric arrangement of his own system? From texts that have become settled, what is left to be set? While anyone who begins to comment on a text faces this danger, repetition particularly threatens those who comment on Hobbes's writings because of his status ... and because the battle against fascination is over.

Arguments lose their fascination when they are reduced to a few choice, sanitized statements that simply echo or contradict what the reader already believes. As they are allowed to be complex and autonomous, texts become more fascinating, more challenging. Texts are artifacts in which authors have tried to come to terms with their world and to communicate their beliefs to others. The author may be distant or dead, but that does not mean that the author was never there. In short, readers must permit texts to exist somewhere between mediocrity and mystery, or, rather, between sameness and absolute difference. Readers must allow for textual wonder. Therefore, as a primary methodological point, we must invert Wittgenstein and say rather that *philosophy, as we use the word, is a fight to realize that words ought to fascinate us.*

But is this kind of attitude towards Hobbes's work justifiable? To suggest that Hobbes's texts ought to be fascinating runs counter to his own claim that his scientific account of politics is a clear and plain description. Rhetorical flourishes and words that catch our fancy are appropriate for literary but not for scientific texts. In a few significant and often-quoted passages, Hobbes vehemently rejects the use of metaphor. He writes in *Leviathan*, for instance, that:

> The Light of humane minds is Perspicuous Words, but by exact definitions first snuffed, and purged from ambiguity; *Reason* is the pace, Encrease of Science, the way; and the Benefit of man-kind, the end. And on the contrary, Metaphors, and senselesse and ambiguous words, are like *ignes fatui*; and reasoning upon them, is wandering amongst innumerable absurdities; and their end, contention, and sedition, or contempt.[1]

Metaphors are an abuse of speech wherein people use words "in other sense than that they are ordained for; and thereby deceive others."[2] (Significantly, Hobbes uses the metaphor of wandering to suggest how metaphors affect reasoning.) Metaphors are associated with ambiguity and rhetoric, which are rejected in favour of the clear, perspicuous use of words tied to the scientific goal of increased rationalization.

> And therefore, when the Discourse is put into Speech, and begins with the Definitions of Words, and proceeds by Connexion of the same into generall Affirmations, and of these again into Syllogisms; the End or last summe is called the Conclusion; and the thought of the mind by it signified, is that conditionall Knowledge, or Knowledge of the consequence of words, which is commonly called SCIENCE. But if the first ground of such Discourse, be not Definitions; or if the Definitions be not rightly joyned together into Syllogismes, then the End or Conclusion, is again OPINION, namely of the truth of somewhat said, though sometimes in absurd and senslesse words, without possibility of being understood.[3]

By invoking passages like this, commentators take for granted that metaphors

---

[1] *Leviathan*, pp. 116-117.

[2] *Leviathan*, p. 102.

[3] *Leviathan*, p. 131.

and rhetorical tropes should not be taken seriously in Hobbes's texts. Science is purged the ability to fascinate. One implication of this, however, has been that commentators seldom consider what words like "metaphor" and "science" meant to Hobbes. They adopt a vocabulary but fail to provide the intellectual framework in which that vocabulary operated. As a result, it is rarely clear why one idea should be labelled a metaphor and another not, and therefore why the text should be understood in one way and not another.

❧

My discussion will begin at the end, and concern itself first with what Hobbes has become. How do commentators begin to understand what Hobbes was trying to claim? I will focus on one pervasive and important strategy for organizing Hobbes's texts—sometimes barely a set of key words, other times an overt reading strategy. The text is divided into two parts: the first is labelled conceptual, scientific or deductive, the second is labelled metaphorical, literary, or rhetorical. The "scientific" parts of the text are reformulated into a set of axioms, arguments and conclusions while the "rhetorical" parts are either ignored or translated into a scientific form. Jean Hampton's position is typical.

> Hobbes meant his work to be appreciated as a philosophical argument for absolute sovereignty, not as an exhibit in a museum of seventeenth-century political beliefs. Hence, the use of any tools of logic or any modern conceptual distinctions that will help to advance, clarify, or improve Hobbes's argument for his political theory is fully in accordance with his purposes and true to the spirit of his work.[4]

The bulk of Hobbes's discussion is tied to a small number of key premises concerning the nature of science, of the world and of Man. Hobbes is turned into a clear and simple thinker—the argument is straightforward and singular—at the cost of denying a large part of what he wrote while making the rest uninteresting. Hobbes is not allowed to fascinate because he must support the Enlightenment's account of an abstract and pure science—an account that often rejects complexity as much as it rejects ambiguity and

[4] Hampton, p. 3.

confusion.

One serious problem with this interpretive strategy is the lack of justification for using it. Why is the division between the metaphorical and the conceptual so important when reading Hobbes's work? Why are some passages scientific and others not? Why, in particular, is the social contract obviously scientific and the body politic obviously metaphorical? Hobbes used the idea of the metaphor against his opponents; is it so obvious that it applies to his own work? By and large, commentators have assumed that Hobbes understood the idea in the way they do. However, the meaning of metaphor is constructed alongside the reader's other epistemological beliefs, beliefs that are not necessarily held by Hobbes. What arises is a migration of terminology. Hobbes and his critics use many of the same words, but this only obscures any differences in how the words are understood. Applying the shared terminology to Hobbes's own text has created a basic contradiction in his work that his interpreters continue to struggle with: he attacks the use of metaphor while using them everywhere.

The second chapter shifts from the interpretive strategies of contemporary commentators to the nature of Hobbes's attack on the use of metaphors. The key goal here is to determine precisely what Hobbes is attacking when he attacks metaphors. His attack ought to be understood in the context of his own discussions about language, meaning and science. The division between metaphor and science is connected to a general concern for the nature of knowledge. How does Hobbes set about answering the question "What is a commonwealth?" The focus here is not the particular answer that Hobbes gives but rather the conditions that make any answer acceptable. How does his account of science condition his scientific account of politics? What, ultimately, is the intellectual situation in which Hobbes begins to write? Although Hobbes attacks the use of metaphors, he accepts and often glorifies the use of analogies, associations and so on. It will therefore become evident that what has been marginalized by most commentators, such as the "body

politic," is in fact quite acceptable in Hobbes's discussion. It will also become evident that logical categories such as definitions and deductions, although vital, have strictly delimited roles in Hobbes's account of science.

The third chapter will consider how Hobbes organized his understanding of the commonwealth. The basic claim, which follows from the second chapter, is that Hobbes constructed his account of the commonwealth in general accordance with his epistemology and that, as a result, passages that have been labelled metaphorical are in fact consistent with his account of science. Hobbes's work becomes more complex, first because more of the text becomes part of his "serious" presentation and second because the relations between the ideas become more associative than implicative. It will also be argued that many of Hobbes's associations fit within two complementary structures: first, a division of objects into a three-tiered hierarchy of complexity from simple physical objects to animate objects to linguistic objects; and, second, a division of motions into four kinds of causality: material, formal, final and efficient. Both of these structures echo passages in the works of Aristotle. Hobbes's account of the commonwealth involves a sophisticated use of several mutually-supporting patterns of associations that compare the commonwealth to such things as a building, a human body, a contract, and a theatre.

The final chapter in the thesis will consider the sophisticated image of politics in the frontispiece of *Leviathan*. The page stands in particular contrast to the account of political science that commentators have found in Hobbes's text, which helps explain why so few commentators write more than a sentence or two on the picture. The frontispiece will be located as a concluding *mise en scene* for Hobbes's account of the commonwealth, one that both mirrors and prefigures Hobbes's work.

❧

In the light of contemporary discussions on language, it would have been easy to title this thesis "Thomas Hobbes's Use of Metaphor." It has

become self-evident, as well as fashionable, to claim that meaning-creation is inherently metaphorical. This may be true, but it is not my direct concern. It is far too easy to trap historical thinkers in the skirmishes of the present. What I am more interested in is how and why "the metaphor" has become part of the way that people understand Hobbes's work. I will consider three related questions.

Does Hobbes use metaphors? This question can be easily answered once "the metaphor" is defined. Most commentators accept that Hobbes used metaphors; the key difference between them is how they respond to these metaphors. Some readers are hostile, others are congenial. However, as will become clear later, it is not so obvious that Hobbes used metaphors; and it may well be the case that the identification of metaphors in Hobbes's text is misplaced.

How has "the metaphor" been used to understand Hobbes's work? The history of a text contributes as much to how the text is understood as the text itself does. Commentators are conditioned by previous commentaries. For this reason, it is important to determine how the idea of the metaphor has been used to understand Hobbes's text. Whatever its justification, the idea has been an important theme.

How would Hobbes understand his own work? The third and final question considers how Hobbes's own account of experience, language, metaphor and science generates a frame for understanding his texts. Whether Hobbes's account of metaphor is contradictory or not depends on what he writes and how he characterizes what he writes.

For Hobbes to become interesting, it is necessary to rethink the ways that "the metaphor" has been deployed around and within his text. Accepting that Hobbes is separated from us, that he is approaching the question of politics in ways that could be very different, is a first but important step in allowing his texts to become fascinating.

Hobbes and His Modern Critics:
The Butchering of *Leviathan*

> When Alexander captured Gordium, which is reputed to have been the home of the ancient king Midas, he saw the celebrated chariot which was fastened to its yoke by the bark of the cornel-tree, and heard the legend which was believed by all the barbarians, that the fates had decreed that the man who untied the knot was destined to become the ruler of the whole world. According to most writers the fastenings were so elaborately intertwined and coiled upon one another that their ends were hidden: in consequence Alexander did not know what to do, and in the end loosened the knot by cutting through it with his sword, whereupon the many ends sprang into view. Plutarch, *The Age of Alexander*

I shall begin at the end and consider what has become of *Leviathan* through the varied attempts to understand the work. There are too many passages to comment on and too many ways of putting the passages together. The knot is too large; not everything can be considered. How can an unmanageable entanglement of possible meanings be managed, understood, and assimilated? Every commentary controls, selects and organises passages in a text within a certain number of categories. The goal of commentary is frequently to control all the potential ways of understanding and using a text, to avert the powers and the dangers of the text, to cope with chance events and undecidable questions that "evade its ponderous, awesome materiality."[5] When a reader faces a text, almost anything could happen, almost anything *could* be said. There must be some movement from the potentially infinite to the practically constrained. Commentators respond in many ways to the potential openness, complexity and ambiguity of Hobbes's text.

---

[5] Foucault, "The Discourse on Language," p. 216.

External Barriers. Commentary can be hindered by things that are deployed around the text, in particular the idea of the author, and the historical context. These strategies are important because they point the reader's attention away from the text to things that make the text meaningful but that are themselves understood differently. The problems of textual interpretation can thus be avoided by searching elsewhere.

The concept of the author is an important category for textual commentary, making a set of texts coherent and providing a key for classifying and understanding what is being said. The meaning of the text can be connected to what the author intended to mean when the text was written. While it is unquestionable that many works are written with an intention, the textual unity that the author frequently provided depends on the assumption that the reader has access to the mind of the author. However, all that the reader has direct access to are words located in the material text. The author's intention must be pieced together from circumstantial evidence, and even then the best accounts remain controversial.

An author's intention is usually connected to how the author understood what he or she was writing about. By determining what Hobbes wanted to say about the commonwealth, it is possible to determine how he understood the commonwealth. However, there is an important distinction between what the author intended to write and how the author understood the subject. Quentin Skinner confuses intention and understanding when he discusses the role of the author.[6] For him, writing is a two-stage process: the author thinks about a topic and then expresses the thoughts in words. The key interpretive concern is whether or not the author was sincere. However, understanding neither equals nor implies an awareness of the understanding. I can understand something without thinking to myself *that* I understand it. I can write intending to mean something without forming a clear intention to convey that meaning. But the connection of understanding and an

[6] Skinner, "Meaning and Understanding," p. 63.

awareness of understanding is necessary if I am to form an *intention* to express these particular thoughts. Otherwise, there is a possible disjunction between what I intended to convey about a subject and how I understood the subject, a disjunction that I am unaware of and therefore cannot control. If the goal of textual commentary is to determine how an author like Hobbes understood a particular subject, intention is a useful but inadequate category. Intention provides the simpler of the two ways of understanding the world; it occurs at the level of self-awareness rather than simple awareness. Not having the idea of intention to unify meaning allows the commentary to be more creative—or at least expansive—but with a certain loss of clarity. Intention as a category of interpretation does not allow for the uncertainties, partial understandings, vaguely recognized implications and shadows of meaning that haunt the understanding.

The second way that the meaning of a text can be externally controlled is with reference to the historical context. The historical context, the situation in which the text was first created, offers a vast array of information including others texts, biographies, political events, social trends, and human actions. When the meaning of a text is located in the character of the situation at the time it was created—a claim that borders on a genetic fallacy—what was historically important becomes what is textually important. For instance, Hobbes's texts can be characterized through biographical and intellectual associations: he travelled to Italy and met Galileo; he escaped from England to France during the civil war and came into contact with Mersenne's circle. Various arguments can be understood as responses to political events such as the Ship Money controversy or the English Civil War. Each of these events shape Hobbes's character and help explain what he meant and why he wrote what he did.

But why should Hobbes be connected to these thinkers and these events as opposed to others? and why should he be connected to them in one way and not another? The historical context is nonetheless an essential part of any

attempt to understand what a text may have meant to whoever was writing or reading it. It is only through an historical awareness that the reader can come to partially understand the context and the language in which Hobbes began to write. But the historical information leaves open how Hobbes's texts are themselves to be understood. History only gives the reader basic ideas for interpreting the text, and reasons for believing that one interpretation is more plausible than another.

However much the text is thought to *mediate* between the author and the reader, the *distance* that the existence of the text entails creates a considerable challenge for commentary. The text is between the author and the reader as both bridge and abyss. This separation is compounded when the author and reader live in different cultures, contexts, or historical periods. If language is connected to a way of life, then how can a modern reader decide the way that Hobbes understood something without at the same time understanding a way of life that is itself very distant from our age? No modern reader has access to Hobbes's mind, his experiences, and almost certainly his language. Rather than understanding Hobbes as an example of a more general scientific position, Skinner writes that "there are only individual answers to individual questions, and as many different questions as there are questioners."[7] There is no such thing as a general scientific position. In addition, because "we must classify in order to understand, and we can only classify the unfamiliar in terms of the familiar"[8] any attempt to truly understand the unfamiliar will fail. Problems of commentary echo problems of epistemology, and Skinner's claims parallel a radical nominalist position. Skinner joins these two claims to support his belief that the past is "essentially inapplicable" to the present.

> ... whenever it is claimed that the point of the historical study of such questions is that we may learn directly from the answers, it will be found that what counts as an answer will usually look, in a different culture or period, so different in itself

[7] Skinner, "Meaning and Understanding," p. 65.

[8] Skinner, "Meaning and Understanding," p. 31.

> that it can hardly be in the least useful even to go on thinking of the relevant question as being 'the same' in the required sense at all. More crudely: we must learn to do our own thinking for ourselves. [9]

For Skinner, the distance that exists between the present and other "periods" and "cultures" leads to their isolation from us. A modern western thinkers can only think modern western thoughts. If we think about our problems with texts created in other contexts, we are wasting our time and confusing ourselves. Thus, by granting Hobbes's text autonomy, Skinner makes the work irrelevant.[10]

While the distance between reader and text creates impressive problems for understanding, by underlining the differences between the author and the reader, this distance can also lead to a sense of fascination. The problems associated with determining how an author understood a problem can allow the reader to better understand the author's world-view. Skinner's claim that the unfamiliar will always be understood in terms of the familiar is an overstatement. Not only was the familiar always once unfamiliar, but also the reader's attitudes towards the unfamiliar can forestall its reduction into the familiar.[11] If associating a text to a different situation implies confusion or misunderstanding, then such "mistakes" are acceptable.

Although the author and the historical context are important for how a text is understood, the reading the text itself is the focus of interpretations. Many new questions become relevant. How does meaning occur in a text? What kinds of readings are potentially correct? With what criteria can

---

[9] Skinner, "Meaning and Understanding," p. 66.

[10] The claim is more useful as a warning against those who all too quickly believe that they have understood the unfamiliar with the ideas they already had. In contrast, by being suspicious of understanding an unfamiliar thing in familiar ways, it is possible for readers to expand their understanding.

[11] It is less controversial to claim that a text can only be understood in terms that the reader *can* understand. However, any reader can understand a text in many ways, some familiar, others less so. The reader may be unable to complete assimilate the unfamiliar as unfamiliar, but it does not follow that the reader is trapped by what is at that point familiar.

someone choose between divergent but equally viable readings? The reader is distant from the author's desires, experiences and language, and must understand the text with his or her *own* desires, experiences and language. Reading is both personal and dialogic. And yet, whatever the problems associated with textual interpretation, the text can still be read while its content can be analysed and discussed.

Internal Fences. Even with the author and the historical context, the possibilties of interpretation are unbounded. It is in response to this openness that the contrast between metaphor and science is used to establish the general character of the book. It is regularly and correctly assumed that Hobbes intended to construct a single coherent system of ideas. As the nature of this coherence is established, Hobbes is usually, although with less justification, connected to a scientific discourse in which coherence is understood as logical consistency. A strategy that follows from this account of coherence divides the essential passages from the inessential ones. Although *Leviathan* is a large book, only a small number of passages are usually taken seriously. By far the most common way to justify what deserves comment is by dividing the scientific from the non-scientific passages. The non-scientific passages, whether labelled rhetorical, literary, or metaphorical, do not have to be considered. These labels are often interchangeable; they constitute a single vocabulary that is scattered, rarely analysed and virtually invisible throughout the commentaries. Even those commentators who do not use the vocabulary rely on its effects. They select the same passages or ideas as those who invoke the vocabulary. Not all passages or ideas are given equal status.[12] Through this process, ideas like metaphor and science establish how the text is understood, how the reader begins to read. Having established that this dichotomy is central to Hobbes's text, the readers can begin to arrange the

[12] I am thinking of Watkins in particular, who ignores the body politic without offering a justification for doing so.

work. The contrast between metaphors and science establishes a general frame of reference, a ready-made way to classify and approach passages.

Dividing Hobbes's text into scientific and metaphorical parts generates a basic contradiction in his argument. On the one hand he attacks the use of metaphors while on the other he uses metaphors throughout his work. As A. E. Taylor writes:

> ... it is one of the entertaining ironies of history that the English philosopher who, of all others, is most strongly insistent upon the deductive character of genuine science should be chiefly remembered by that part of his work which is most flagrantly inconsistent with his own strictly scientific method.[13]

Although Taylor limits the irony to Hobbes's psychology, the contradiction can be found in any aspect of Hobbes's work.[14] Terence Ball even suggests that Hobbes was unaware that his key arguments used metaphors.[15] Most commentators are not content to believe that Hobbes allowed a basic contradiction in his work. While the centrality of the division between metaphor and science is common, the appraisal of, or explanation for the metaphors in Hobbes's text varies.

The Metaphor as Vestige. Gary Shapiro claims that the metaphors in Hobbes's work occur because of his location between the Medieval and Early Modern periods. Insofar as Hobbes looks forward to the modern period, his work does not depend on metaphors; insofar as he remains a captive of the

---

[13] Taylor, p. 56.

[14] That Hobbes is a contradictory writer has become part of the basic claims made about his text. In an off-hand remark, Beral Lang writes that:

> Both Hobbes and Locke, for example, object explicitly to the use in philosophical discourse of figurative language as it moves away (in their view) from the plain sense and direct reference of literal usage; but we know that this did not prevent either of these writers from making use of such figures and Hobbes most egregiously, of a large one - a "Leviathan" of one - at that.
>
> *Anatomy of Philosophical Style*, (p. 20)

[15] Ball, "Hobbes's Linguistic Turn," p. 756.

medieval worldview, he is trapped by analogical ways of thinking.

> Let me make just the brief suggestion that Hobbes has one foot in the literary and analogical world of the Renaissance and the other in the emerging mechanism and nominalism of the seventeenth century. He rejects metaphors and analogy consistently enough when it is a question of learning about nature by transferring or analogizing from human properties; but he is quite assured in his reliance on similarity in moving from man to the artificial man, the art of artifice involved being that of writing, and in expecting the reading to produce a self-reading analogous to the one Hobbes sets down in the book.[16]

This account of Hobbes's apparent use of metaphors depends on a discrete division of the history of ideas understood as the presence and then absence of analogical thought. The inconsistency in Hobbes's argument becomes the conflict between two ages. Shapiro's characterization also depends on the questionable move from Hobbes's denial of a particular analogy—"Men measure, not onely other men, but all others, by themselves"[17]—to the claim that Hobbes denied all analogies.

On the same theme, according to David Hale, by the 17th century, "the living metaphor of the body politic became a dead phrase which is simply synonymous with 'the state', having no further meanings implied or accepted."[18] What was once a metaphor has become synonymous with a basic political concept. Hobbes is not caught by the medieval world-view; his location as a modern theorist ensures that the only metaphors he uses are dead ones. In opposition to Hale and Shapiro, it will be argued in a later chapter that Hobbes presents reasons for rejecting the particular analogy of the physical body as human while at the same time making analogies central to his position.

---

[16] Shapiro, Gary. "Reading and Writing in the Text of Hobbes's *Leviathan*," p. 149.

[17] Hobbes, *Leviathan*, p. 87.

[18] Hale, *The Body Politic*, p. 12.

The Metaphor as Limitation. Another way to respond to the apparent metaphors in Hobbes's text is to view their existence as a failure in Hobbes's argument. This strategy is frequently used by commentators who approach the text from a logical or scientific perspective. When she discusses Hobbes's account of the institution of "an absolute sovereign" out of the state of nature, Hampton writes that:

> Given his uncharacteristic unclarity and use of metaphor at this point in his argument, it appears that Hobbes did not see his way clearly enough to give it.[19]

To give what? Hampton assumes the existence of a Hobbesian argument that Hobbes himself failed to give. This is not an isolated quote in Hampton's work. She in fact argues in favour of this attitude towards Hobbes in the introduction to her commentary.

> Hobbes meant his work to be appreciated as a philosophical argument for absolute sovereignty, not as an exhibit in a museum of seventeenth-century political beliefs. Hence, the use of any tools of logic or any modern conceptual distinctions that will help to advance, clarify, or improve Hobbes's argument for his political theory is fully in accordance with its purposes and true to the spirit of his work.[20]

Hampton's point that Hobbes should not be treated as an historical relic is well-taken. However, her janitorial attitude towards the text makes it unclear what she can learn from it. What Hobbes lacks are "tools of logic" and "modern conceptual distinctions," but Hampton fails to specify what these tools are, and given that her own commentary never strays from the basic tools of deductive logic—premise, conclusion, validity etc.—it is not clear how she intends to help Hobbes here. Hampton also assumes, without justification, that the key difference between early modern and modern political thought is that modern thought has access to more distinctions. Hobbes does not live in a different world, he does not understand his words in a different way. He only lacks clarity. How Hobbes understood his work becomes irrelevant; what the commentator has to do is apply modern developments in thinking to an early modern thinker. Her account of

---

[19] Hampton, p. 136.

[20] Hampton, p. 3.

commentary ends up treating Hobbes like a confused modern. It is more than surprising that, after helping Hobbes's argument along, Hampton eventually finds it indefensible anyway.

When Hobbes's work is understood within the division between metaphor and science, it follows that parts of the work have scientific merit, parts of it can be salvaged. Commentators will sometimes exchange the metaphorical (defective) words with scientific (correct) ones. A. E. Taylor, for example, writes that:

> ... in any case, the substance of Hobbes's reasoned plea for absolutism is quite independent of the largely mythical form in which it is clothed by the author. However governments originate, it is at least true that their permanency depends upon the recognition of governors and governed alike of certain general principles defining the functions of the governor and the obligations of the governed, and such recognition may not unsuitably be represented to the imagination as an implicit bargain.[21]

In another passage Taylor redirects Hobbes's use of "forbidden" in his discussion of Natural Laws by claiming that the use was "of course, metaphorical" and then continues by writing that "his meaning is simply that...."[22] Taylor's alternative wording is to understand natural laws as pragmatic precepts that people, when they "reflect" on their situation, could not rationally deny. Thus the marginalization of metaphors is quickly followed by the use of a metaphor—thought as reflection—to help describe what Hobbes really meant.[23] How Hobbes said what he was trying to say becomes almost irrelevant.

This denial and substitution becomes pathological in Taylor's text. Having created Hobbes as a scientific thinker who denies metaphors, and having thus ignored ideas of the body politic in Hobbes's work, Taylor writes:

> To borrow an analogy from the case of the individual, the soul of the great

[21] Taylor, p. 80.

[22] Taylor, p. 81.

[23] Taylor also writes about "... Hobbes's superficial appeals to physical analogies ..." (p. 58). The passage cuts out physical analogies by using a physical analogy.

> artificial 'body politic' is not diffused over the whole organism, 'all in every part,' but definitely located in a central organ, or brain.[24]

The body politic comes back into the commentary—as an analogy, not a metaphor—as Taylor's illustration for how Hobbes understood the commonwealth to be "one man." Taylor does not pursue the analogy, nor are any of Hobbes's own passages referred to.[25] The body politic is used as a quick illustration for a political order understood exclusively by Hobbes as a contractual relation.

The inverse application of the scientific appraisal of metaphors as inadequate emphasizes the non-metaphorical character of passages that should be taken seriously. For instance, J. W. N. Watkins reassures his readers that "when [Hobbes] spoke of [mental activities] as motions of the mind he was not speaking metaphorically."[26] The passage ought to be read literally. In his role as a commentator, Watkins does not have to repair Hobbes's text on this point; he simply has to repeat the words. The rejection of metaphors in Hobbes's text is thus used as a way to adopt an interpretive realism that connects commentary to a repetition of the text more than to an engagement with the text.

The Metaphor as Supplement Metaphors do not necessarily indicate a failure in Hobbes's argument, they can exist because a text is attempting to be more than scientific. M. M. Goldsmith claims that Hobbes used metaphors to make his work interesting.

> *Leviathan* is a masterpiece, the result of ten year's rethinking, revising, adding and polishing. And clearly what makes it a masterpiece is not its use of the organic analogy, the comparison of a state to a human body.... The use of the organic analogy is part of Hobbes's stylistic polishing, just one of many ways in which he tightened up what he said, made it wittier, crisper, more vivid.[27]

---

[24] Taylor, p. 98.

[25] Nor does Taylor indicate what he means by either metaphor or analogy.

[26] Watkins, p. 5.

Metaphors are "poetic tropes", "figures of speech", or "stylistic images" that entertain or make a text interesting. Hobbes, the master craftsman of political theory, developed his work rhetorically and scientifically. The polish was applied both to the style and the substance. Hobbes must have written two works, shuffled between the pages of the book like two mis-matched decks of cards. Commentary must divide the cards into their appropriate decks, cleaning up the mess found in a "polished" text.[28] Hobbes is praised while the metaphors he uses are still excluded from serious consideration.

David Johnston's book, *The Rhetoric of Leviathan*, is an extended attempt to explain the non-scientific passages in Hobbes's work. Many of the interpretive strategies that have been discussed so far are used somewhere in the work. Johnston does not extensively consider Hobbes's account of metaphors—the times that he uses the word are rare, and those usually place metaphor in a longer list of literary and rhetorical categories. Johnston is concerned with another, although similar contradiction: Hobbes denies rhetoric while displaying extensive rhetorical skill. However, it becomes evident as the commentary proceeds that the status of metaphors in Hobbes's text is tied directly to the status of rhetoric. Throughout the work, Johnston attempts to contain metaphors in rhetoric and out of science. When Hobbes uses rhetoric, he uses metaphors. Their fates are joined.

Johnston recognizes Hobbes as a fellow traveller in the Enlightenment project that opposes science to myth, irrationality and confusion. Hobbes is given a relatively standard role in the story, and is treated sympathetically.

> We need not accept Hobbes's own vision of political society to recognize that many of the pitfalls he was trying to avoid are real enough, and should be approached only with great circumspection.

---

[27] Hobbes, *The Elements of Law*, p. xx.

[28] Although it seems clear to him which cards belong to which decks, Goldsmith nowhere provides reasons for considering the body politic to be "metaphorical" or the social contract to be "scientific." The idea of the body politic is consistently labelled as metaphorical in the commentaries. Other ideas, such as the social contract, are sometimes labelled as metaphorical, other times as scientific.

Hobbes underestimated the power and role of myth in politics while overestimating the power of scientific correctives. Therefore, concludes Johnston, although Hobbes's picture of society and individuals is limited in some ways,

> In seeking to broaden our concept of human rationality—our self-understanding—we should not abandon altogether the line he tried to draw between the rational and the irrational, even if we do decide to shift or redefine that line.[29]

Johnston brings to the foreground of Hobbes's texts the opposition between reason and unreason because it is this opposition that he finds politically relevant. Johnston's book expands the irrational and the mythical to include the rhetorical, the passionate and the confused. All of these become problems to which science must respond.

Johnston connects Hobbes to the rhetorical tradition, which gives Hobbes technical skills of persuasion (and of using metaphors), and then connects him to the emerging scientific tradition, which gives him the substance of his political position. Rhetoric and science are each given a place in the story. Johnston rejects commentators such as Goldsmith who criticize the rhetorical qualities of *Leviathan* for making the work more obscure. Because "these arguments presuppose a radically disembodied conception of the nature of political philosophy, one that is essentially foreign to Hobbes's way of thinking," Johnston does not consider them further; he finds the explanation for the non-scientific passages in Hobbes's political goals.[30]

Johnston connects Hobbes to rhetoric in three ways. The first is biographical. Hobbes had an early interest in republican thought but by the time he began to write his political works, he had rejected republicanism in favour of a scientific account of politics. What Hobbes retains from his early studies is the knowledge of rhetoric that was joined to his humanist training. However, the character of his rejection is not clear. Although Hobbes argues for absolute sovereignty, and although he prefers the monarchical system, he

---

[29] Johnston, p. 218.

[30] Johnston, p. 68.

accepts that aristocratic and democratic forms are possible. Hobbes is quite willing to admit that Cicero's thoughts were appropriate for his time. It is not that a republican system is wrong, but rather that England has a different system and the English should not attempt to make England a republic. Also, republicanism does not necessarily deny that sovereignty must be absolute. For instance, Cicero's claim that the good of the people is law concerns a particular political system where the people are sovereign. One important belief that Hobbes shares with republican thought is the centrality of language in politics. Even according to Johnston, Hobbes claimed that "the strength of commonwealths ultimately resides in the opinions and beliefs of their members."[31] This can also be seen when Hobbes includes rhetoric in his scheme of the sciences, as the science of the consequences of speech in persuading.[32] Rhetoric may be a kind of skill, but it is also a science along with logic.

Johnston's second attempt to connect Hobbes to the rhetorical tradition focuses on the way that Hobbes distinguishes science and history. Whereas "Experience concludeth nothing universally" and history is "nothing else but sense, or knowledge original," otherwise called simply "experience," reason is capable of achieving universal knowledge "of the truth of propositions."[33]

> ... the axiomatic method of reasoning, which Hobbes came increasingly to associate with science, might provide a different and, in an explanatory sense, more powerful source of political knowledge than history even could hope to be.[34]

Johnston understands this division as one between two kinds of knowledge. Hobbes does not reject history. Some historical knowledge may be

---

[31] Johnston, 206. Johnston does not consider the places where Hobbes seems to privilege experience, such as when he labels knowledge of fact as "absolute" and knowledge of consequences as "conditional." (*Leviathan*: p. 147). This is important because Johnston attempts to limit science to abstract ideas that are created through definitions. If words are not connected to experience, then science cannot be connected to the world, even conditionally.

[32] Hobbes, *Leviathan*, p. 149.

[33] Johnston, p. 11.

[34] Johnston, p. 23.

problematic, particularly if the historian is attempting to reconstruct distant events, but history can supply "an abundance of evidence on which rests the science of causes ...."[35] What kind of relation Johnston means by "rest", whether causal, evidentiary, extractive or something else, is not clear. But the nature of the division between science and history, abstract thought and experience, would be important for providing metaphors with a location and a status.

One interesting implication of Johnston's discussion of this point is that words cannot be both literal and scientific. For a word to be literal, it must refer to an object directly through a process of naming. The literal is tied to what has been experienced and to the ability to provide ostensive definitions. If the historical, the experienced, is not made the ground of science, then a word used by science does not have a referent. The problem is acute because Hobbes's nominalism entails that there are no universal forms to which universal words can refer. But where does the meaning of an abstract word come from? According to Johnston, a word's meaning is established by its definition. But a definition is the substitution of one word with many words. If experience is excluded from science, then definitions cannot refer to the world. However, it would then follow that the only thing a definition does is to exchange one word with many words. The distinction between true and grammatically correct propositions becomes impossible to establish. Watkins, whose position is close to Johnston's on this point, refers to this account of truth as Hobbes's Humpty Dumptyism—"'When I use a word,' Humpty-Dumpty said in a rather scornful tone, 'it means just what I choose it to mean—neither more nor less.'" For Watkins, Hobbes overcomes the relativistic implications of his nominalism by allowing names to stand for accidents; that is, for shared characteristics or properties.[36] Hobbes's nominalism is made inconsistent to make his theory of truth plausible.

---

[35] Johnston, p. 10.

[36] Watkins, p. 104.

Johnston, who is faced with the same paradox, does not offer a response; his commentary only progresses to the point of claiming that science must be both connected and not connected to experience.

A related implication of Johnston's discussion is that prudence is placed in an awkward position. Prudence is an outgrowth of historical knowledge but still not universal knowledge; it exists somewhere in between. But if prudence is accepted, then the dichotomy between history and science is made a bit less obvious. Prudence "rests" on experience more than science does, but it is more general than simple experience can be. Although Johnston seems to take for granted that there must be some relation between abstraction, experience, science and history, he does not provide an adequate account of how the relationship is to be understood.

Johnston's third attempt to locate rhetoric in Hobbes's work focuses on the relationship between rhetoric, logic, poetry and history.[37] He limits his discussion to works by Erasmus and Sir Philip Sidney.[38] Johnston discusses the ability of the four arts to transmit ideas effectively. "Hobbes rigorously distinguished between inquiry and transmission (or between truth and elocution)."[39] He seems most concerned with placing logic, which is immediately tied to science, above the other arts. Logic is also tied to the acquisition of knowledge (inquiry). The relationship between rhetoric, poetry and history, each of which concern the transmission of ideas, becomes confused.

> Hobbes's emphasis upon elocution and style - upon the rhetoric of Thucydides's

[37] Johnston, p. 12.

[38] Johnston leaves out the extensive and relevant discussion of these topics in Bacon's work. This choice is surprising given Bacon's position in Hobbes's biography and his possible influence on Hobbes's intellectual development. Bacon is referenced three times in Johnston's work. The first is in connection to the centrality of ambition in politics, where no direct textual reference is given (p. 32). The second is in a discussion of the relevance of the audience, where Bacon's claim that his science should be "evident even to the meanest capacity" is quoted (p. 72). The third is when Bacon's term for scientific learning—"natural magic"—is given (p. 127).

[39] Johnston, p. 21.

> history - is partly a reflection and extension of this broad concern with the transmission of knowledge.[40]

Thucydides's *history* is described as *rhetorical*. Later in the book Johnston locates poetry *in* rhetoric.

> ... he who undertakes to be an heroic political philosopher should also take upon himself, in some measure, the part of the poet. From a literary point of view, then, *Leviathan* can be seen as the closing point of a circle that begins with a contrast between the power of the visual image and the powerlessness of the merely conceptual proposition for creating mental impressions, moves through the 'dry discourse' of strictly philosophical demonstration, and returns once again to the 'speaking picture' of poetry ....[41]

What matters most for Johnston's reading is that Hobbes is faced with a clear choice. "The fundamental dilemma confronting Hobbes's political theory can be reduced to the simple question: science or rhetoric?" This formulation leads, with a perceptible slide, to a choice: "Is political theory essentially a scientific enterprise or a political act?"[42] If Hobbes chooses science, then he chooses deductive logic and the possibility of gaining truth, but he reduces his political impact. For his texts to have a political impact, Hobbes must invoke the dark dangers of rhetoric. Rhetoric is successful in political persuasion because of its "ability to transmit ideas forcefully, to create deep and striking mental impressions."[43]

According to Johnston, Hobbes relates science and rhetoric as the soul is related to the body.[44] Johnston's use of "disembodied" is significant for the

---

[40] Johnston, p. 16.

[41] Johnston, p. 91. Throughout his discussions, Johnston uses a variety of metaphors to characterize the division between science and rhetoric: "speaking pictures," "dry discourses," "striking impressions" and "powerless propositions" are some examples. This is not a contradiction as it was with a commentator like A. E. Taylor, discussed above, who supported the attack on metaphors while using them in his commentary. However, it may suggest something about what Johnston thinks about the intellectual capacity of his own audience.

[42] Johnston, p. 61.

[43] Johnston, p. 28.

[44] Johnston, p. 68.

relation that it suggests. A disembodied soul is outside of its body. To be embodied is to be in a body but still to be fundamentally different from the body. Tracing the analogy backwards, science and rhetoric may coexist, but they do not overlap. There is no necessary reason why science is rhetorical just as there is no necessary reason why a soul is in a body. Purity would be reached with the death of the body; a disembodied science is possible. The separation is nonetheless far from distant; rhetoric is the underside of science, the non-true that can be passed off as truth—the persuasion of empty or dangerous thoughts, the body without a soul, the automaton, the unthinking masses. Thus, for Johnston, Hobbes reconciles science and rhetoric because rhetorical strategies can be justified with the promise of a scientific grounding.

Johnston moves from discussing different kinds of art to discussing different kinds of style to labelling different kinds of texts. Initially, the four arts are divided according to their respective goals: rhetoric seeks to "move the listener to perform something", logic seeks to "demonstrate the truth of something universal", poetry seeks to "glorify great deeds" and history seeks to "narrate a sequence of particular facts". The division between goals becomes a division between four styles of writing. A logical style must avoid "tropes and figures" while a rhetorical style usually will use "aphorisms and metaphors" because these can excite the emotions. Finally, the divisions become divisions between different works. *The Elements of Law* is essentially logical, a work of science appropriate for a restricted, educated audience,[45] whereas *Leviathan* is designed to have a broad political impact. The division between science and rhetoric is expanded into a very broad system of divisions that include disciplines, writing styles, and kinds of texts. It becomes a basic way to divide and simplify Hobbes's texts.

What sort of decision is it to choose between logic and rhetoric? Johnston's answer to this question is confusing in several ways. First, he does

[45] Johnston, p. 26.

not get clear what he means by "method." In Hobbes's introduction to Thucydides, "method" (Johnston's word) refers to "the order of [Thucydides's] presentation."[46] If method is a way of organizing a text, and science or logic is a kind of method, then science or logic are styles of presentation. Within the terms of the rhetorical tradition, the choice of method would be a rhetorical choice. The second problem is that Johnston discusses the composition of *The Elements of Law* as if Hobbes was making a rhetorical decision with a "very restricted audience in mind."[47] Determining which styles and images are best for convincing which audience is a key question for the rhetorician.

> It seems likely that he [Hobbes] would have considered logic and scientific demonstration the best, most persuasive form of discourse for such an audience, even though he knew it would not be suitable for a larger readership. [...] *The Elements of Law* is calculated to persuade by logical, not rhetorical means.[48]

By demonstrating his conclusions, Hobbes hoped to *persuade* the learned audience of their truth.[49] Scientific persuasion may be sober compared to the emotive persuasion that rhetoric provides, but still it seems that the choice between logic and rhetoric is a rhetorical one.

Johnston could respond by claiming that Hobbes did not choose a logical style for his learned audience for rhetorical reasons. Hobbes is not trying to convince his learned audience; they can understand the truths that he writes. It is only when he relates his ideas to "the masses," who cannot understand him directly, that a rhetorical approach is necessary. The choice of audience therefore is not like a rhetorical choice. Johnston quotes Hobbes:

> Now to demonstration and teaching of the truth, there are required long deductions, and great attention, which is unpleasant to the hearer; therefore they which seek not truth but belief, must take another way .... And such is the power of eloquence, as many times a man is made to believe thereby, that he sensibly feeleth smart and damage, when he feeleth none, and to enter into rage and indignation, without any

[46] Johnston, p. 5.

[47] Johnston, p. 71.

[48] Johnston, p. 62.

[49] Johnston, p. 28.

other cause, than what is in the words and passion of the speaker.[50]

According to Johnston's reading of Hobbes, logic is sober and unpleasant but necessary in order to gain truth. The (more appealing) alternative is eloquence, which cannot gain truth but can create belief. Why is it that some people are persuaded by logical arguments? (Hobbes's reaction to his first encounter with Euclid might also suggest that deduction is unpleasant to some people but not to others.) Logic continues to be described by Johnston as a form of persuasion. The persuasive power of logic is unanalysed, and possibly unanalysable so long as rhetoric and logic are contrasted alongside opinion and truth, persuasion and deduction. What Johnston seems to need is an alternative to persuasion for describing logic that is not persuasion but that remains persuasive.

Throughout his discussion Johnston uses "rhetoric" equivocally. In some places, the relation between logic and rhetoric is a relation between two arts: the first concerns how truth is attained, the second concerns how people are convinced and motivated with words. In other places, the relation between logic and rhetoric is a relation between two styles: the first is a tight, deductive form, the second is a loose, literary, eloquent form (Johnston often substitutes "eloquence" for "rhetoric"). There is a tension here because rhetoric describes both a particular style and the question of style as such. This is important because only when rhetoric is both a style and the question of style can the issue of transmission be limited to popular transmission and scientific transmission be insulated from the rhetorical requirements of transmission. As rhetoric becomes both a style and the choice between all styles, logic becomes a style that is not a style.

Having sketched out the division between rhetoric and science, the next step in Johnston's commentary is to label the early works, specifically *The Elements of Law*, as essentially scientific. The book is loosely modeled on an axiomatic method of reasoning, which is "... ill-designed to win the assent of

---

[50] Johnston, p. 61. Reference to Hobbes, *The Elements of Law*, II.8.14.

any but the most attentive and patient readers."[51] One implication is that this work is not a political act.

> In choosing to frame his political doctrine essentially in the form of a logical demonstration, Hobbes was effectively subordinating the political aims of his work to its scientific aims.[52]

It is unclear why a text that is to be read by a small, expert audience is not political, especially if the book is about law and the intended audience is composed of nobility and politicians. Nonetheless, by locating *The Elements of Law* in this way, Johnston provides Hobbes with a scientific text on which later rhetorical works can be based, and provides himself with an excuse for not discussing the metaphors in *The Elements of Law*. Johnston admits in passing that there are metaphors and rhetorical tricks in the scientific works, but he does not take this to be a problem. They exist, but they are not essential. But this attitude seems to be circular: the text does not use metaphors because it is scientific; the text is scientific because it is not rhetorical; it is not rhetorical because it is logical; it is logical because it does not use metaphors.

Johnston next labels *Leviathan* as a rhetorical work, which follows easily from the claim that "in writing this work, Hobbes was above all else, performing a political act, not a scientific one." *Leviathan* is intended to shape the opinions of a large public audience where:

> it was less important to demonstrate the truth of his political doctrines than to drive those doctrines into the minds of his readers, to express them in a language that would leave a deep and lasting impression upon them.[53]

Thus the "various components of this argument are tied together as the constituent elements of a single political act."[54] But Hobbes's political statement has a scientific grounding.

> It would be wrong to suggest that *Leviathan* is not a work of science or philosophy, for it clearly is such a work. But it also goes much further beyond the bounds of

---

[51] Johnston, p. 87.

[52] Johnston, p. 70.

[53] See Chapter 3 of Johnston, *The Rhetoric of Leviathan*, in particular pp. 89-90.

[54] Johnston, xix.

> propositional argument and logical demonstration ....[55]

In short, Hobbes draws upon the lessons of the rhetorical tradition to create conditions for the actualization of his political (and scientific) ideals.[56] Hobbes abandoned an earlier indirect political act where he advocated that his ideas be taught at the universities in favour of a political act that sought to mould public opinion directly. Rather than the professor, the book becomes the mediator between science and politics that allows science to be political.

Johnston offers an additional way to characterize Hobbes's intellectual development. By the time he wrote *Leviathan*, Hobbes's intellectual position had become more complex and his enemies more numerous. Hobbes had become part of the Enlightenment project that opposed superstition and irrationality.

> The opposition between reason and rhetoric had been Hobbes's basic theme in *The Elements of Law*. In *Leviathan*, it was replaced by a new theme, that of the struggle between enlightenment and superstition, between the forces of light and the forces of darkness.[57]

Hobbes's basic position did not change, but criticizing "the designs of cunning rhetoricians" was subsumed under a concern for the "powerful hold superstitious and magical beliefs exercise over the popular imagination."[58] Superstition hinders the political ideal that Hobbes had constructed on scientific principles because it leads to irrationality. Thus, according to Johnston, "the beliefs in prophecy, miracles, and magic would have to be tamed before sovereign authority could be established upon firm foundations."[59]

Johnston can then explain the existence of metaphors in *Leviathan* by referring to the kind of impact that Hobbes wanted the book to have. He

---

[55] Johnston, p. 67.

[56] Johnston, p. 133.

[57] Johnston, p. 131.

[58] Johnston, p. 107.

[59] Johnston, p. 153.

attempted to "puncture those beliefs" held by his audience that were politically dangerous.

> It is true that Hobbes condemns metaphors, ambiguous words, and other figures of speech as obstacles to strict ratiocination and the discovery of scientific truth—often invoking a metaphor himself to do so. But if the aim of *Leviathan* is less to demonstrate the truth of his political doctrines than to imprint them upon the minds of his readers, then metaphors, along with many other literary devices that have no place in a strict scientific demonstration, are entirely in place.[60]

It is significant that Johnston is not concerned with metaphors that are in the first half of the *Leviathan*. In fact, having granted that science can use metaphors, he does not attempt to explain *any* of them in the text. He is concerned specifically with analysing certain religious arguments in the second half of Hobbes's book.

According to Johnston, "from a strictly logical point of view..." nothing in the first half of the book depends on theology. The second half is a supplement "which can be explained only by going outside the bounds of its central argument" to consider what Hobbes was attacking and how he could best do so. For instance, Hobbes accepts miracles, but under conditions that make them very rare occurrences that are eventually accountable in natural categories. A miracle is a natural event that people as yet do not understand. By implication, those who claim to have experienced a miracle are simply claiming that they lack knowledge.

Johnston also discusses Hobbes's materialism as an example of rhetorical strategies in *Leviathan*. Hobbes's

> attempt to destroy the Christian mythology of the immortal soul with the weapon of metaphysical materialism is the first prong of a strategy designed to lead men toward [rational enlightenment].[61]

Johnston's comment here raises a general interpretive problem for this kind

---

[60] Johnston, p. 91.

[61] Johnston, p. 150. Taylor makes a similar argument: "... in short, the only advantage which Hobbes really derives from his materialism is that it furnishes him with a plausible excuse for his refusal to take theology seriously." (p. 45)

of strategy. Is Johnston claiming that Hobbes adopted materialism in order to refute Christian doctrines? Is Hobbes a materialist for strategic reasons? Most accounts, including Johnston's, argue that Hobbes believed in materialism.

Another example of this problem occurs when Johnston considers Hobbes's account of human nature. He writes that:

> Given his premise about the natural offensiveness of men, it was essential for Hobbes to find a motive that was powerful enough to counteract the insatiability and vanity that lay behind that offensiveness.[62]

But essential for what? Is there a position lying behind Hobbes's support of man's fear of death such that his psychology is rhetorical or accepted for (merely) strategic reasons? The division between rhetorical and scientific parts assumes what is serious and what is superfluous. Unfortunately there is seldom an obvious way to make this division. Although there may be incontestable examples of both, most parts of a text could be either.

Johnston's reading suggests a final problem that undercuts his attempt to privilege logic above rhetoric. Hobbes admits that deduction, and therefore science, is limited to the space between premises and conclusions. Science is necessarily conditional. Why, then, does someone believe premises that cannot be proven? Johnston's answer, which he does not elaborate, is that there is no way to prove the premises of an argument and that, subsequently, it is quite acceptable to use any means available to convince people of their correctness.

> Science cannot prove that the principles upon which it rests are true. But this limitation inherent in the nature of science need not prevent its advocates from using other means to persuade their readers to accept those principles as true.[63]

What this entails is that scientific demonstrations *depend* on prior persuasions and that science ultimately *depends* on rhetoric. This leads back to the question: Why does the inquirer comes to believe something? The

---

[62] Johnston, p. 34.

[63] Johnston, p. 131. Experience could have been an answer if Johnston had not completely distanced it from science. Hobbes's account of human nature requires that men look into themselves, "For this kind of Doctrine, admitteth no other Demonstration." (*Leviathan*, p. 83)

scientist must also be convinced of propositions that cannot be proven to be true. Johnston's account therefore becomes inverted: rhetoric provides the content of truth and logic provides the form.

The final appraisal of Johnston must therefore be that he does not construct a viable account of Hobbes's use of metaphors and, more severely for his own purposes, he does not construct a viable account of the relation between science, history and rhetoric. The bulk of his discussion appears plausible because he uses a vocabulary that is widely accepted now. Johnston repeats the categories that are common sense for modern political scientists. That Hobbes is so easily connected to these categories is more a function of Johnston's failure to understand Hobbes's vocabulary than it is of Hobbes being so similar to modern political science.

In all these interpretive strategies, the metaphor becomes a label for what is not wanted or for what does not belong to the proper text. It becomes an excuse to edit out large portions of what is written. Texts can be divided, limited, arranged, simplified and ultimately packaged through separating the essential from the inessential, the serious from the flippant, or the literal from the literary. Commentary becomes Alexandrian. Clearly some violence occurs. But it is a violence that is seldom justified, and often amounts to no more than an appeal to a series of ready-made dichotomies that take for granted that metaphors have no place in a scientific text.

Although this strategy may be appropriate for a small number of isolated metaphors, passages of the text that could be labelled as failures, the strategy becomes less plausible when large parts and major themes of the text appear to be metaphorical. Even if the second half of *Leviathan* is approached as extended irony, the frequent use of metaphors in the first half of the work must still be accounted for.

The Metaphor as Pervasive. There is another theme in the commentaries on Hobbes that arises in opposition to those who read Hobbes as an early political scientist. The focus of this commentary is the claim that metaphors are a vital part of Hobbes's text. Terence Ball claims that most of what Hobbes wrote was metaphorical.

> The persuasiveness of Hobbes' science relies a good deal less upon his definitions and deductions than upon his metaphors. What after all is his state of nature if not an extended metaphor in which men are beasts, life is war, war is hell, and so on? And who is the sovereign if not a secular savior, a "mortall god" sent not from heaven but sprung, Athena-like, from the head of the civil philosopher himself? Hobbes was always more adept at detecting the mote of metaphor in another's eye than the beam in his own.[64]

Although Ball's argument is hidden behind his use of questions, the direction of his reaction to those who attack or ignore the metaphors in Hobbes's text is evident.

Along the same lines, Charles Cantalupo's argument, based on an interpretive approach advocated by writers such as Paul de Man, reacts to those who locate Hobbes within the stream of English logical positivism. He claims that Hobbes used metaphors throughout his work and, more generally, that a "literary" or "rhetorical" reading of *Leviathan* is essential for understanding the text. Cantalupo lists the kinds of metaphors that Hobbes uses.

> In *Leviathan* Hobbes derives metaphors from Scripture, pagan myth, nature, proverbs, natural science, and secular aspects of quotidian life

He also suggests that:

> a main line of development in Hobbes's writing is that it becomes more and more metaphorical as it proceeds to *Leviathan* ....[65]

Cantalupo has extended this reading of Hobbes into a book-length study of *Leviathan*, where he notes many interesting passages. What is important for the discussion here is how Cantalupo frames the discussion, and in particular

---

[64] Ball, Terence, "Hobbes' Linguistic Turn," p. 756.

[65] Cantalupo, "Hobbes's Use of Metaphors," pp. 27 and 25.

how he uses ideas of rhetoric, metaphor and literature as oppositions to science.

There are two themes that structure Cantalupo's discussion. The first is the relation between academic departments. Cantalupo is offering the literary reading of a book that has already been read "from the standpoint of philosophy, political science, the history of science, psychology, phenomenology, and theology."[66] Cantalupo makes various claims, such as that a literary reading can "reveal how [the philosophical themes in Hobbes's work] are developed through the rhetoric, the metaphors and tropes of Hobbes's work,"[67] Although a great deal could be packed into this claim it is not clear how a philosophical theme develops "through" rhetoric?

The second theme of Cantalupo's book is that rhetoric and science are inseparable. To support this claim, Cantalulpo makes two connections: rhetoric is tied to metaphors and metaphors are tied to cognition. Cantalupo uses standard associations to slide easily from rhetoric to metaphors. For instance, he claims that:

> To understand the literary nature of *Leviathan* would help those in other disciplines, such as philosophy, to distinguish more clearly between Hobbes's rhetoric and his logic .... For instance, a reader cannot properly understand Hobbes's views on religion or his famous 'materialism' without first recognizing the extravagant metaphors through which Hobbes expresses his ideas.[68]

The connection between metaphors and cognition is established by appealing to Paul de Man, who writes that "all philosophy is ... dependent upon figuration ... although to varying degrees." [69] In his essay on the epistemology of metaphor, de Man concludes that "the distinction between literature and philosophy cannot be made in terms of a distinction between aesthetic and epistemological categories."[70] For Cantalupo, Hobbes's

---

[66] Cantalupo, *A Literary Leviathan*, p. 16.

[67] Cantalupo, *A Literary Leviathan*, p. 16.

[68] Cantalupo, *A Literary Leviathan*, p. 16.

[69] Cantalupo, *A Literary Leviathan*, p. 18.

"metaphors are inseparable from his meaning."

In order to approach Cantalupo's adopted theoretical frame, it is essential to trace his vocabulary back to the works of Paul de Man, and in particular to de Man's discussion of the relationship between philosophy and rhetoric. De Man argues that the non-literal character of general ideas means that all texts are in some way metaphorical. "It is entirely legitimate to conclude that when Condillac uses the term "abstraction," it can be 'translated' as metaphor ...."[71] The literal is tied to the philosophic, the literary is tied to the figurative. By claiming that philosophy generates truth claims about the world and then showing how philosophy depends on claims that are not, technically, truth claims but rather abstractions, de Man claims that there is a non-literal component to philosophy whose articulation depends on using figurative language. Therefore, "all philosophy is condemned, to the extent that it is dependent upon figuration, to be literary and, as the depository of this very problem, all literature is to some extent philosophical."[72]

De Man's argument works because he has defined metaphor as that which is not literal and has limited the literal to the particular. Therefore, any general idea has to be metaphorical.

> When one speaks of the legs of the table or the face of the mountain, catachresis is already turning into prosopopoeia, and one begins to perceive a world of potential ghosts and monsters.[73]

To claim that "table leg" is an instance of prosopopoeia assumes that "human leg" is the origin of the meaning of "leg" and that the table is thereby personified. But why is "leg" properly attibuted to humans and not other animals or inanimate objects? To take de Man's argument one step back, why is "table leg" an instance of catachresis, which also assumes that "leg" is properly used for other kinds of things? What is the literal usage of "leg"?

---

[70] Cantalupo, "Hobbes's Use of Metaphors," p. 20.

[71] de Man, "Epistemology," p. 21.

[72] de Man, "Epistemology," p. 28.

[73] de Man, "Epistemology," p. 19.

The word is ambiguous because it is a general term that denotes many objects. But how do we decide what the correct usage is? By experience? How do we experience general attributes? By naming? But what kinds of things can we name? The basic epistemological problem that de Man's discussion raises is the status of general ideas.

In arguing for the relevance of metaphors, de Man appears to be arguing for the relevance of general ideas and associations, things that very few philosophers have denied. He is not arguing that science is condemned to catachresis. If there is a conflict between Hobbes and de Man, it would be over the relative stability of general ideas, not their acceptability. Hobbes attacks catchresis, but accepts general ideas. Hobbes could accept de Man's arguments ... and continue to reject metaphors as he understands them.

Significantly, both Cantalupo and Ball repeat the dichotomies of a debate that allows, even necessitates, the continued marginalization of metaphors from serious political discussions. Cantalupo, for instance, claims that:

> To learn the value of Hobbes's use of metaphor is to begin to value him primarily as a writer who, conventionally considered to be the province of departments of philosophy and political science, might be better appreciated than at present for his literary art.[74]

Cantalupo further suggests that metaphors become less important with writers such as Kant, Hegel and Mill.

> Writing that primarily exhibits logic and abstract words is a mere shadow of a discourse once replete with images, tropes, and rhetorical flourishes.[75]

This tribute to Hobbes's style is significant for what it implies about the relation between logic, science and metaphor. Cantalupo continues to separate metaphors from science, and thus from serious knowledge claims. Metaphors do not become important for philosophy or political science. Cantalupo is claiming that, because Hobbes uses metaphors, he becomes interesting to people who study literature.

---

[74] Cantalupo, "Hobbes's Use of Metaphors," p. 30.

[75] Cantalupo, "Hobbes's Use of Metaphors," p. 20.

The way that Ball locates and appraises Hobbes's use of metaphor is likewise self-defeating. *Leviathan* is persuasive because Hobbes used metaphors to persuade people, and *not* because of its definitions and deductions. Definitions and deductions remain distant from metaphors, and metaphors are not positively tied to truth or meaning. Both commentators claim that metaphors ought to be relevant to Hobbes's text, but they frame this claim in a way that reestablishes the metaphor's irrelevance. They offer a simplistic inversion of the standard categories without an awareness of what those categories entail for the value of metaphors. In the discussions offered by Ball and Cantalupo, metaphors are rhetorical, but they are not scientific; they are persuasive, but they are not meaningful.

❧

This chapter has shown that the metaphor plays a significant, if hidden, role in how people approach *Leviathan*. By marginalizing metaphors, commentators can discover the serious work. Foucault writes about this general strategy of commentary.

> Whatever the techniques employed, commentary's only role is to say *finally*, what has silently been articulated *deep down*. It must—and the paradox is ever-changing yet inescapable—say, for the first time, what has already been said, and repeat tirelessly what was, nevertheless, never said. The infinite rippling of commentary is agitated from within by the dream of masked repetition: in the distance there is, perhaps, nothing other than what was there at the point of departure: simple recitation.[76]

Most commentators on Hobbes's work exhibit a Victorian obsession with the "unclean;" and, like the character of Victorian sexuality, the denial and suppression of metaphors is not the same as their extinction. The ritual repetition of Hobbes's hatred for metaphors is often surrounded by commentary that blindly repeats them and at times adds more. The Victorian approach also leads to its antithesis, the glorification of the unclean as essential. But this glorification is part of, and repeats, the conceptual system

[76] Foucault, "The Discourse on Language," p. 221.

that established certain things as unclean in the first place. Johnston's argument provides an extended attempt to solve the contradiction, and for that he deserves praise. Although I have taken issue with his reading, and attempted to show how it becomes incoherent at certain key points, at least Johnston recognizes that the unclean is a problem in the text that ought to be explained. Johnston's attempt to divide science and rhetoric shows, if nothing else, that the division is difficult to make.

Should Hobbes then be left as a contradictory thinker?

One of the common problems with the commentaries discussed above is that they do not consider what they or Hobbes meant by metaphor. It is simply taken for granted that the word's meaning is unproblematic and that it could be easily equated with other terms such as literature, rhetoric and myth. But it may be that what Hobbes meant by metaphor should be one primary focus of the analysis. Does he mean what we mean by metaphor? What do we mean by it? How is the denial of metaphor to be understood in the overall argument of the text? What is the nature of language and of communication? What, in the end, is the status of metaphors in Hobbes's texts? How would Hobbes have understood his apparent contradiction? It is only after these kinds of questions have been addressed that the role of metaphor in Hobbes's work can be assessed. Perhaps it is only then that the butchering can begin, because only then will we know where to cut.

Similes, Metaphors and the Great Chain of Words

> The Deity does not regard the human race collectively. He surveys at one glance and severally all the beings of whom mankind is composed; and he discerns in each man the resemblances that assimilate him to all his fellows, and the differences that distinguish him from them. God, therefore, stands in no need of general ideas; that is to say, he never feels the necessity of collecting a considerable number of analogous objects under the same form for greater convenience in thinking.
>
> Such, however, is not the case with man. If the human mind were to attempt to examine and pass judgement on all the individual cases before it, the immensity of detail would soon lead it astray and it would no longer see anything. In this strait, man has recourse to an imperfect but necessary expedient, which at the same time assists and demonstrates his weakness.
>
> General ideas are no proof of the strength, but rather of the insufficiency of the human intellect; for there are in nature no beings exactly alike, no things precisely identical, no rules indiscriminately and alike applicable to several objects at once. The chief merit of general ideas is that they enable the human mind to pass a rapid judgment on a great many objects at once; but, on the other hand, the notions they convey are never other than incomplete, and they always cause the mind to lose as much in accuracy as it gains in comprehensiveness.
>
> Alexis de Tocqueville, *Democracy in America*

The categories in which commentators reconcile Hobbes's attack on and use of metaphors is a particular aspect of a general theme in Hobbes scholarship, a theme that places Hobbes within the dichotomies of modern thought: either he is a scientist and *not* a writer or he is a writer and *not* a scientist. Like the trenches in the First World War, the borders that protect Hobbes from literature have expanded into a complete front. Every aspect of his texts and life has been fashioned into defenses against assault. This raises certain practical problems for anyone attempting to reconsider Hobbes's relation to metaphors. Too many arguments, too many bunkers, too many combatants all become alerted at once. Commentary is either a total war ... or

peace. For the reconsideration of the metaphors to be effective, it must act as the spearhead for a broader assault. It is necessary to step back from the immediate conflict and consider more closely what Hobbes meant by metaphor.

I want to achieve two objectives. The first is to establish that Hobbes's denial of metaphor is limited to a particular problem in the connection of thoughts and words. It is not a general denunciation of associations between thoughts or between words. Second, I want to establish that Hobbes's account of science depends on an associational account of meaning that echoes the medieval image of the Great Chain of Being. The contradiction that Hobbes creates when he attacks the use of metaphors while using them everywhere will then be seen as misleading. By understanding Hobbes differently, it will become apparent that his location in the scientific tradition, and perhaps the character of that tradition change.

Experience and Thought. *Leviathan* begins with and it rarely moves beyond a discussion of how people experience the world. Although there are external bodies that affect our organs of sense, most of what we experience is qualitative, disconnected from the objects that create them. The language of bodies is nonetheless dominant throughout Hobbes's text. He adopts the stance of an outside observer who can directly experience objects in the world, and describes the general mechanisms of the mind. The organs of external sense transfer particular kinds of motion from the outside world into the human body.[77] The motions that are transferred from outside the body continue in the body for some time as thoughts.

> And as wee see in the water, though the wind cease, the waves give not over rowling for a long time after; so also it happeneth in that motion, which is made in the internal parts of a man ....[78]

[77] Elsewhere Hobbes writes that "SENSE is a phantasm, made by the reaction and endeavour outwards in the organ of sense, caused by an endeavour inwards from the object, remaining for some time more or less." *De Corpore, E. W. I*, p. 391.

The qualities that are experienced are "many several motions of matter... pressing, rubbing, or striking" the sense organs. Imagination or memory is "nothing but decaying sense" caused by the obscuring of past experience by newer or stronger experiences "as the voyce of a man is in the noyse of the day." Sensation provides the material, the thoughts, for the mind.

> For there is no conception in a mans mind, which hath not at first, totally, or by parts, been begotten upon the organs by Sense.[79]

Everything that humans can experience, remember, think about and reason with is acquired through the senses. There are no innate ideas, while words that are not somehow grounded in experience have no signification.

Images are "simple" when they correspond to our first experiences and "compounded" when parts of one "simple" image have been connected to parts of another. The compounding of qualities is called fiction,

> as when from the sight of a man at one time, and of a horse at another, we conceive in our mind a Centaure. So when a man compoundeth the image of his own person, with the image of the actions of an other man; as when a man imagins himselfe a *Hercules*, or an *Alexander*, (which happeneth often to them that are much taken with reading of Romants) it is a compound imagination, and properly but a Fiction of the mind.[80]

The distinction between fiction and fact is not a simple distinction between what has been experienced and what has not. Fiction is a kind of memory where the content of one memory is mixed with the content of another. Fiction is and can only be the rearrangement of experiences. As will be seen, the limits of fiction are also the possibilities of knowledge and the boundaries of madness.

Thoughts are combined into a succession of thoughts that Hobbes calls a "Mentall Discourse" to distinguish it from a "Discourse in words."[81] The pre-linguistic is given a linguistic structure—our thoughts become textual.

---

[78] Hobbes, *Leviathan*, p. 88.

[79] Hobbes, *Leviathan*, p. 85.

[80] Hobbes, *Leviathan*, p. 89.

[81] Hobbes, *Leviathan*, p. 94.

The first succession of thoughts is the one that the human experiences as presented by the world. Other successions, which are imagined, do not have to follow the original order.

> When a man thinketh on any thing whatsoever, His next Thought after, is not altogether so casuall as it seems to be.[82]

The succession of images in memory is affected by the order of experience. Sense establishes the pathways along which our thoughts proceed,

> in such manner, as water upon a plain Table is drawn which way any one part of it is guided by the finger.

Because any number of different things are experienced after a particular thing, eventually

> there is no certainty what we shall Imagine next; Onely this is certain, it shall be something that succeeded the same before, at one time or another.[83]

The succession of events is different from memory in that the mind can only move from one thought to another where those thoughts have been connected at some time before.[84] It remains possible for the mind to wander, but only along paths that have been made for it.

When the mind is unguided, the thoughts are "as busie as other times," but they are "without harmony, as the sound which a Lute out of tune would yeeld to any man."

> And yet in this wild ranging of the mind, a man may oft-times perceive the way of it, and the dependence of one thought upon another. For in a Discourse of our present civill warre, what could seem more impertinent, than to ask (as one did) what was the value of a Roman Penny? Yet the cohærence to me was manifest enough. For the Thought of the warre, introduced the Thought of delivering up the King to his Enemies; The Thought of that, brought in the Thought of the delivering up of

---

[82] Hobbes, *Leviathan*, p. 94.

[83] Hobbes, *Leviathan*, p. 94.

[84] This raises an interesting question about the status of compound thoughts. If a succession of thoughts must follow some connection that has been experienced, how is it possible for a compound thought, which has not been experienced, to become part of a succession? A plausible response is that the thoughts do not have to be exactly the same, but rather similar. Two thoughts that share a quality can be connected, even if they do not share every quality.

> Christ; and that again the Thought of the 30 pence, which was the price of that treason; and thence easily followed that malicious question; and all this in a moment of time, for Thought is quick.[85]

Unguided thoughts can yield meaningful statements about the world. However, they do not become part of a more general account of the world until they are reformed into explicit and proximate associations. Hobbes's analysis of this apparently impertinent question does not remove the associations or deny the ultimate comparison; rather, he fills in the steps of the wandering in order to underline the association.

The succession of thoughts can be organized "by some desire, and designe." There are still a variety of paths, but the existence of an end provides a criterion for judging between the paths. When there is a definite end, thoughts that "begin to wander" can be "quickly again reduced into the way." Some successions are limited to a determinate place, others

> run over all the parts thereof, in the same manner, as one would sweep a room, to find a jewell; or as a Spaniel ranges the field, till he find a sent ....[86]

So long as there is an end to the succession, a goal grounded in the individual's appetite, Hobbes can maintain a difference between the wandering of unguided thoughts and the hunting or searching of guided thoughts.

> Some mens thoughts run one way, some another; and are held to, and observe differently the things that passe through their imagination. And whereas in this succession of mens thoughts, there is nothing to observe in the things they think on, but either in what they be *like one another*, or in what they be *unlike*, or *what they serve for*, or *how they serve to such a purpose*; Those that observe their similitudes, in case they be such as are but rarely observed by others, are sayd to have a *Good Wit*.[87]

Humans can notice similarities between things even though they do not have universal names. Whether noticing similarities or differences, the individual depends on recognizing the qualities of the object. In the case of

---

[85] Hobbes, *Leviathan*, p. 95.

[86] Hobbes, *Leviathan*: p. 97.

[87] Hobbes, *Leviathan*, p. 135.

similarities, the observer notices the same quality common to different objects whereas in the case of differences, the observer notices two or more qualities that are not common. The mind constructs universals by resolving simple thoughts into their parts.

> ... if any man propound to himself the conception of *gold*, he may, by resolving, come to the ideas of *solid, visible, heavy*, (that is, tending to the centre of the earth, or downwards) and many other more universal than gold itself; and these he may resolve again, till he come to such things as are most universal.[88]

What object does a universal name refer to? According to Hobbes, general names do not refer to any *thing*.

> there is nothing in the world universal but names; for the things names are every one of them individual and singular.[89]

Watkins takes Hobbes's denial of universals to be "an uncompromising statement of radical nominalism" which entails that truth is determined by will. As the quote from *Leviathan* continues, Hobbes also accepts that:

> One Universal name is imposed on many things, for the similitude in some quality, or other accident: And whereas a Proper Name bringeth to mind one thing onely; Universals recall any one of those many.

According to Watkins "Hobbes's statement that some names are names of accidents is inconsistent with his statement that there is nothing universal in the world but names."[90] However, although Hobbes denies that qualities are *things*, Watkins is mistaken when he claims that only things can be named. What Hobbes is insisting upon is that a quality has no existence separate from the objects.

> And all such Names, are the names of the accidents and properties, by which one Matter, and the Body is distinguished from another. These are called names Abstract; because severed (not from matter, but) from the account of matter.[91]

Qualities are neither material nor "immaterial." They are not separate from

---

[88] Hobbes, *De Corpore, E. W. I*, p. 69.

[89] Hobbes, *Leviathan*, p. 102.

[90] Watkins, p. 107.

[91] Hobbes, *Leviathan*, p. 107.

matter, but they exist and can exist in different objects. When qualities are named, a word is connected to the thoughts that the human has of that quality. A general name becomes significant when the observers rearrange their experiences of the world, placing objects that share a quality together that were not together in the original experiences. What a general name signifies is not a general idea, but rather "any one of those many" objects. What a general name names is a quality. The ability to judge resemblances is thus established alongside the claim that universals do not exist.

Sign. When one experience frequently succeeds or precedes another, people may judge the one to be a sign of the other. The sign is not limited to the linguistic sign, the word, but rather indicates any regular association of events.

> A Signe, is the Event Antecedent, of the Consequent; and contrarily, the Consequent of the Antecedent, when the like Consequences have been observed, before: And the oftner they have been observed, the lesse uncertain is the Signe.[92]

Signs can be natural or arbitrary, depending on whether they were created or not. Clouds are a sign of rain whatever humans do. Fences are a sign of property and words are signs for thoughts because humans have made them so.[93] Artificial signs are further divided into signs of the will and signs of thoughts.

> For a dogge by custome will understand the call, or the rating of his Master; and so will many other Beasts. That Understanding which is peculiar to man, is the Understanding not onely his will, but his conceptions and thoughts, by the sequall and contexture of the names of things into Affirmations, Negations, and other forms of Speech.[94]

The sign relationship provides only limited access to the world; people cannot directly experience how the world works. This entails that people cannot predict the future with certainty,

---

[92] Hobbes, *Leviathan*, p. 98.

[93] See Hobbes, *The Elements of Law*, I. 14-15.

[94] Hobbes, *Leviathan*, p. 93

> the Future being but a fiction of the mind, applying the sequels of actions Past, to the actions that are Present; which with most certainty is done by him that has most Experience, but not with certainty enough.[95]

The best guesser has the greatest amount of information. But people can only remember a limited amount of information and cannot experience all circumstances. Prudence therefore can be "very fallacious." But when Hobbes claims that experience cannot conclude anything universally, he is not claiming that it cannot conclude things generally. The prudent person can be a good guesser.

> The best Prophet naturally is the best guesser; and the best guesser, he that is most versed and studied in the matters he guesses at; for he hath most *Signes* to guesse by.[96]

Hobbes uses prudence in *Leviathan* as a limiting case in human knowledge. It is the kind of knowledge that we share with animals capable of imagining. Prudence, which is connected to memory, is the simplest instance of humans projecting their actions into the future. In its pure form, prudence is also a kind of knowledge that does not use speech, perhaps even proper names, and it therefore does not consider general ideas. It is an internal, pre-linguistic process of collecting information.

In contrast to prudence, science proceeds from the "invention of Words, and Speech" to consider general attributes. The general attributes already exist in the sense that qualities can be experienced without names. If prudence does not use language, then everything capable of speech has some capacity for scientific thought.

> ... all men can reason to some degree, and concerning some things: but where there is need of a long series of reasons, there most men wander out of the way, and fall into error for want of method ....[97]

Science, as will be seen, is in part a process of classification based on universal

---

[95] Hobbes, *Leviathan*, p. 97.

[96] Hobbes, *Leviathan*, p. 97.

[97] Hobbes, *De Corpore, E. W. I*, pp. 1.

names. It would follow that the rejection of prudence does not entail the rejection of practicing historians insofar as practicing historians, such as Thucydides, do not simply narrate an event, but rather point to common qualities between events. The problem with an historical organization of ideas is that the connection between ideas is secondary to the connection between facts. There is nonetheless an element of scientific analysis in historical studies.

Words. Words are signs that humans have created to indicate their thoughts. Words can be created well or poorly, they can be ambiguous or confusing, and they can be manipulated or falsified. A person who does not understand a word cannot take or use the word to be a sign for thoughts. A person who has not experienced something cannot understand the name for that thing. If an experience does not regularly enter into discourse, there may be no words that name it.[98] For these reasons, the quality of a language is tied to the ability to indicate thoughts. The ability to know the world is increased with the expansion of language.

Hobbes's account of words moves from the simple relationship between names and thoughts to consider four kinds of names.[99] We can name matter, we can name a quality "which we conceive to be in" matter, we can name the fancy that occurs in our mind, and we can name names. For Hobbes a naming relation has both a sense and a referent. It does not simply refer to an object, but refers to an object in a particular way. A basic distinction is made between proper and common names. A proper name names a single thing, such as Homer or the man who wrote *The Iliad*. In contrast, a common name names a quality that humans have judged to be common to many things.

---

[98] Hobbes, *Leviathan*, p. 90.

[99] Hobbes, *Leviathan*, pp. 106 - 107.

Metaphors. Hobbes's attack on the use of metaphors is focused on the relation between the word and the thought. Metaphors are the wrong signs for the person's thoughts. They are an inconstant use of names.

> For though it be lawfull to say, (for example) in common speech, the way goeth, or leadeth hither, or thither, The Proverb sayes this or that (whereas wayes cannot go, nor Proverbs speak;) yet in reckoning, and seeking of truth, such speeches are not to be admitted.[100]

Hobbes's basic attack on metaphor is powerful, but it is also very specific. A metaphor disrupts the connection betweeen words, thoughts and experiences and thereby removes the only way to understand what a person is saying. Metaphors do not include associations or assertions of similitude. They do not include analogies. They do not include the relation of substitutability that general ideas imply between the objects they comprehend. All that Hobbes is directly rejecting here is the inconstant use of words, or catachresis. Using a word metaphorically makes it equivocal and therefore inappropriate for demonstrations. Metaphors confuse reason, making it more difficult for the mind to hunt, and more likely for the mind to wander, whether it wants to or not. The argument is extended to connect linguistic chaos to political chaos. "Loose concepts, imprecisely defined terms, metaphors, tropes, and figurative speech of all sorts are the sources of sedition."[101] Intellectual wandering is connected to political fickleness, a connection that Hobbes repeats throughout his work.

Definitions. General names divide a name into parts, those parts being the different qualities contained in what was experienced. To define a proper name is to resolve the name into general names; just as to analyse a simple thought is to resolve the thought into its qualities. General names can also be resolved by further general names. The recursive process of resolution ends

---

[100] Hobbes, *Leviathan*, pp. 114-115.

[101] Ball, "Hobbes's Linguistic Turn," p. 753.

when the names can no longer be divided.

> Now, seeing definitions (as I have said) are principles, or primary propositions, they are therefore speeches; and seeing they are used for the raising of an *idea* of some thing in the mind of the learner, whensoever that thing has a name, the definition of it can be nothing but the explication of that name by speech; and if that name be given it for some compounded conception, the definition is nothing but a resolution of that name into its most universal parts.[102]

A visual example of this structure is the definitions that he gives of the different sciences in Chapter IX. The words are resolved from "Science" down to the individual sciences. Chapter VI of *Leviathan* extensively uses definitions to classify the human passions.[103] The chapter begins by dividing two kinds of motions in animals, the first called "Vitall," the second called "Voluntary." Voluntary motions, which result from small internal motions, are further divided into *Appetites* and *Aversions*. Eight pages of further definitions follow. Here are some examples.

> Desire of Office, or precedence, AMBITION: a name used also in the worse sense, for the reason before mentioned.
>
> *Contempt* of little helps and hindrances, MAGNANIMITY.
>
> *Magnanimity*, in danger of death, or Wounds, VALOUR, FORTITUDE.
>
> Feare of power invisible, feigned by the mind, or imagined from tales publiquely allowed, RELIGION, not allowed, SUPERSTITION. And when the power imagined, is truly such as we imagine, TRUE RELIGION[104]

The definitions locate the words in a larger structure of interconnections. "Religion" is the fear of powers invisible from tales publicly allowed. It is distinguished from "Superstition" by the quality of being allowed. It would be possible to draw a diagram or a classification key that showed the location of each passion.

---

[102] Hobbes, *De Corpore, E. W. I*, p. 83.

[103] Hobbes, *Leviathan*, pp. 118 - 130, *Of the Interiour Beginnings of Voluntary Motions; commonly called the Passions.*

[104] Hobbes, *Leviathan*, pp. 123, 123, and 124.

Hobbes does not discuss indistinct connectives such as "is like." Either a word is contained in another or it is not. However, these connectives may only require additional analysis in the same way that the question "What is the value of a Roman Penny?" did. Affirmations that connect thoughts because they are alike suggest that there is a more general idea that contains them both. For instance, to claim that the commonwealth is like a human body is to claim that both are contained by the name "machine" or "animate creature." In any case, indistinct connectives are not approached in the way that metaphors are. The potential ambiguity of indistinct connectives arises from the nature of the copula, not from the improper use of the words.

The acceptance of similitudes in science may result in an unbounded science, free to wander through any similarities that can be constructed. Hobbes is quick to hinder this potential chaos.

> Without Steddinesse, and Direction to some End, a great Fancy is one kind of Madnesse, such as they have, that entering into any discourse, are snatched from their purpose, by every thing that comes in their thought, into so many, and so long digressions, and Parentheses, that they utterly lose themselves ....[105]

Although Hobbes claims that the more associations are noticed, the better people are able to reason about the world, and although it follows from what he says that abstract ideas allow for associations between very different things, the construction of associations ought to be guided by an end, whether practical or intellectual. Wandering is a kind of madness that science must control.

The arrangement of ideas in a hierarchy of generality and particularity is an example of the basic form of presentation in Hobbes's work: namely, his resolutive-compositive method. Watkins traces Hobbes's resolutive-compositive method to Medieval thought and ultimately to the works of Aristotle.

> The intuitive idea which informs this methodological tradition [Paduan] was this: the way to understand something is to take it apart, in deed or in thought, to

[105] Hobbes, *Leviathan*, p. 136.

> ascertain the nature of its parts, and then to reassemble it—to resolve it and recompose it.[106]

Watkins, and Jean Hampton after him, associates Hobbes's account of politics to methodological individualism. The commonwealth is resolved into the egos out of which it is constructed. Hobbes is therefore associated with the basic assumptions of rational choice theory: individuals exist, collectives do not. The separateness of the human being is inescapable while the composition of individuals into the commonwealth becomes simply an arrangement of individuals. The commonwealth as such does not exist.

Focusing on the claims that he makes about the proper object of political analysis, Deborah Baumgold criticizes Watkins for following

> the orthodox assumption that the principal problem confronting Hobbes and his interpreters is explaining the motivation of ordinary subjects to support the sovereign.[107]

> Hence the various institutions and roles [Hobbes] describes, as well as the distinction between elite politics and mass behaviour that informs his political arguments, are essentially trivial details in a portrait of the Leviathan-state.[108]

Baumgold challenges Watkin's and Hampton's view by claiming that Hobbes understood politics as primarily a conflict between elite groups and not between individuals. Humans are located in a political and social hierarchy.

> In the case of servants and children, like 'conquered' subjects (whose condition reflects, as the hypothetical contract does not, the reality that citizenship is most often a role 'given in advance'), the primary agent in the relationship is their superior.[109]

Baumgold is correct to criticize the claim that politics is about an abstract human nature. The animate and symbolic relationships between people are as important as the physical one. Baumgold is also correct to claim that

---

[106] Watkins, p. 32.

[107] Baumgold, p. 87.

[108] Baumgold, p. 82.

[109] Baumgold, p. 95

Hobbes considers the political impact of elite groups, but that does not make these groups the matter of the commonwealth or the proper level of analysis. Baumgold's criticisms do not undermine the general claim that the commonwealth is made up of individuals. The smaller groups she considers can likewise be resolved into their constituent parts, namely individuals, which would reestablish Watkins's claim that the commonwealth as such does not exist.

There are passages where Hobbes labelled the commonwealth as a fiction, which seems to deny that it exists.[110] In *The Elements of Law* he writes:

> For a body politic, as it is a fictitious body, so are the faculties and will thereof fictitious also. But to make a particular man unjust, which consisteth of a body and a soul natural, there is required a natural and very will.[111]

However, it is important to consider again what Hobbes means by "fiction." As was said at the beginning of this chapter, fiction is any rearrangement of facts, that is, of direct experience. It follows that general ideas, which depend on the association of experiences, are also fictions, as are the associations that readers are urged to make between themselves and the image of Everyman presented in the book. For when Hobbes has

> set down [his] own reading orderly, and perspicuously, the pains left another, will be onely to consider, if he also find not the same in himself.[112]

Hobbes adds our idea of the future to the list of fictions, for

> the Future being but a fiction of the mind, applying the sequels of actions Past, to the actions that are Present; which with most certainty is done by him that has most Experience, but not with certainty enough.[113]

---

[110] Richard Ashcraft makes a similar claim for the state of nature.

> The state of nature for Hobbes, we are repeatedly told, is nothing more than a 'logical abstraction,' a hypothetical construct,' or a 'methodological fiction.'
>
> Ashcraft, "*Leviathan* Triumphant," p. 148.

Ashcraft refers to Gauthier, p. 118-119; Hood, pp. 74, 81 and 177; and Wolin, *Politics and Vision*, p. 264

[111] Hobbes, *The Elements of Law*, p. 93. Referenced in Hale, p. 129.

[112] Hobbes, *Leviathan*, p. 83.

To claim that the commonwealth as such has a fictional status, therefore, does not deprive it of its value in science. If we recall the general definition of fiction, which is the rearrangement of original experience, almost every object that science considers is at least partially fictional. However, this leaves open the status that should be given to the commonwealth, its parts, and the resolutive-compositive method itself.

To deny that an object exists because it can be resolved into its physical parts is a very dangerous claim because it is incompatible with methodological individualism. If he used the method consistently, Watkins would also have to deny the existence of human beings as well as the commonwealth. He avoids the problem by identifying human beings with qualities independent of resolution: humans have egos, they are self-interested and so on. Whether a human being can be physically divided into parts, whether a human being has a body at all is irrelevant to the discussion. What matters for Watkins is the existence of an ego, which is not as obviously susceptible to resolution as the physical body.

For Watkins, the resolutive-compositive method is a tool for creating knowledge, it is a way to find out what something is rather than a way to organize what is already known. But he has only confused the epistemological position of the method. The claim that the meaning of the whole can only be found in the parts is very different from the claim that the meaning of the whole can be analysed into parts. In the first case the meaning is found at the end of the analysis, which serves as the source of meaning. In the second case the meaning is found at the beginning, but becomes clearer at the end. Unless an object can be meaningful without being resolved, which would call into question the need to resolve the commonwealth into parts, the process of resolution can only end at "simple matter," the point where no further resolution is possible. But ending with simple matter would make any analysis of politics trivial. If everything is reduced to the qualities of

[113] Hobbes, *Leviathan*, p. 97.

matter and motion, then there is no difference between human politics and architecture or astronomy. It is only when qualities specific to particular objects are considered that the sciences can become differentiated and interesting. When speech is left unresolved it can be used to anchor the classification of human beings, which constitutes the object of study for such things as ethics and logic. This entails that an object can be approached by a particular kind of science when it has not been resolved.

Contrary to both Watkins and Baumgold, who use the resolutive-compositive method to analyse objects into their physical *parts*, the general direction of Hobbes's presentation is more intent on applying the method to *thoughts*.[114] This is more consistent with the way that he bases knowledge on experience and memory rather than on the direct observation of bodies. He writes in *De Corpore*:

> Now, by parts, 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.[115]

The resolution would still consider specific abilities, such as "to reason," but it would not ground these abilities in the material parts. Likewise, when Hobbes considers recomposition, he focuses on the recomposition of ideas. For instance, from "the several conceptions of *four sides, equality of sides, and right angles*, is compounded the conception of a *square*."[116] Therefore, resolving an object is distinct from indicating what it is made of. It may still follow that, by performing a particular function some material parts of the commonwealth will give the commonwealth a particular quality. The matter is important, but it is not the only thing that science is concerned with.

---

[114] Watkins, p. 43.

[115] Hobbes, *De Corpore, E. W. I*, p. 67.

[116] Hobbes, *De Corpore, E. W. I*, p. 4.

The resolutive-compositive method parallels the way that Hobbes relates fancy and judgement. Fancy is the ability to notice similitudes; judgement is the ability to discern differences. They are complementary, with the exception that judgement on its own is a virtue whereas fancy on its own is madness. The relative value of fancy and judgement depends on what the words are being used for: in a poem, both judgement and fancy are required; in a "hortation," the fancy is more important. Finally,

> In Demonstration, in Councell, and all rigourous search of Truth, Judgement does all; except sometimes the understanding have need to be opened by some apt similitude.[117]

Hobbes gives an expanded account of the relationship in his *Answer to Davenant*, where he writes that

> For Memory is the world (though not really, yet so as in a looking glass) in which the Judgement, the severer sister, busieth herself in a grave and rigid examination of all the parts of nature and in registering by letters their order, causes, uses, differences and resemblances; whereby the Fancy when any work of art is to be performed, findes then a swift motion over them, that what she wants, and is there to be had, may not lie too long unespied. So that when she seemeth to flie from one *Indies* to the other, and from Heaven to earth, and to penetrate into the hardest matter and obscurest places, into the future and into her self, and all this in a point of time the voyage is not very great, herself being all she seeks; and her wonderful celerity consisteth not so much in motion as in copius imagery discreetly ordered and perfectly registered in the memory.[118]

Although these quotes may suggest that similitudes are at best secondary to science, demonstration and fancy both take for granted the existence of definitions, general names, similitudes, and, in short, a language. Demonstration and fancy may not create similitudes, but they depend on the already existing similitudes. Neither fancy nor judgement can move beyond the world, which, significantly, Hobbes refers to as memory. Hobbes claims in another passage that sense is "nothing els but original fancy."[119] Sensation,

---

[117] Hobbes, *Leviathan*, pp. 136-137.

[118] Hobbes, *Answer to Davenant E.W. IV*, p. 449.

[119] Hobbes, *Leviathan*, p. 86.

which is the ground of all ideas, is a web of original relations given to the mind by the world. The language of experience underlines the textuality of the world and in so doing places fancy prior to judgement.

Through judgement, the individual constructs a hierarchical structure of ideas based on the respective generality of its components, which are themselves based on the perceived qualities of things in the world. Judgement is vital to demonstration because the ideas in the demonstration must be classified as completely as possible. Summarizing the structure of names, Hobbes writes that:

> of Names Universall, some are of more, and some of lesse extent; the larger comprehending the less large: and some again of equall extent, comprehending each other reciprocally. As for example, the Name *Body* is of larger signification than the word *Man*, and comprehendeth it; and the names Man and Rationall are of the same extent, comprehending mutually one another ....[120]

The key word here is "comprehend." What is comprehended are qualities or levels of complexity. Body as such comprehends the animate body, the animate body comprehends the human body and so on. The human body is also made out of, and is more complex than simple animate bodies.

Classifications. Science is placed last and highest in Hobbes's account of knowledge. It is based on and arises out of experience, which makes Hobbes a realist of some form, but it is also the result of an active mind organizing information.

> The subject of Philosophy, or the matter it treats of, is every body of which we can conceive any generation, and which we may, by any consideration thereof, compare with other bodies, or which is capable of resolution and composition; that is to say, every body of whose generation or properties we can have any knowledge.[121]

Philosophy concerns the generation of a body, comparing bodies to each other and analyzing a body into its properties. The chain of predications makes the identification of things complex. To say that something is a Man is to say,

---

[120] Hobbes, *Leviathan*, p. 103.

[121] Hobbes, *De Corpore*, p. 10.

among other things, that it is a rational, passionate, living machine that is composed of matter in a particular order moving in a particular way. A name suggests a wide range of associations that a definition makes explicit. Science is built out of definitions,

> attayned by Industry; first in apt imposing of Names; and secondly by getting a good and orderly Method in proceeding from Elements, which are names, to Assertions made by Connexion of one of them to another; and so to Syllogismes, which are the Connexions of one Assertion to another, till we come to a knowledge of all the Consequences of names appertaining to the subject in hand; and that is it, men call SCIENCE. And whereas Sense and Memory are but knowledge of Fact, which is a thing past, and irrevocable; Science is the knowledge of Consequences, and dependence of one fact upon another.[122]

Science begins with the resolution of names into other, more particular names. The propositions connect two names with the copula "is." Definitions are not true; they are simply accepted or rejected. "It is not necessary to dispute whether definitions are to be admitted or no. If someone rejects a definition, what they are doing is refusing to learn."[123] Science thus begins with the generation of a great chain of ideas and words, these two webs being ideally parallel. The chain cannot be a chain of beings because material objects are separated from the mind and there is no world of universal forms. Qualities are part of the object, they are the object, and do not have a separate existence. Universal words, in contrast, do have a separate material existence and are common to many objects. Hobbes's image of science is a redescription of scholastic thought based on experience rather than God, but that repeats the form that knowledge ought to take.[124]

Science is arranged by the definition of its basic parts. The different sciences are defined and connected in a relation of dependence: astronomy

---

[122] Hobbes, *Leviathan*, p. 115.

[123] Hobbes, *De Corpore, E. W. I*, p. 84.

[124] The form that science takes according to Hobbes is very different from the form that Wittgenstein proposes in the *Tractatus*. For Wittgenstein, the language ought to be atomic—one word for one object in the world. The language is flat.

depends on geometry, logic depends on arithmetic. In his autobiography Hobbes writes how he thought

> of connecting into a whole the knowledge I had gained, so that the conclusions might shine bright in the light of the first principles and the whole argument might have the permanence of a strong chain.[125]

The structure of the sciences exists prior to the presentation of knowledge, and creates conceptual spaces that should be filled. The structure is something into which parts of human knowledge belong.

> To know the naturall cause of Sense, is not very necessary to the business now in hand; and I have else-where written of the same at large. Nevertheless, to fill each part of my present method, I will briefly deliver the same in this place.[126]

An obligation is created by the hierarchical arrangement to give a complete account. The most general sciences come "first" because they apply to—comprehend—more topics than specific propositions. The arrangement of knowledge moves from a start to a finish. The strong chain extends to the whole of science, binding each part together.

A considerable distance may exist between Hobbes's account of general ideas and the account given by de Tocqueville that introduced this chapter. The border can be personified with the name of Leibniz, and conceptualized as a move from the principle of natural kinds to that of minimal difference. Although Hobbes provides an account of how human perception of the world differs from the way that the world works, his arguments focus on the crude scale of human experience and on the process of experience that disconnects the observer from the object. Hobbes does not suggest that the division of objects into kinds is artificial or that the totality of objects would constitute a plenitude with an infinitesimal difference between objects. Hobbes may have thought of this kind of argument; however, it is an image of language that is not presented in his work. What he seems to believe is that the world occurs in groups, that objects in the world are a mixture of

---

[125] Hobbes, "Autobiography," p. 26.

[126] Hobbes, *Leviathan*, p. 85.

discreet qualities. But if this is the case, what does it mean to label Hobbes as a nominalist?

Nominalism is a label that is frequently associated with Hobbes's thought. Hobbes claims, for instance, that there is nothing universal but names. All our ideas are caused by particular experiences of individual objects. How this is understood is important. If Hobbes is taken to be a radical nominalist, then he could not claim that his political writings have any general relevance. The ability to judge similarities becomes impossible. According to Watkins, Hobbes responds by claiming that objects have qualities that they share with other objects.[127] Watkins views this as a basic contradition in Hobbes's work. Some commentators have noted that Watkins oversimplified Hobbes's nominalism.[128] Hobbes is a nominalist only when he claims that forms do not have a separate existence. But in claiming this, he may only be siding with Aristotle, who located forms in objects, and opposing Plato, who placed forms in a separate world. The world of forms may be an unnecessary idea if the world occurs in qualitatively classifiable groups. But Hobbes's attack on the separate existence of universals does not entail a rejection of qualitative similarities.

The general structure of Hobbes's account of science follows the classical division of objects into simple objects, plants, animals and humans. Hobbes's trilogy of *De Corpore, De Homine* and *De Cive* is structured by consequences of body, human body, and citizen. In Aristotle's work, the division between plants, animals and humans is understood as the possession of different kinds of souls. In attacking the idea of mixed governments, Hobbes deploys this vocabulary.

> Sometimes also in the meerly Civill government, there be more than one Soule: As when the Power of levying mony, (which is the Nutritive faculty,) has depended on a generall Assembly; the Power of conduct and command, (which is the Motive faculty,)

---

[127] Watkins, *Hobbes's System of Ideas*, p. 104.

[128] McNeilly, *The Anatomy of Leviathan*, p. 217.

> on one man; and the Power of making Lawes, (which is the Rationall faculty,) on the accidentall consent, not onely of those two, but also of a third.[129]

Although Hobbes may be adopting the vocabulary of an Aristotelian system that he decisively rejects, it should be noted that he also builds the division between nutritive, motive and rational into his scheme for the sciences given in Chapter IX of *Leviathan*.[130] Bodies that are more complex also have the qualities of the less complex: animals have the qualities of vegetables and the quality of sense. A human being is a particular kind of complex animal that has passions and speech.

It does not follow that a higher science *includes* a later science. Each science has additional information that cannot be derived from above. Geometry is the basis for architecture, but architecture also includes the consequences of weight. As Sorell points out,

> Hobbes does not say that the truths of mechanics are to be deduced from those of geometry, only that they are to be deduced after those of geometry.[131]

> When he claimed that geometry was the most basic natural science he did not mean that from its axioms the rest of the special sciences could be deduced. He seems to have held that geometry was basic in the weaker sense that it had to be understood before the rest of the natural sciences could be taught.[132]

Sorell's description is misleading when he claims that a higher science has to be understood for the dependent sciences to be taught. Although how well someone understands a science depends on how well they understand the prior sciences, it does not follow that the dependent sciences are unintelligible until the prior sciences are understood. Humans can understand something about architecture without fully understanding geometry.

To privilege associations in Hobbes's account of science opposes two divergent themes in Hobbes's work. He is often described as either an

---

[129] Hobbes, *Leviathan*, p. 372.

[130] Hobbes, *Leviathan*, p. 149.

[131] Sorell, *Hobbes*, p. 5.

[132] Sorell, *Hobbes*, p. 6. Reference to *De Corpore*, ch 6, xvii, *E I*, pp. 87-88.

empiricist or a formalist. The empiricist reading makes experience relevant by claiming that Hobbes advocated hypothesis testing. The formal definitions and deductions are used to generate claims about the world that are tested by experience. Watkins, for instance, claims that

> In natural philosophy you can only propose a hypothetical model from which, 'without contradiction to any other manifest truth or experiment, you can derive' the effect you are seeking to explain; and in examining your hypothesis 'you must furnish yourself with as many experiments ... as you can'.[133]

There is very little textual evidence to support this reading. Johnston rightly criticizes Watkins on this point by showing how Hobbes "took almost no interest in the possibility of experimental falsification or verification."[134]

The other standard account of Hobbes's image of science is that he based knowledge on an axiomatic model that almost completely ignored experience.

> From the *Tract* to *Leviathan* his works open with a declaration of first principles and then magisterially unfold their implications.[135]

> Thus the final achievement would have been the deduction of social science as a body of corollaries from the principles of mechanics.[136]

> ... the axiomatic method of reasoning, which Hobbes came increasingly to associate with science, might provide a different and, in an explanatory sense, more powerful source of political knowledge than history even could hope to be.[137]

A small part of the work becomes the core or the source from which everything else is extracted. Every other part of the deduction is conditional "in the sense in which any deductive inference is conditional upon the truth

---

[133] Watkins, *Hobbes's System of Ideas*, p. 46. Reference to *E. W. VII*, p. 88

[134] Johnston, *The Rhetoric of Leviathan*, p. 51.

[135] Watkins, *Hobbes's System of Ideas*, pp. 44 - 45. There is a tension in Watkins's reading insofar as he claims that science is about deductive implications and about hypothesis testing. So far as I can tell, Watkins does not show how these are related.

[136] Taylor, p. 15.

[137] Johnston, *The Rhetoric of Leviathan*, p. 23.

of its premises."[138] If Johnston connected experience to science, then his whole strategy would thus falter, he could not support the dichotomies between history and logic, prudence and science, or universal thoughts and particular experiences on which his commentary depends. The formalist account becomes problematic when it attempts to connect science and experience. Aristotle criticizes a similar account of knowledge in his *Metaphysics*.

> If, then, a man has theory without experience, and knows the universal but does not know the individual included in this, he will often fail to cure; for it is the individual that is to be cured.[139]

Johnston claims that all our ideas ultimately come from experience but he does not connect experience to the formation of general names or to the "truth of premises." He provides no explanation for how premises can be true. He claims that scientific propositions are "valid" when they are useful, but the grounds of science remain unestablished. Johnston's division between experience and science also leads him to make some misleading claims, such as that

> One cannot empirically test the proposition that a straight line is the shortest distance between two points, or that two parallel straight lines can never intersect one another.[140]

Geometrical propositions cannot become part of science until they have been abstracted from particular instances, but it is misleading to claim that only science can consider geometrical objects. There is no reason why these propositions cannot be proven by experience only, unless geometry's criteria for adequate proof are the only criteria that are accepted. Anyone can "test" the Pythagorean theorem with paper and scissors. Hobbes claims that a person limited to experiences can assent to a geometrical proposition. The frequent experience of some geometrical relation could even make someone form an

---

[138] Johnston, *The Rhetoric of Leviathan*, p. 52.

[139] Aristotle, *Metaphysics*, 981a22-24.

[140] Johnston, *The Rhetoric of Leviathan*, p. 52.

expectation the next time those objects were present.

It is one thing to claim that Hobbes denied hypothesis testing, and another to claim that Hobbes accepted no connection between science and experience. Science is ultimately grounded on and built out of experience. It would follow that the more experiences a human has, the more ideas can be located in science. Hobbes claims that

> From Knowing much proceedeth the admirable variety and novelty of Metaphors and Similitudes, which are not possible to be lighted on to in the compass of narrow knowledge.[141]

A greater variety of experiences allows for more and more obscure associations. Because more experience would also mean that the mind can range further, wisdom could also be tied to madness. Thus, although Hobbes is not interested in using experiences to falsify claims, he does not deny the value of experiences for science. In fact, Hobbes's account of reasoning makes experience and memory central. The following quote, taken from *De Corpore*, summarizes the process of reasoning.

> The thoughts in the mind answering to a direct syllogism, proceed in this manner: first, there is conceived a phantasm of the thing named, with that accident or quality thereof, for which it is in the minor proposition called by that name which is the subject; next, the mind has a phantasm of the same thing with that accident, or quality, for which it hath the name, that in the same proposition is the predicate; thirdly, the thought returns of the same thing as having that accident in it, for which it is called by the name, that is the predicate of the major proposition; and lastly, remembering that all those are the accidents of one and the same thing, it concludes that those three names are also names of one and the same thing; that is to say, the conclusion is true.[142]

The difference between prudence and science is not in the presence or absence of experience, but rather the presence or absence of words. When people think with words, they relate to their experiences differently. Philosophy

> excludes history, as well natural as political, though most useful (nay necessary to philosophy) because such knowledge is but experience, or authority, and not

---

[141] Hobbes, *Answer to Davenant*, p. 65; quoted in Cantalupo, "Hobbes's Use", p. 27.

[142] Hobbes, *De Corpore, E. W. I*, pp. 49 - 50.

ratiocination.[143]

The contradiction in this passage should not be left unnoticed. Philosophy excludes what is necessary to it. The exclusion of description is not an ignoring, nor is it a rejection. Philosophy "treats of" the generation of objects, their similarities and their differences. Philosophy considers the relations of objects that are not part of history, but are made out of history.[144]

Causality. Science is not limited to creating a classification system; it is also concerned with causality. Aristotle provides the classical divisions between material, efficient, final and formal causality.

> We call a cause (1) that from which (as immanent material) a thing comes into being, e.g. the bronze of the statue and the silver of the saucer, and the classes which include these. (2) The form or pattern, i.e. the formula of the essence, and the classes which include this .... (3) That from which the change or the freedom from change first begins, e.g. the man who has deliberated is a cause, and the father a cause of the child, and in general the maker a cause of the thing made and the change producing of the changing. (4) The end, i.e. that for the sake of which a thing is, e.g. health is the cause of walking. For why does one walk? We say 'in order that one may be healthy', and in speaking thus we think we have given the cause.[145]

The four general questions that causality addresses are: What is the thing made of? Who made it? What for? and How are the parts organized? Because there has been considerable debate over which kinds of causality Hobbes accepted, and because causality is a point where Hobbes is highly critical of scholasticism, a direct connection with Aristotle should not be assumed. However, it also should not be taken for granted, as many commentators do,

---

[143] Hobbes, *De Corpore, E. W. I*, pp. 10 - 11.

[144] Wittgenstein makes a mirror claim in the *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus* where he writes that "The Darwinian theory has no more to do with philosophy than has any other hypothesis of natural science." (4.1122) The idea of philosophy for Wittgenstein is the inverse of Hobbes's, he is concerned with the general form of a world proposition, with generating a complete description, a complete history.

[145] Aristotle, *Metaphysics*, 1013a24-35.

that there is *no* significant connection between the two thinkers.

Very few readers would object to the claim that Hobbes accepts material and efficient causality as viable parts of his science. He claims that the primary categories of existence are matter and motion.

> The aggregate of accidents in the agent or agents, requisite for the production of the effect, the effect being produced, is called the *efficient cause* thereof; and the aggregate of accidents in the patient, the effect being produced, is usually called the *material cause*.[146]

If the two basic qualities are matter and motion, then all change has to be understood in terms of motion. The material cause would be useful for determining what kinds of change are possible. Further, Hobbes claims that humans cannot perceive simple matter. The simplest metaphysical component is the endeavour, which Hobbes defines

> to be the motion made in less space and time than can be given; that is, less than can be determined or assigned by exposition or number; that is, motion made through the length of the point, and in an instant or point of time.[147]

The matter of an object should not be confused with prime matter. The matter of an object is relative to the scale of the object being considered. The matter of the commonwealth are human beings; the matter of the human body is the collection of the body's organs, the matter of organs are things further divided. The chain of material divisions would be completed at the level of the endeavour, but that level cannot, by definition, ever be reached. The material cause is therefore a relative, rather than a reductive explanation.

Relative to the traditional commentaries it is more controversial to claim that Hobbes accepted either final or formal causality. Although Hobbes frequently adopts the language of final and formal causality, they are seldom considered to be relevant to his account of science. According to Sorell:

> Hobbes's reinterpretation of the category of substance reduces the number of forms natural objects can have to the one form inseparable from being a body, namely magnitude. Final causes are outlawed. And while material causes remain, these

---

[146] Hobbes, *De Corpore, E. W. I*, p. 122.

[147] Hobbes, *De Corpore, E. W. I*, p. 206. Quoted in Peters, p. 91.

> take second place to efficient causes—motions.[148]

Following from the marginalization of formal causality, commentators have ignored Hobbes's use of the formal causality to describe social relations. Baumgold's claim is typical.

> Hobbes was not especially imaginative in describing the structure of society and the state, nor was he especially concerned with legitimizing a particular set of role and authority relationships.[149]

Sorell claims that Hobbes's "reinterpretation" of causality reduces the kinds of explanations exclusively to efficient causes. But this does not follow from what Hobbes writes. In *De Corpore* Hobbes claims that final and formal causes "are efficient causes."[150] The wording here is significant because it does not deny either kind of causality but rather locates them as kinds of efficient causality. What this suggests, and what Hobbes's vocabulary indicates, is that Hobbes continued to accept formal and final causality in some way. The questions that these kinds of causality considered remained important.

For instance, the formal cause considered the qualities of the object that was changed. Whereas in Aristotle the formal cause was distinguished from the efficient cause, for Hobbes the formal cause becomes an efficient cause relative to the observer. Hobbes does not claim that formal causes no longer exist or that they do not have to be accounted for. Sorell also claims that Hobbes "reduces the number of forms natural objects can have to the one form inseparable from being a body, namely, magnitude."[151] This is confusing because Sorell accepts that different objects can have different magnitudes, which is the same as saying that there are different forms of magnitude. It is also presumably possible that the arrangement of the parts of an object contributes to the object's form. Matter's relation to arrangement is not considered by Sorell. How, for instance, could the simple ideas of matter

---

[148] Sorell, *Hobbes*, p. 53.

[149] Baumgold, p. 100.

[150] Hobbes, *De Corpore*, p. 131.

[151] Sorell, *Hobbes*, p. 53.

and motion describe the arrangement of the planets in the solar system? The descriptions that are proper to astronomy would have to consider the *kinds* of matter and motion that are specific to that science. The description would have to include and could not contradict the ideas of matter and motion.

> For the variety of all figures arises out of the variety of those motions by which they are made; and motions cannot be understood to have any other cause besides motion; nor has the variety of those things we perceive by sense, as of *colours, sounds, savours, &c.* any other cause than motion, residing partly in the objects that work upon our senses, and partly on ourselves, in such manner, as that it is manifestly some kind of motion, though we cannot, without ratiocination, come to know what kind.[152]

On Sorell's reading, Hobbes reduces sensation to matter and motion. "Sense content has to be traced to such properties as we can know, independently of phantasms, bodies have, namely magnitude and motion."[153] In this passage Sorell suggests that we acquire ideas of magnitude and motion independent of experience. Unfortunately, Sorell does not indicate where these ideas would come from. As was argued above, Hobbes claimed that all our ideas come ultimately from simple sense and that the variety of our ideas results from the resolution of what we have experienced into parts, which include the ideas of matter and motion. The status of matter and motion as basic qualities results from their universality. We cannot imagine anything without imagining it somewhere and capable of moving in some way; nor can we think of formal or qualitative ideas as being other than matter and motion. But this does not deny formal concerns; it simply locates those concerns within a materialist or experiential frame.

A large part of Hobbes's account of science, the whole realm of physics, is concerned with the consequences from the *qualities* of bodies.[154] Hobbes defines a cause as:

> *the sum or aggregate of all such accidents, both in the agents and the patient, as*

[152] Hobbes, *De Corpore*, p. 69-70.

[153] Sorell, *Hobbes*, p. 54.

[154] Hobbes, *Leviathan*, p. 149.

> *concur to the producing of the effect propounded; all which existing together, it cannot be understood but that the effect existeth with them; or that it can possibly exist if any on them be absent.*[155]

Causality is focused on the qualities of the agent and the patient in the relationship. The qualities of the agent are the efficient cause, those of the patient are the material cause.[156] The causal relation, a refined version of the sign relation, depends on two identifications.

> In the mean time it is manifest, that in the searching out of causes, there is need partly of the analytical, and partly of the synthetical method; of the analytical, to conceive how circumstances conduce severally to the production of effects; and of the synthetical, for the adding together and compounding of what they can effect singly by themselves.[157]

The accidents that are not conducive to the effect should be separated out

> which being done, we are to put together the concurring accidents, and consider whether we can possibly conceive, that when these are all present, the effect propounded will not follow; and if it be evident that the effect will follow, then that aggregate of accidents is the entire cause, otherwise not; but we must still search out and put together other accidents.[158]

Qualities result from a kind of motion. Hobbes continues later in the book:

> An agent is understood to *produce* its determined or certain effect in the patient, according to some certain accident or accidents, with which both it and the patient are affected; that is to say, the agent hath its effect precisely such, not because it is a body, but because such a body, or so moved. For otherwise all agents, seeing they are all bodies alike, would produce like effects in all patients. And therefore the fire, for example, does not warm, because it is body, but because it is hot .... The cause, therefore, of all effects consists in certain accidents both in the agents and in the patients; which when they are all present, the effect is produced ....[159]

From this quote we can see how matter and motion are located in Hobbes's account of causality. The simple ideas of matter and motion are necessary but

---

[155] Hobbes, *De Corpore, E. W. I*, p. 77.

[156] Hobbes, *De Corpore, E. W. I*, p. 122.

[157] Hobbes, *De Corpore, E. W. I*, p. 79.

[158] Hobbes, *De Corpore, E. W. I*, p. 77.

[159] Hobbes, *De Corpore*, p. 121.

not sufficient ideas for understanding physical bodies because we also have to know what kinds of bodies and what kinds of motion are being considered.

Hobbes does not grant formal causality the independence that Aristotle gave to it. Formal causality is one aspect of efficient causality. Everything has the quality of matter and motion; a "world of forms" and other insubstantial entities are not accepted. However, Hobbes creates a large space for formal causality by making qualities central to science. It follows, finally, that causality depends on the associations of words created through classification.

Hobbes also accepts final causality within a certain range. He criticizes scholastic thought for claiming that every object has a final cause. The schoolmen claim that

> Heavy bodies fall downwards, out of an appetite to rest, and to conserve their nature in that place which is most proper for them; ascribing appetite, and Knowledge of what is good for their conservation, (which is more than man has) to things inanimate absurdly.[160]

What Hobbes is claiming is that final causality depends on a goal, which depends on there being an intention, which in turn depends on there being a will. Because inanimate objects do not have wills, they cannot have goals. But animals, humans and possibly God have intentions. Therefore, Hobbes's frequently repeated claim that security is the end of the commonwealth does not contradict his attack on the use of final causality. Willing is a particular kind of motion where it is acceptable to consider final cause. It is thus an over-statement in Sorell's reading to claim that final causes are "outlawed."

Sorell has taken Hobbes's comments on various kinds of causality as being a relation of choice: Hobbes likes this kind and dislikes these others. Hobbes's discussion of causality may police the vocabulary of explanation, but it does not make explanation simpler. Sorell does not realize that Hobbes's attack on formal and final causality ends up making his account of efficient causality much more complex. Hobbes has shifted how the different ideas associated with causality are understood.

---

[160] Hobbes, *Leviathan*, p. 87.

When the vocabularies of Aristotle and Hobbes are closely considered, it seems that they are presenting very similar positions. The primary description of causality for Hobbes occurs when he limits causality to efficient causality and ties efficient causality to motion. The secondary description of causality occurs when he uses a variety of names to specify the kinds of efficient causality, which include generation, arrangement and end. Hobbes combines final, formal and efficient causes into the category of motion, which he labels the efficient cause. Aristotle's vocabulary is slightly different. Each kind of causality focused on answering one question. The kinds of causality are not grouped into an organization. Aristotle is content to classify the kinds of causality whereas Hobbes arranges the classification with the categories of matter and motion. Both thinkers nevertheless propose similar accounts of what how causality is understood.

Deliberation. Classification and causality are both tied to deliberation, with which humans connect science to the world. Science, like prudence, allows people to guess effectively what will happen or, more importantly, allows people to know what can be done with whatever is in their power.

> The *end* or *scope* of philosophy is, that we may make use to our benefit of effects formerly seen; or that, by application of bodies to one another, we may produce the like effects of those we conceive in our mind, as far forth as matter, strength, and industry will permit, for the commodity of human life.[161]

Hobbes denies any strict form of prediction.

> No Discourse whatsoever, can End in absolute knowledge of Fact, past, or to come. For, as for the knowledge of Fact, it is originally, Sense; and ever after, Memory. And for the knowledge of Consequence, which I have said before is called Science, it is not Absolute, but Conditionall. No man can know by Discourse, that this, or that, is, has been, or will; which is to know absolutely: but onely, that if This be, That is; if This has been, That has been; if This shall be, That shall be: which is to know conditionally; and that not the consequence of one thing to another; but of one

[161] Hobbes, *De Corpore, E. W. I*, p. 7. This quote, which considers the end of philosophy, is another indication of Hobbes's use of final causality.

> name of a thing, to another name of the same thing.[162]

People can still affect the future through deliberation guided by reason. Science is not conditional in the way that conclusions are conditional on premises, or truth is conditional on verification. Science is conditional in the sense that the possible consequences depend on a prior identification of the object being considered. Science differs from prudence in its dependence on general names, which are based on noticing the similiarities and differences between things. Deliberation connects the consequences of general names in science to action. When a person deliberates, he or she adds and subtracts desires and aversions, the result being what the person wills.[163] Hobbes writes that:

> ... a compounded name, which by the joining of another name to it, is made less universal, and signifies that more conceptions than one were added in the mind.[164]

The comparison of the mind to a calculator may conjure up very different images for modern commentators. What is being added and subtracted are attributes or general ideas. When one name is added to another, the new name becomes more restricted. If a sign can be artificial or natural, adding "natural" to the name "sign" adds a quality to the name (and subtracts things in the world that the name can refer to). William Sacksteder writes that science

> computes their accidents, making logistic moves among them. For inverse methodological procedures either analyze appearances into complex accidents which are more universal or they recompose from the latter wholes which were more singular. Science adds and subtracts accidents only.[165]

Reason navigates through the structures of words that Hobbes calls science. Tied to judgement, which is the ability to classify an object, reason allows humans to deliberate about the future with great effectiveness. Hobbes uses

---

[162] Hobbes, *Leviathan*, p. 131.

[163] Hobbes, *Leviathan*, p. 127.

[164] Martin, "On the Semantics of Hobbes," p. 211. The reference is to *Computatio*, no page.

[165] Sacksteder, "Some Ways of Doing Language Philosophy," p. 471.

the example of the swordsman who adds to his dexterity

> an acquired Science, of where he can offend, or be offended by his adversarie, in every possible posture, or guard ....[166]

Reason gives a kind of knowledge that affects the relative weight of desires and aversions. It does not come after the person has willed, but rather indicates which aversions and desires are possible, compatible and so on. We can know nothing absolutely, and Hobbes's discussion is not interested in abstract prediction anyway. Deliberation is focused on what people can do with what they have; the rest of the world is determined by God. The best we can do is experience as much as we can and organize a clear structure of words that organize the qualities of the things we have experienced into a coherent account of what is possible. Science is the process of fashioning experience in order to fashion action.

> Philosophy ... the child of the world and your own mind ... is within yourself; perhaps not fashioned yet, but like the world its father, as it was in the beginning, a thing confused .... Imitate the creation: if you will be a philosopher in good earnest ... your method must resemble that of the creation.[167]

Humans can control their destinies when they become creators and acquire knowledge of the possible causes of things. But in order to become creators, they must imitate God's creation, which means that they must imitate, as much as they are able, the nature of the world. Humans must become obedient to their experiences and construct their knowledge accordingly. They must also establish a meaningful language; in doing so they imitate God's first gift of language.

---

[166] Hobbes, *Leviathan*, p. 117. Another example is given in *De Corpore, E. W. I*, p. 71.

> 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 forward, 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.

[167] Hobbes, *E.W. I*, xii.

❧

Making associations a central aspect of Hobbes's project runs against the common claim that Hobbes rejected "scholasticism." Hobbes's location in the history of ideas is at stake given that the more he rejects scholasticism, the more he is part of the scientific rejection of medieval thought in general and the more distance is placed between the two "Ages." Hobbes's relations to scholasticism and to Aristotle have been largely neglected by the commentators. Rugow limits his commentary to a few choice biographical anecdotes about Hobbes's abhorrence of the "barbarous Latin of the Schoolmen."[168] Most of the other commentators repeat Hobbes's attack on scholasticism and take this attack to be a complete rejection. Sorell considers Hobbes's relation to Aristotle concerning causality and science, but only to point out the ways that Hobbes rejected Aristotle. This approach is simplistic at best. Hobbes's commentators have merely taken a caricature as if it were a real historical entity. Scholasticism, if it existed at all, is a very complex set of ideas, that encompasses many thinkers and a variety of conflicting positions. In *Leviathan*, Hobbes criticizes the scholastics for basing their beliefs on the authority of books, for using words that are insignificant and for teaching politically suspect doctrines. In each case Hobbes responds by privileging experience over books as the ground of knowledge. The scholastics are either confusing themselves or manipulating others. Hobbes does not, however, criticize the form that knowledge takes in scholastic thought. He attacks the character of the relation between things—there is no third entity that exists in addition to the two that have similar qualities—but he does not reject that thoughts should be arranged in terms of similarities.

Hobbes still attacks the use of metaphors. Hobbes should not be characterized as a metaphysical poet or as a post-modern novelist.[169]

---

[168] Rugow, *Thomas Hobbes*, p. 44.

[169] Hobbes's vision of science is not sympathetic to Borges's Chinese classification. Although it is unclear how he would respond to such a system, given that it does point to similarities between objects, one of the underlying attitudes for Hobbes's discussion seems to be that the

However, ideas such as the body politic cannot be ignored by appealing to Hobbes's denial of metaphors. In a later chapter of *Leviathan*, Hobbes refers to the body politic in positive terms.

> Hitherto I have set forth the nature of Man, (whose Pride and other Passions have compelled him to submit himselfe to Government;) together with the great power of his Governour, whom I compared to Leviathan, taking that comparison out of the two last verses of the one and fortieth of *Job*; where God having set forth the great power of Leviathan, called him King of the Proud.[170]

The body politic is not ambiguous; it is not obscure. It is a comparison that helps establish the proper signification of the commonwealth. There is a distinction between associations and free associations, between hunting and wandering. The claim that Hobbes uses metaphors, in the contemporary sense, does not entail the claim that his texts accept ambiguity or multiple interpretations. Quite the contrary; it is with his "metaphors" that he structures the possibilities of meaning. Hobbes advocates the strict regulation of language. To regulate language is to regulate thought, which is to fashion actions. The extensive use of terms such as madness, absurdity, and insignificance emphasizes that Hobbes is not advocating an "open" work.

What remains is to consider how Hobbes organizes his answer to the question: "What is a commonwealth?" We can take several basic points from the discussion above. Hobbes provides a definition of the commonwealth, but he also provides a variety of associations that connect the commonwealth to other ideas. These associations are not random or chosen out of convenience. Hobbes's choice of associations follows a fairly strict pattern that connects back to his classification of things into what is simple or collective, inanimate or animate, non-linguistic or linguistic. The commonwealth is a body that can be appropriately compared to things such as rivers and buildings; it is an animate body that can be appropriately compared to things like a machine

---

world is a coherent place and that a well-constructed classification system will be coherent and straight-forward.

[170] Hobbes, *Leviathan*, p. 362.

and a human body; and it is a linguistic entity that can be legitimately compared to a speaker or a legal person. Each of these comparisons contributes to the meaning of "the commonwealth." The words constitute a web of associations that will now be described.

Chapter 3
Webs of Association

> ... but to call our selves a Microcosme, or little world, I thought it onely a pleasant trope of Rhetorick, till my nearer judgement and second thoughts told me there was a reall truth therein: for first wee are a rude masse, and in the ranke of creatures, which onely are, and have a dull kinde of being not yet privileged with life, or preferred to sense or reason; next we live the life of plants, the life of animals, the life of men, and at last the life of spirits, running on in one mysterious nature those five kinds of existences ....
>
> Thomas Browne, *Religio Medici*, I 34, 1630's

One of the key themes in *Leviathan* is Hobbes's attempt to distinguish a multitude of people from a commonwealth, the many from the one. How can a collection of human beings be thought of as if it was a single object? Hobbes understands the problem as one of language. Ignorance of the signification of words can lead to confusion between "one action of many men, and many actions of one multitude" where one may "take for the action of the people, that which is a multitude of actions done by a multitude of men, led perhaps by the perswasion of one."[171] A collection, however coherent, remains distinct from a real unity. Even if everyone follows one orator, they may not be a "people." The question concerns the identity of complex bodies and the possibilities of human political relations.

Locating Hobbes close to the Medieval notions of the Great Chain of Being as I have done in the last chapter, while still recognizing his criticisms of that worldview, frames how the ideas in his text can become meaningful. A scientific presentation must be deductive, but it must also be other things. Deductions occur, but only within and after other cognitive and linguistic processes which prefigure and prearrange those deductions. Hobbes's account of meaning creates standards and procedures that he must follow in order to

[171] Hobbes, *Leviathan*, p. 165.

characterize the commonwealth. He cannot make the commonwealth meaningful simply by naming it. Words are the money of fools. What is important is what the words signify in the minds of individuals. To name something does not necessarily change how that thing is understood at all. Nor can the commonwealth be adequately characterized through its definition. A definition will help locate the commonwealth in an overall language system, but the character of the commonwealth would depend on the student's ability to follow all of the definition's implications. In one classical passage Hobbes defines the commonwealth as:

> *One Person, of whose Acts a great Multitude, by mutual Covenants one with another, have made themselves every one the Author, to the end he may use the strength and means of them all, as he shall think expedient for their Peace and Common Defense.*[172]

Most of the words in the definition are open to further expansion: Hobbes devotes a chapter to the meaning of "person," which connects to his account of human nature; while the idea of the covenant is the central concern of many passages, and is itself connected to the discussion of rights, obligations and the laws of nature. Hobbes's account of the commonwealth names and defines it, but he moves beyond these initial steps to associate the commonwealth with a wide variety of ideas; and, through this process he makes the commonwealth meaningful. According to his account of science, an individual will judge that an association is apt if qualities that are common to both ideas have been experienced. *That* the commonwealth is a body is the primary association that Hobbes makes. This conditions the way that the identity of the commonwealth is described and understood. The commonwealth is compared to other objects whose existence is generally granted. Hobbes still attacks the use of metaphors, but the application of this attack to his own text is severely limited—it is no longer obvious that Hobbes uses metaphors.

---

[172] Hobbes, *Leviathan*, ch. 17, p227.

Charles Cantalupo complains that Hobbes "mixes metaphors" when he compares the commonwealth first to a building and then writes about its "infirmities."[173] However, what Hobbes is presenting is a system of associations that may be judged as "mixed" if they are contrasted as isolated tropes, but are consistent if they are understood relative to the broader structures of Hobbes's account. These associations are not haphazard; they are closely tied to a general system of ideas that are arranged in a hierarchy of complexity and generality. There may be nothing the same as *Leviathan*, but it can be classified nonetheless. Classification does not depend on the sameness of objects, but on the universality or commonness of qualities.

Hobbes deploys two structures to arrange the associations that make the commonwealth meaningful. The first assigns objects in the world into three basic ranks: inanimate, animate and symbolic. The commonwealth, as an artificial human body, is placed at the highest level of complexity in his schema. As a result, the commonwealth can be meaningfully associated with any kind of body below it, whether a building, a machine, or a human.

The second structure classifies the motions of the bodies, and in particular the kinds of causality that describe the motions. In the introduction to *Leviathan* the question is split into at least five parts: What is the commonwealth made of? Who makes it? How is it put together? What can it do? and How can it be destroyed? Each kind of object changes and is changed in particular ways. The causality associated with a physical object, like a billiard ball, is shared by any object. The causality associated with an animate object, like a watch or a wolf, is shared by any animate object. Animate objects have a kind of motion that simple physical objects lack, namely, some form of self-propulsion. Likewise, a human object has a kind of motion that neither inanimate nor simple animate objects have, namely, language. Because the commonwealth is at the highest level of complexity, the matter, ends, generation and form of the commonwealth can be associated with

[173] Cantalupo, "Hobbes's Use of Metaphors," p. 27.

causality that describes inanimate, animate and symbolic objects. There may be nothing the same as *Leviathan*, but everything is like it.

These two structures do not completely classify the passages that will be considered, nor do they consider all the passages. Hobbes's text is arranged by many divisions and organizations which include gender, class, racial and intellectual divisions as well as distinctions arising from or in reaction to classical and contemporary intellectual streams. It is also true that a passage can become meaningful without being classified; these two structures have been used to organize the discussion only because they are relatively obvious and because they are important in the text.

To distinguish a multitude from a real unity requires "study and great understanding."[174] The associations that Hobbes deploys form a web that constitutes Hobbes's account of how a commonwealth is distinct from a multitude. The overall structure of associations provides a frame in which particular associations can be located and their function in the overall image can be assessed. I will not attempt to analyse Hobbes's argument in great detail since his arguments are only one aspect of how the vision of the commonwealth is constructed. What I will attempt to do is sketch some of the key associations that Hobbes makes and thus show the basic frame in which he understood the commonwealth.

---

[174] Hobbes, *Leviathan*, p. 165.

The Physical Commonwealth

Physical Matter. Because human beings are part of the world, and because the world is ultimately composed of matter and motion, it is generally acceptable to associate the motions and qualities of humans to various physical objects in the world. The material associations establish ways of understanding the possibilities of human interaction. For instance, passions interact like coal:

> ... the passions of many men be more violent when they are assembled together ... even as a great many coals, though but warm asunder, being put together inflame one another.[175]

> For the Passions of men, which asunder are moderate, as the heat of one brand; in Assembly are like many brands, that enflame one another, (especially when they blow one another with Orations) to the setting of the Commonwealth on fire, under pretence of Counselling it.[176]

> The Understanding is by the flame of Passions, never enlightned, but dazled.[177]

People can be swept away by "the stream (in a manner) of the whole nation...."[178] In these and many other similar associations, changes in the human being are meaningfully compared to changes in physical objects. Humans act and are acted upon the way that physical objects are. Even the basic grammar in Hobbes's writings reflects the pervasiveness of physical associations in his thought. He frequently turns processes into objects. For instance, he writes that the sovereign cannot justly be "put to death" rather than "killed." Death occurs when a living object changes its location. Physical objects are also associated with less tangible objects, such as life and rights. Civil laws are described as "Artificiall Chains" which are

> fastned at one end, to the lips of that Man, or Assembly, to whom [the subjects] have

---

[175] Hobbes, *De Cive*, p. 111.

[176] Hobbes, *Leviathan*, ch. 25, p. 309.

[177] Hobbes, *Leviathan*, p. 241.

[178] Hobbes, *Behemoth*, p. 112.

> given the Sovereign Power; and at the other end to their own Ears.[179]

Laws are like chains that bind the subjects to the sovereign. Peace and security can be "lost," "preserved" and "recovered"[180] The sovereign power is like an object that can be given to someone, taken away, transferred, lost or potentially divided.

Hobbes also characterizes rights as physical objects. When the commonwealth is created, individuals "transfer" their rights to the sovereign. The distinction between rights and objects parallels a distinction between the use and the ownership of an object. With this vocabulary, lending an object becomes distinct from giving an object away. Conditional transfers do not change relations of right. The reason why the gift can be taken back is because the right serves as a chain that continues to connect the object to the original owner and not to the user.

Human life is associated with the idea of a commodity, which can be owned, lost, exchanged or purchased.

> The good which the vanquisht, or inferiour, in strength doth receive, is the grant of his life, which by the Right of War in the naturall state of men he might have depriv'd him of, but the good which he promises, is his service and obedience.[181]

Parents and masters own the lives of their children and slaves. The servant is tied to the lord, who has a right to "dispose of [the slave's] *Person*." Although the idea of the person will be discussed later, it should be noted here that it is partially understood as a material object. Persons are shadows of the physical human beings that are themselves treated as physical objects capable of ownership and transfer. The ability for human beings to create an ephemeral likeness of themselves is vital for the way that Hobbes understands representation. The sovereign represents the subjects because their persons are present in the sovereign. The ghosts of citizens tie them together.

Hobbes's discussion of free will and determinism relies on the

---

[179] Hobbes, *Leviathan*, p. 264.

[180] Hobbes, *Leviathan*, p. 233.

[181] Hobbes, *De Cive*, p. 117.

associations he draws between mental and physical processes. The mind is associated with a machine, and actions are associated with a flowing river. Liberty can only be meaningful as a question of external impediments, not of transcendent freedom.

> And so of all living creatures, whilest they are imprisoned, or restrained, with walls, or chayns; and of the water whilest it is kept in by banks, or vessels, that otherwise would spread it selfe into a larger space ...[182]

Civil laws are also understood as embankments that constrain but do not stop motion.

> Laws were not invented to take away, but to direct men's actions; even as nature ordained the banks, not to stay, but to guide the course of the stream.[183]

The association also provides Hobbes with a vocabulary for discussing human relations. Passions are the terrain on which human actions flow.

> Competition of Riches, Honour, Command, or other power, enclineth to Contention, Enmity, and War: Because the way of one Competitor, to the attaining of his desire, is to kill, subdue, supplant, or repell the other.

In contrast, "Desire of Ease, and sensuall Delight, disposeth men to obey a common power."[184] Most of the associations that Hobbes makes in the second passage are more appropriately associations with animate objects which have desires. The animal movements are nonetheless understood with the physical idea of "enclining."

The language of determinism is tied to a relative indeterminism. No single manner leads to obedience or contention. The changes are incremental and cannot be adequately experienced by either the subject or the scientist. However, the absence of a single overriding factor in human activity does not contradict the ultimate determinism of that activity. Scientific claims about the world are limited by the character of the scientist. But how can Hobbes justify that everything is determined if he admits himself, with the concept of

---

[182] Hobbes, *Leviathan*, p. 262.

[183] Hobbes, *The Citizen*, p. 268. Quoted in Di Stephano, *Configurations of Masculinity*, p. 77.

[184] Hobbes, *Leviathan*, p. 161.

the endeavour, that no one can directly or completely experience the world? What Hobbes has done is associate the basic nature of the world with the perceived world around him, moving from the visible to the invisible. His experience of the world suggests, at least to him, that events are determined, even events that do not appear to be determined.

Physical End. An important distinction must be made in order to claim that the end of the commonwealth can be understood in physical terms. It is one thing to claim that physical objects have goals, a claim that Hobbes categorically denies. It is another thing, however, to claim that something with a will uses a physical object to achieve a goal. When it is claimed that the end of the commonwealth is associated with the ends of physical objects, what is being claimed is that the goals of humans relating to the commonwealth are associated with the goal of humans relating to physical objects.

The ends of physical objects help describe the move from the state of nature to the commonwealth. Humans in the state of nature "become at last weary of irregular justling, and hewing one another, and desire with all their hearts, to conforme themselves into one firme and lasting edifice ...."[185] Like rocks, Men through their frequent contact lose their contentious qualities and become capable of being moulded into a building. The end of the commonwealth is therefore the cessation of movement, which can allow a stability like that of a building. Although partial, the image suggests a calmness that contrasts with the chaos of the state of nature where no individual can be "secure." The end of the building is, however, not complex enough to understand the end of the commonwealth if only because the parts of the commonwealth relate as animate and symbolic objects. Neither characteristic can be contained by a physical image of stability.

---

[185] Hobbes, *Leviathan*, p. 363.

Physical Generation. The creation of the commonwealth is associated with the generation of physical objects. These associations tend to be used when Hobbes considers how people are forced into the commonwealth, whether by conquest, dependence, or threat. The creator is not the people, but the conquerer, the slave owner, the father, or the architect. Humans

> cannot, without the help of a very able architect, be compiled into any other than a crazy building, such as hardly lasting out their own time, must assuredly fall upon the heads of the posterity.[186]

Humans do not act exactly like physical objects. They have to desire to conform, to act like parts of the building. The association is appropriate but inadequate; it shows some aspects of how humans must act in a commonwealth.

Physical Form. Insofar as people are like physical objects, the form of their relations can be understood in physical terms. Hobbes describes the state of nature as a physical situation into which humans can fall. Men "justle" each other. The threat of war is like foul weather.

> For as the nature of Foule weather, lyeth not in a showre or two of rain; but in an inclination thereto of many dayes together: So the nature of War, consisteth not in actuall fighting; but in the known disposition thereto, during all the time there is no assurance to the contrary.[187]

In *De Cive* Hobbes compares the stagnation of water to the lack of political commands.

> As water inclosed on all hands with banks, stands still and corrupts ... so subjects, if they might doe nothing without the commands of the Law would grow dull, and unwildly.[188]

The images of the disorganized commonwealth are contrasted to the images of physical coherence. The idea of conformity is associated with the stones that make up a building. Hobbes's fifth Law of Nature is "Compleasance"

---

[186] Watkins, p. 115 • reference to *Leviathan* p. 167 and *E.W. III*, p. 308.

[187] Hobbes, *Leviathan*, p. 186.

[188] Hobbes, *De Cive*, p. 165.

> that is to say, *That every man strive to accomodate himselfe to the rest.* For the understanding whereof, we may consider, that there is in mens aptnesse to Society; a diversity of Nature, rising from their diversity of Affections; not unlike to that we see in stones brought together for building of an Ædifice. For as that stone which by the asperity, and irregularity of Figure, takes more room from others, than it selfe fills; and for the hardnesse, cannot be easily made plain, and thereby hindereth the building, is by the builders cast away as unprofitable, and troublesome; so also, a man that by asperity of Nature, will strive to retain those things which to himselfe are superfluous, and to others necessary; and for the stubbornness of his Passions, cannot be corrected, is to be left, or cast out of Society, as cumbersome thereunto.[189]

The commonwealth is a lasting edifice, which is created with the help of architecture. The physical association suggests how someone like the sovereign should intervene to support social order. Humans must be enclined in certain directions, they must be fashioned and fastened to the sovereign. The subjects ought to be moulded so that they fit into the commonwealth properly.

The commonwealth is like a river and a building. Readers may take these images to be contradictory. How could something be both water and stone? Hobbes weaves together water and stone, in particular when he relates the river to the riverbank. Water describes motion that can be unbounded, harnassed or stifled while stone describes things that limit motion. Hobbes's solution to the problem of chaos, which could also be called the problem of water, is not that water must be substituted for stone. Water flows, it must flow or it becomes putrified. But the water must be constrained by the riverbank. Stones and water become a single system. Transposing this relation to the political discussions, human beings are associated with both water and stones. The bank always exists—it is the rest of the river. In the state of nature, the river creates its own bank. When someone breaks a law of nature, they experience resistance. Other humans in the state of nature unintentionally enforce the laws of nature. No one can "secure himselfe" or

---

[189] Hobbes, *Leviathan*, p. 209.

"subdue" others. Hobbes's plea that we should act towards others as we want them to act towards us is a prescription against challenging the bank.

Stones, or water acting like stones, are not the only objects that can organize the flow of water. Water acting as water can control itself. Water tends to flow along paths where water has already been, and where it still exists. Like water on a table, water can keep itself more or less in line. Even the king can be "carried away with the stream (in a manner) of the whole nation." [190] The movement of water can be fashioned by the examples that occurred before. There is a combination of laws (the embankment) and designs (patterns on a table), or of negative and positive freedom, that arises from the way that human beings are both water and stone.

Associating the commonwealth with a building opposes the tendencies of commentators such as Taylor and Hampton who focus on the contractual relations while ignoring the physical relations of force.

> It should be clear that, in spite of his absolutist leanings, what Hobbes is trying to express ... is the great democratic idea of self-government. The coercive powers of the ruler are only legitimate in his eyes by the thought that they give effect to what is at heart the will of the whole people....[191]

If we focus on the physical associations, it is indifferent to the existence of the commonwealth whether the commonwealth was created by social contract or conquest, just as it is indifferent to the existence of a chair whether its creation was spontaneous or executed by a carpenter. Hobbes suggests other associations that are more consistent with Taylor's claim; but these should be understood as only one part of a position that includes physical associations that are not democratic. We can use as an example Hobbes's discussion of

---

[190] Hobbes, *Behemoth*, p. 112. Hobbes's phrasing here is significant. He qualifies his comparison with "in a manner." Does this mean that he is using a metaphor? Does it mean that the comparison should not be taken seriously? The association contributes to how the king's actions are understood. How would the scientific description be phrased? "In a manner" may mean just what it says, that the stream and public opinion are not identical, but that there is a quality that is common to them, in particular being swept away.

[191] Taylor, *Thomas Hobbes*, p.98.

paternal dominion in chapter 20 of *Leviathan*. He begins by claiming along democratic lines that the parent's right of dominion

> is not so derived from the Generation, as if therefore the Parent had Dominion over his Child because he begat him; but from the Child's consent ....[192]

The discussion that follows this passage, however, calls into question a democratic reading of consent. Hobbes argues that the child cannot "belong equally to both" but that there is no natural superiority of either sex. If the mother does not declare who the father is, then she has dominion because "the Child dependeth on her will, and is consequently hers." The child owes the mother for his or her life, and is therefore obliged to obey. The signification of consent in this passage is not evident, but it does not suggest a simple, free choice.

The idea of the building could generate a complex image of the commonwealth. The river and the building are standard motifs in political theory. Understanding standard associations in different ways is an important part of political argumentation. Milton, for instance, used the idea of the building against those who argued that England ought to have a single religion.

> Yet these are the men who cried out against for schismatics and sectaries; as if, while the temple of the Lord was building, some cutting, some squaring the marble, others hewing the cedars, there should be a sort of irrational men who could not consider there must be many schisms and many dissections made in the quarry and in the timber, ere the house of God can be built. And when every stone is laid artfully together, it cannot be united into a continuity, it can but be contiguous in this world: neither can every piece of the building be of one form; nay, rather the perfection consists in this, that out of many moderate varieties and brotherly dissimilitudes that are not vastly disproportional arises the goodly and the graceful symmetry that commends the whole pile and structure.[193]

The associations with material objects are useful for describing basic motion and for describing changes when humans are acted upon by external powers. However, the image has a limited value in Hobbes's discussions. He is

---

[192] Hobbes, *Leviathan*, p. 253.

[193] Milton, *Areopagitica*, p. 46.

concerned with the internal state of the individual—although slaves can be owned like property, they can also fight back or promise to obey. Hobbes is concerned with creating an image of conflict that is more severe than a lack of fit. An association such as that made by Milton could not be easily connected to the state of nature, which could make the idea of schism into an active process rather than a simple physical difference. Of course, Milton's association may be an attempt to diffuse the various religious controveries by making them inanimate. Finally, Hobbes is concerned with making the sovereign constantly vital to the commonwealth. Although the building requires an architect to be built, the architect becomes irrelevant once the construction is finished. Associating the sovereign with the will of an animate object contributes additional characteristics. The will is always an essential part of the animal.

The Animate Commonwealth

Animate Matter. Animate objects are a particular, more complex kind of physical object. Because billiard balls have no internal control over their motions, they would not be an adequate way to understand humans. The primary addition in the matter of the commonwealth at the animate level is the possibilities of motion arising from the object itself. Hobbes does not insist on a distinction between machines and "animals." Animals are understood in the same way that clocks are. The association of animals with commonwealths allows Hobbes to claim that the commonwealth is built out of human beings that act like animals.

> Competition of Riches, Honour, Command, or other power, enclineth to Contention, Enmity, and War: Because the way of one Competitor, to the attaining of his desire, is to kill, subdue, supplant, or repell the other.

Although "animal" suggests that the object is animate, the quality that Hobbes uses to distinguish animals from physical objects is the ability to sense. Sensation may be an appropriate quality to focus on because Hobbes ties sensation to animation.[194] Animation may have been a problematic concept for Hobbes. He cannot base his account of animation on an incorporeal soul that relates to the material world. Everything is material and everything is put into motion by something else already in motion. It would follow that every animate motion originates outside of the animal, which would work against the idea that animals are self-moved. The way that Hobbes describes human motion in the beginning of *Leviathan* suggests how he would characterize animate objects generally.

> The cause of Sense, is the Externall Body, or Object, which presseth the organs proper to each Sense ... which pressure, by the mediation of Nerves, and other strings, and membranes of the body, continued inwards to the Brain, and Heart, causeth there a resistance, or counter-pressure, or endeavour of the heart,to deliver it self ....[195]

---

[194] Hobbes, *Leviathan*, p. 85.

An object is animate when it has the ability to internalize certain kinds of pressure and then respond to them. Unlike simple physical objects, animate objects are not passive, they have the ability to respond. The difference between will and deliberation is important for clarifying the nature of the animate. Bees can will to act, but because they cannot use language, formulate general ideas, or deliberate. They are not conscious of options, they do not plan and they are not self-aware. Willing does not entail intentions.

Sensation is the key process that makes an object animate. Animals are built out of smaller animals, just as complex machines are built out of smaller machines. The senses are divided into the various "organs" of sense, on which objects "worketh" by "pressing" against them. These motions continue inward to the brain and the heart, which react by "resisting" the inward motion with a "counter-pressure." Only the "predominant stroakes" from external bodies are sensible. When humans think, their minds can "wander" or they can "hunt" for a particular end. The image begins to "decay," it becomes "weaker" and is eventually "destroyed." Cold can breed dreams of fear, whereas the schools "nourish" ideas of spirits and witches.[196] Fear of invisible things is "the Naturall seed" of what "everyone in himself calleth Religion" and what other people call superstition.[197] Passions are "commonly more potent" than reason.[198] In each of these associations, parts of the mind act like animals, sometimes in competition, other times in cooperation.

Although some animals, such as bees, are naturally cooperative, when Hobbes associates humans with animals, he deploys examples of animals that he takes to be naturally confrontational. The association of animals with violence is a traditional theme in western political thought. Thomas

---

[195] Hobbes, *Leviathan*,p. 85.

[196] Hobbes, *Leviathan*, pp. 88-90, 93.

[197] Hobbes, *Leviathan*, p. 167.

[198] Hobbes, *Leviathan*, p. 241.

Aquinas, for example, writes that

> The animal soul made living a ceaseless quest, a life of lust without satisfaction, of will without direction, a wandering that ended only with death. [...] It was because man possessed a human soul that he was able to rise above the aimless desire that characterized the merely animal state, and to realize that his sole purpose in life was to seek reunion with his Maker ....[199]

Calvin claims that without religion,

> men are in no wise superior to brute beasts, but are in many respects far more miserable. Subject, then, to so many forms of wickedness, they drag out their lives in ceaseless tumult and disquiet.[200]

Transforming Christian imagery into secular language, Sir Walter Raleigh describes a civil war as:

> a state of War, which is the meer state of Nature of Men out of community, where all have an equal right to all things, and I shall enjoy my Life, my Substance, or what is dear to me, no longer then he that has more Cunning, or is Stronger than I, will give me leave; for Natural Conscience is not a sufficient Curb to the violent Passions of Men or of the Laws of Society.[201]

Although Aquinas and Raleigh differ on what humans are lacking when they act like animals, whether it is a connection to God or to the laws of society, both thinkers use the animal as an image of what humans would act like if they acted solely on their passions. Within this theme, Hobbes writes that when there was no language:

> there had been amongst men, neither Common-wealth, nor Society, nor Contract, nor Peace, no more than amongst Lyons, Bears, and Wolves.[202]

For Hobbes, what distinguishes humans from animals, and what allows humans to overcome their violent passions, is the presence of language, which makes humans more than animals.

One stream of commentary, exemplified by Hampton's work, emphasizes the confrontational, animal-like stance that Hobbes presents in

---

[199] White, "The Forms of Wildness", p. 19. Reference to *Summa Theologica* (quest. 6, arts. 2-4).

[200] Ashcraft, "*Leviathan* Triumphant," p. 145.

[201] Raleigh, *Three Discourses*. Quoted in Ashcraft, "*Leviathan* Triumphant," p. 146-147.

[202] Hobbes, *Leviathan*, p. 100.

the state of nature.[203] Not only does she underestimate the role of language in Hobbes's account of politics, even when she discusses animate objects she presents an abstracted, rational choice, passion-filled image that ignores the temporal dimension of the state of nature. For Hampton, people are always hostile and never become tired of warfare. They are constantly asking themselves whether it is worth staying in the commonwealth, and are always prepared to revolt against the sovereign. Hampton's commentary focuses on the association of the subject with the slave.[204] The relation between the sovereign and the subject is initially, and perhaps continually, a relation of force, whether threatened or realized. Focusing on the master-slave relationship conditions how Hampton reads Hobbes's argument. The slave, who becomes the image for any subject, is understood as an animal that can revolt. For his argument to succeed, Hobbes has to show how the sovereign acquires enough power to be an effective slave owner. It is little wonder that Hobbes fails to meet Hampton's standards. One would only have to look at how the slave owner depends on outside political structures to maintain the slaves in their servitude. However, when Hobbes discusses the relation of the master and slave, it is only to show that force and threats are inadequate for ruling humans. In the same passages, he contrasts the slave with the servant. The difference between the slave and the servant is that the slave is in chains and in a hostile relation to the master whereas the servant is "bound" to the master through an agreement. By favouring the master-servant relation, Hobbes indicates that the sovereign-subject relation requires more than a relation of force. For Hobbes, humans eventually become weary of the state of nature, and so begin to desire the stability of the commonwealth. When they become part of the commonwealth, they are changed.

Another stream of commentary emphasizes the functional relations between the parts that the idea of the animal can be used for. As Sorrell writes,

---

[203] Hampton, p. 210.

[204] Hampton, p. 195.

> The functional organization of a commonwealth comes into focus ... when the commonwealth is seen as an automaton in the form of an artificial man.[205]

There may be only individuals, but any particular individual must be understood in relation to other individuals. People are not simply objects that either conflict or cohere; they are also objects that can be changed and that can change others. They are members of a group that fashions its members. As Baumgold claims:

> *Leviathan's* addition of the role of the soldier evinces a recognition of the plasticity, the malleability, of political roles.[206]

In a social context where people are fashioned, no individual can be understood in isolation. But it does not follow, as Baumgold claims, that individualism is denied. People become complex, but they remain the matter of the commonwealth.[207]

Hobbes's text does not completely accept or deny either Watkins's or Baumgold's account of the commonwealth's matter. The commonwealth is made up of individuals. These individuals are complex enough that roles and social practices are important parts of their character. Structures, on the other hand, are not an additional part of the commonwealth's matter. They are, however, a necessary component of the analysis of a commonwealth because they indicate one aspect of the form that the matter takes. The form of an object cannot be described in terms of the matter of that object. The issue between Watkins and Baumgold, and the problems that they seem to have with Hobbes's text, can be explained in part by which of Hobbes's associations

---

[205] Sorell, *Hobbes*, p. 20. Sorell does not mention the body politic elsewhere in the book.

[206] Baumgold, p. 100.

[207] The conflict between Watkins and Baumgold falls into a general conflict between individual and structure. What is the proper analysis: individuals or the structures in which individuals are located? Both sides seem to rest on self-evident claims. For the individualist, structures do not have an existence outside of individuals. For the structuralist, individuals do not have an existence except in structures. The individualist can point to the mystical nature of structures, the structuralist can point to the simplified nature of individuals.

they focused on. Watkins limits Hobbes's account of human nature to its association with bodies and to animate bodies. He does not consider the interdependencies and functional variety that a commonwealth entails. Promises become epiphenomena and language does not affect the human character. Watkins therefore misses the impact of organized speech on human beings that Baumgold considers.

Baumgold's discussion is limited in considering the ways that humans can act. She is correct to point to the functional relations, but she does not adequately distinguish between the functional and the symbolic relations. The analysis of language is *peculiar* to the study of humans. If humans were just egos, they would not be different from insects. Because people have speech, they can think with general ideas, they can plan and they can make promises. The account of politics has to expand to consider more things, and, for this reason, the words that Hobbes ties together in the text become that much more complicated. But anything that is added to the system must be coherent with, and partially understood with reference to what is already in the system and is partially.

Animate End. The end of animate objects is more complex than physical objects; in addition to maintaining the fixed relations between its parts, an animate object has to maintain itself when its parts move. The stability of a building does not include an ability to move. In addition, the animal has to maintain the processes by which it is animate. To stop breathing or eating is to endanger life. The animal's goal, therefore, is health, which depends, among other things, on the continued harmony of the animal's parts. If the animal is diseased, then its health and its existence as an animal are threatened. Hobbes uses this set of ideas to characterize aspects of the commonwealth.

For instance, the idea of health is associated with the end of the commonwealth, and is thereby tied to Hobbes's discussion of the

commonwealth's economy. Money is the blood of the commonwealth and the treasury is the heart.[208]

> The Office of the Sovereign ... consisteth in the end, for which he was trusted with the Soveraign Power, namely, the procuration of *the safety of the people*.... But by Saftey here, is not meant a bare Preservation, but also all other Contentments of life, which every man by lawfull Industry, without danger, or hurt to the Commonwealth, shall acquire to himself.[209]

A radical inequality of wealth is a kind of disease. Hobbes attacks the merchants who "only become wealthy, moreover, 'by making poor people sell their labour to them at their own prices'"[210] For Patterson, passages like this

> look backward and forward at the same time; backward to an era in which, probably, organicist social theory was still half believed even while its traditional tropes were used with manifest policy; and forward to an era in which political theory would be increasingly dominated by economics.[211]

It is misleading to place Hobbes at the border between (16th century) politics and (18th century) economics. Rather, he is at the border between one way of understanding economics and another. In fact the ideas of the body politic can be tied very closely to mercantilist understanding of economics, where the principle goal is to accumulate wealth within the country.

Animate Generation. Unlike the generation of the physical and the symbolic objects, Hobbes makes few clear associations with the animate generation of the commonwealth. This makes sense in terms of Hobbes's strategy. The generation of a natural animal occurs without an external power to keep the parts together. The coherence of the animal occurs naturally. Because Hobbes is quick to deny that humans relate in the way that bees and other gregarious animals do, it would be difficult to make extensive use of these associations

---

[208] Hobbes, *Leviathan*, pp. 300-301.

[209] Hobbes, *Leviathan*, p. 376.

[210] Hobbes, *Behemoth*, xx. See also Hobbes, *Leviathan*, p. 374.

[211] Patterson, *Fables of Power*, p. 136.

without making the commonwealth's creation a natural process. If people created the commonwealth in the same way that animals formed themselves into collectives, then maintaining the organization of the commonwealth would not be a problem. Whereas animals and groups of animals exist naturally, humans and groups of humans are partially artificial. Humans have more than desires and wills, they have language, while commonwealths are more than the coherence of actions, they are relations of contract and obedience. Language creates the problems and the solutions peculiar to human organizations.

While the animal qualities of humans constitute the primary political problem, that is, the conflict of passions, these qualities also point beyond their animal base to human qualities. Humans desire language because it is useful. Fear of the future leads humans to science. Fear of other humans leads them to obedience. Therefore, in order to generate the commonwealth, humans have to move beyond the animal level to become symbolic creatures, but the reason for this development is found in the animate qualities.

The family becomes meaningful at the level of the animate object. Animals are the first group of objects to organize themselves into families. The family is itself an animate group that can attack, defend and organize itself with other groups as a larger group. The primary reason why a family is not a commonwealth is because the family is too small to effectively defend its members.

> A family is not properly a Common-wealth; unlesse it be of that power by its own number, or by other opportunites, as not to be subdued without the hazard of war.[212]

Another reason why an animal family would not be a commonwealth is that the relations between the parts are not based on language, but rather on "natural lusts," which cannot be trusted to last more than a short time. The family must be as coherent as the parts of an animal are coherent. The ability

---

[212] Hobbes, *Leviathan*, p. 257

to survive, to continue to be an animate object, is vital. An animal that has died continues to exist, but it has lost its animation; it has become a simple physical object.

The idea of animal generation characterizes the creation of colonies. It should be noted that this associational theme marginalizes the contractual creation of the social group. Parts of one commonwealth are sent out to form a separate but connected group without reference to their consent or choice.

> The Procreation, or Children, of a Commonwealth, are those we call Plantations, or Colonies; which are numbers of men sent out from the Commonwealth, under a Conductor, or Governour, to inhabit a Forraign Country, either formerly voyd of Inhabitants, or made voyd then, by warre.[213]

The commonwealth is both the mother and the father of the colony; the patriarch assumes the function fo the mother. Hobbes pushes the limits of the association of the commonwealth with animate objects. However, although the commonwealth does not "mate" with another commonwealth to create a colony, the commonwealth does, in a sense, give birth by sending out an animate object that exists independently. The process is more understandable as cell division than as human birth.

Animate Form. The arrangement of the parts of the commonwealth is associated with the arrangement of the parts of the body, which provides Hobbes with a way to understand how the parts of the commonwealth relate. "Having spoken of the Generation, Forme, and Power of a Common-wealth, I am in order to speak next of the parts thereof."[214] Hobbes is thereby connected to an extensive theme in political thought that connects the organization of a city or commonwealth to the organization of an animal, or in particular a human body. Plato considered the analogy throughout the *Republic* while Aristotle writes that:

> The constitution of an animal must be regarded as resembling that of a well-

[213] Hobbes, *Leviathan*, p. 301.

[214] Hobbes, *Leviathan*, p. 274.

> governed city-state. For when order is once established in the city there is no need of a special ruler with arbitrary powers to be present at every activity, but each individual performs his own task as he is ordered, and one act succeeds another because of custom. And in animals the same process goes on because of nature, and because each part of them, since they are so constituted, is naturally suited to perform its own function; so that there is no need of soul in each part, but since it is situated in a central organ of authority over the body, the other parts live by their structural attachment to it and perform their own functions in the course of nature.[215]

The association is justified by the shared functional arrangements of the parts of the respective bodies. Both the body and the commonwealth continue to exist although the relation of their parts change. Many issues can be raised and responded to. Associations with animate objects provide ways of understanding how the parts of the commonwealth are arranged and the kinds of relations that keep the parts coherent. Although the parts of an animal body have a natural appropriateness for the locations they have, humans are roughly equal in nature and therefore they must be moulded or fashioned into the roles they are to play in the commonwealth. Sorell claims that:

> The functional organization of a commonwealth comes into focus, he suggests, when the commonwealth is seen as an automaton in the form of an artificial man.[216]

Even though many of the associations do not depend on a specific kind of body, the dominant associations that Hobbes makes are with the adult human male body. The primary functions of the ruler are those commonly associated with the patriarch: the security of the group through warfare and the maintenance of peace through judgements and punishments. The commonwealth is the father and the warrior.

A body has many important parts, each vital to the well-being of the whole. The sovereign is tied to two key functions: keeping the political body together and organizing it. The sovereign is sometimes associated with the

---

[215] Aristotle, *On the Movement of Animals*, 703a30. Quoted in Hale, p. 24.

[216] Sorell, *Hobbes*, p. 20. He does not mention the body politic anywhere else in the book.

soul of the political body.

> For the soveraign, is the publique Soule, giving Life and Motion to the Commonwealth; which expiring, the Members are governed by it not more, than the Carcasse of a man, by his departed (though Immortall) Soule.[217]

The sovereign is the source of the motion particular to the commonwealth. The sovereign's power is not necessarily a physical power. Hobbes is not claiming here that the subjects move because the sovereign pushes them into motion. The claim is more particular. The sovereign is the source of motion for the interaction of the commonwealth's parts. Without the sovereign, the parts could not interact as parts of a single body. They could still interact as separate bodies, but then the commonwealth would not exist and they would be in the state of nature.

The sovereign is also associated with the will of the commonwealth. The sovereign not only keeps the body together, but also determines what the body does and does not do. In fact, the body may be kept together simply because it is organized. The existence of the will is enough for the body to have a soul. An implication of these associations is that the will and the soul are intertwined and practically identical. In *De Cive* Hobbes defines a "city" as "one Person, whose will, by the compact of many men, is to be received for the will of them all."[218] The will of the commonwealth is separate from the wills of the subjects and is only connected because the subjects accept it. According to Baumgold, in *Leviathan* Hobbes attempted to directly tie the will of the sovereign to the wills of the subjects through the idea of authorization. For Baumgold,

> Such a notion of an organic community, whose will is the sovereign's will, is at the sharpest odds with the nominalist philosophy to which Hobbes subscribed. By contrast, the analysis of political agency in *De Cive* reflects a nominalist's incredulity in the idea of natural social agency.[219]

---

[217] Hobbes, *Leviathan*, p. 375.

[218] Hobbes, *De Cive*, v, 9, p. 89. Cited in Baumgold, p. 38.

[219] Baumgold, pp. 39-40.

Baumgold does not show why "authorization" is a mystical and unwarranted addition to Hobbes's account of the relation between the sovereign and the subjects. There is a difference in the causal order in each of the passages: authorizing comes before the sovereign's actions whereas receiving comes after. How Baumgold understood the difference is not clear from what she writes. She also does not show why the "reall Unitie" of the organic community is at odds with Hobbes's nominalism. Baumgold associates nominalism with "methodological individualism," which claims that "statements about groups ought to translate into ... statements about individuals."[220] If Hobbes's "nominalism" is at odds with an organic community, then it would be at odds with any complex entity, including the individuals that the commonwealth is made out of and that Hobbes's politic method presumably rests on. The alternative is to accept that the human and the commonwealth exist as particular organizations of less complex objects. Just as the identity of a human depends on the continued functional interaction between the body's parts, so does the identity of the commonwealth depend on the interraction of its parts.

Connecting the sovereign with the soul leaves open why individual wills would unite. The soul was usually used as a thing existing between the parts of the commonwealth that explained why the parts of the body continued to be coherent. The existence of a will is insufficient to explain why humans continue to belong to the commonwealth. One explanation is that the sovereign has access to enough force to deter humans from rebelling. This is only partially useful because the sovereign's force depends on at least most subjects continuing to belong to the commonwealth. The will and the soul may be mutually dependent, but they are not functionally identical. In other passages Hobbes associates the soul to sovereignty rather than the sovereign. When the multitude join together, they "constitute" sovereignty and then choose a sovereign to give it to. This is significant because it points to how the soul could be meaningfully distinguished from the will. They co-exist and are

[220] Baumgold, p. 14.

mutually dependent, but the soul describes the body's role in the maintenance of the commonwealth. If a new sovereign is not chosen, then the commonwealth "dieth, and dissolveth with him, and returneth to the condition of Warre."[221] The soul depends on the will and the will depends on the soul.

The sovereign has control over the future will of the commonwealth. Who the sovereign has "designed to the succession and inheritance of his power" is determined by "expresse Words" or "tacite signes sufficient". Without express words, "other naturall signes of the Will are to be followed" and beyond that custom becomes the only ground. Hobbes allows that custom may advance the closest relative of the old sovereign, whether male or female. If words and customs are lacking, then "naturall affection" can be presumed. The sovereign would have maintained the monarchical form, would have preferred his own child to someone else's, would have preferred a male over a female "because men are naturally fitter than women, for actions of labour and danger."[222] The possibility that controversy can arise over interpretation is not raised when the final judge is being chosen. There is no final judge to decide controversies, including the controversy of who should succeed. Hobbes instead appeals to the duty of the subject:

> if any contention arise to the disturbance of the publique Pease, it is not to be attributed to the forme of Monarchy, but to the ambition of Subjects, and ignorance of their Duty.[223]

Hobbes leaps from a concern for who should succeed the monarch to a discussion of how the subjects ought to relate to whoever becomes the monarch. The criteria that he gave are taken to be conclusive, the succession is unproblematic, and the key question is how the subjects relate to the already identifiable monarch. Hobbes argues in this way even though he

---

[221] Hobbes, *Leviathan*, p. 246.

[222] Hobbes, *Leviathan*, p. 250.

[223] Hobbes, *Leviathan*, p. 244.

elsewhere makes a considerable effort to attack the idea that any sort of common law can exist without the sovereign giving it a voice.

A reader could draw implications from the association of the sovereign with the will that Hobbes does not. The sovereign depends on and organizes the commonwealth. It is the sovereign's role to increase the riches, power and honour of the commonwealth. Hobbes uses this to claim that monarchy is a superior form of government. In a democracy or aristocracy, those in the sovereign assembly are more likely to follow their private interests at the cost of the public interest. For the monarch, the private and the public interest are generally the same. Although the subjects are tied to the will of the sovereign,the sovereign in turn depends in many ways on the subjects. The "riches, power, and honour of the Monarch arises onely from the riches, strength and reputation of his Subjects." A king depends on the subject's ability to "maintain a war against their enemies."[224] The "freedom" of the sovereign should be understood within Hobbes's general denial of freewill. The will is the last stage of a deliberation process that is connected to and determined by the passions of the body. Humans are given a body that they can control in certain ways. They can try to do anything, but the body is limited in various ways. The will can easily exceed the body's ability, to the detriment of the whole.

Associating the sovereign to the will provides Hobbes with a vocabulary to criticize or orient the sovereign. The sovereign's interests and the body's interests are the same. A healthy commonwealth benefits both. The health of the commonwealth is a duty of the sovereign. The sovereign *ought* to play the role of the will and allow itself to be determined.

> And they say true; but they have no reason to think he will, unless it be for his own profit; which cannot be, for he loves his own power; and what becomes of his power when his subjects are destroyed or weakened, by whose multitude and strength he enjoys his power, and every one of his subjects his fortune?[225]

[224] Hobbes, *Leviathan*, p. 241.

[225] Hobbes, *Dialogue on Common Law*, pp. 33-34.

However, it should be noted that these limits are not limits of right. Humans can do all sorts of things to their bodies without the bodies being able to protest. But they will feel the pain, suffer along with the body, and perhaps die as a result.

The sovereign is not the only part of the commonwealth that can be meaningfully compared to the body politic. There are people who have special functions in the commonwealth. Hobbes, therefore, "pictured a political division of labor in which roles and functions are the units of analysis."[226]

> Hobbes's political theory illustrates what might be called methodological structuralism, meaning the view that social structure—roles, institutions, and social practices—is the proper level of social analysis.[227]

Baumgold's claims are effective when she states that roles are an important element of Hobbes's analysis of politics. She focuses on how Hobbes discusses the role of the soldier.

> Basic to Hobbesian reasoning is a distinction between performance and obligation. Employment entails a strong obligation to perform the duties attached to an office, whereas those who are simply commanded to serve are bound only to "acknowledgement, and an endeavour of requitall" of their duties.[228]

The soldier has a peculiar role in the commonwealth. Although Baumgold does not do so, this claim can be extended to include people in many different locations: counsellors, merchants, tax officials, and so on.

Hobbes devotes a complete chapter to characterize the function of the counsellor. Because the limits of human reason apply as much to the sovereign as to anyone else, the sovereign needs counsellors. The counsellors are understood as the memory of the commonwealth.

> For Experience, being but Memory of the consequences of like actions formerly observed, and Counsell but the Speech whereby that experience is made known to another; the Vertues, and Defects of Counsell, are the same with the Vertues, and

[226] Baumgold, pp. 9 and 134.

[227] Baumgold, p. 14.

[228] Baumgold, p. 87.

> Defects Intellectuall: And to the Person of a Common-wealth, his Counsellours serve him in the place of Memory, and Mentall Discourse. But with this resemblance of the Common-wealth, to a naturall man, there is one dissimilitude joyned, of great importance; which is, that a naturall man receiveth his experience, from the naturall objects of sense, which work upon him without passion, or interest of their own; whereas they that give Counsell to the Representative person of a Common-wealth, may have, and have often their particular ends, and passions, that render their Counsells alwayes suspected, and many times unfaithfull.[229]

The sovereign is given control over choosing who will counsel it, but Hobbes is quick to provide criteria for choosing the best counsellors. The ends of a good counsellor ought to correspond to the ends of the sovereign, which includes the health of the commonwealth.

One implication of the body politic is that rebellion becomes very difficult to imagine. The argument had been made before. Thomas More argued against an independent church of England by claiming that Christendom is a single body.

> And therefore, sith all Christendom is one corps, I can not perceive how any membre thereof may withowt the comen assent of the body departe from the comen hede.[230]

Hale does not notice that there is a suggestion of contract theory in this quote. The body is a relation of common assent that cannot be broken without the assent of all. Division within the body is unthinkable, logically impossible. If there is division, then there are two bodies, not one. A mixed government would be a monstrosity, "not unlike Siamese Twins."[231] The unity of the sovereign is understood as the unity of the head, a functional understanding, and as the unity of the voice. There cannot be more than one sovereign because there can be only one will and one voice. Hale notes that when Starkey discusses the possibility of resisting the king, he

> was doubtless well aware of the fact that the doctrine of nonresistance to the king was being preached in terms of the body politic and did not, therefore, elaborate on

---

[229] Hobbes, *Leviathan,* pp. 306-307.

[230] Hale, p. 52.

[231] Hale, p. 128 . See *Leviathan* chapter 29.

> his logically absurd suggestion that if the head of the body became diseased, it had to be amputated just like any other diseased member.[232]

Hale's discussion here is somewhat misleading. Why is an amputated head a logical absurdity? It is a factual impossibility, at least for human beings, but, as was well understood at that time, an analogy has elements that are shared and elements that are different. Another misleading aspect of Hale's claim here is that somehow the head cannot be amputated whereas the heart, the soul, and so on can. Once it is accepted that amputations and replacements can occur in principle, which is seldom questioned, then the important discussion turns to which parts can be amputated and under what conditions. As Hobbes claims, a significant difference between the artificial and the natural body is that the artificial body can change its parts. This includes the monarchs, because monarchs die and new ones assume the throne. What Starkey seems to be doing, however, is rethinking how it is possible to replace the head, and whether the body can play a role in any replacement process.

Hobbes responds to a position like Starkey's within the vocabulary of the body politic. If the head, the will, is the point of identity, then the body without the head cannot have a will of its own. If the body has a will, then it has a head. Hobbes's response is more complex than saying that the head is essential. What he is claiming is that there is no organizational principle in the body that could challenge the sovereign. If the body challenges the sovereign, then there must be some other sovereign, and the conflict is not between the head and the body, but rather between two heads.

One aspect of Hobbes's position is that the judgement of the subjects (or rebellion) is not the only possible response to the sovereign. Rulers can be reasoned with, they can be scared, not with personal threats, but with scientific expectations of the consequences of their acts. The subjects remain a threat, even when being obedient, but a threat of a different order. They do not challenge the sovereign as another sovereign; they do not confront the

---

[232] Hale, p. 66.

sovereign as an equal. However, they react to the sovereign (immediately to violence directed towards them and potentially to any breakdown in the social order).

Following classical themes in the idea of the body politic, Hobbes draws a parallel between human and social diseases. The commonwealth can become diseased and can either be cured or die.

> But because he is mortal, and subject to decay, as all other Earthly creatures are; and because there is that in heaven, (though not on earth) that he should stand in fear of, and whose Lawes he ought to obey; I shall in the next following Chapters speak of his Diseases, and the causes of his Mortality; and of what Lawes of Nature he is bound to obey.[233]

The body politic vocabulary provides a way to understand how some parts of the body can have a negative impact on the body as a whole.

> The Popularity of a potent Subject ... is a dangerous Disease; because the people (which should receive their motion from the Authority of the Sovereign,) by the flattery, and by the reputation of an ambitious man, are drawn away from their obedience to the Lawes.[234]

Disconnecting the mind and body is a also a kind of disease. This does not mean that the body can judge the mind, but it does mean that death is imminent and the disease ought to be cured. If it is the fault of the mind, then the mind should do something about it. The violent sovereign is disconnected from his people. Violence does not create connections. It is only through symbolic relations that the mind and the body become united. Hobbes is able to advocate certain policies over others without limiting the authority of the sovereign.

> Seeing the end of punishing is not revenge, and discharge of choler; but correction, either of the offender, or of others by his example; the severest Punishments are to be inflicted for those Crimes, that are of most Danger to the Publique.[235]

If the ruler is a good ruler, then he or she will act accordingly. Part of acting accordingly is pursuing the ends of the commonwealth. The ruler's relation

---

[233] Hobbes, *Leviathan*, p. 363.

[234] Hobbes, *Leviathan*, p. 374.

[235] Hobbes, *Leviathan*, p. 389.

to the commonwealth is one of care.

> To the care of the Soveraign, belongeth the making of Good Lawes. But what is a good Law? By a Good Law, I mean not a Just Law: for no Law can be Unjust.[236]

Hobbes then proceeds to explain what he means by a good law. A good law is not merely a just law. Every law, if it is made by the sovereign, is just. A good law is that "which is *Needfull*, for the *Good of the People....*"

The association of the commonwealth with a human body is prominent in several chapters. However, commentators seldom allow Hobbes to seriously mean this association. David Hale, who wrote an entire book on the idea of the body politic in English Renaissance literature, suggests that the "comparisons are not insisted upon." Hale claims that by the 17th century, the body politic analogies no longer directly applied.

> Starkey's use of clinically detailed organic analogies is supported by the fact that during the first half of the sixteenth century the world of nature was still prevalently regarded as a living organism.[237]

Hale's account of the shift from Medieval to Modern forms of medicine is misleading. Medicine is a part of knowledge, the knowledge being generally based on a world view. The world view clearly did change somewhat between the 16th and 17th century, a change that may provisionally be referred as being from an organic to a mechanistic metaphysics. However, medicine does not depend on an organic metaphysics understood in this way. The four humours may, but one part of the shift to mechanism was the redefining of the human body and life generally in terms of machines. An organ of the body is a small gadget. Thus it remains possible, and is in fact quite common to use "clinically detailed" analogies from the mechanistically understood animal or human body when attempting to understand an animal or human society.

---

[236] Hobbes, *Leviathan*, p. 387-388.

[237] Hale, p. 67.

Claiming that Hobbes's account of the commonwealth accepts the body politic opposes a common assertion in the history of political theory that describes the shift from late Medieval to early Modern political theory as a shift from images of society based on the body politic to those based on the social contract. Hale's book, for instance, ends with the death of the body politic. By the 17th century,

> the living metaphor of the body politic became a dead phrase which is simply synonymous with 'the state', having no further meanings implied or accepted.[238]

At the same time the idea of the social contract gained acceptance. Hobbes, who is used to indicate the transition, had "little use for the metaphor of the body politic and replace[d] it with a social contract ...."[239] Hale's claims are questionable on many points. The idea of the body politic was used in and after Hobbes's work. In addition, the social contract was hardly a new idea, since it can be found in Christian and Ancient Greek thought. In fact, most of Hobbes's examples of contract are drawn from the Bible. Hale's discussion is also misleading because he suggests that the social contract and the body politic are competing ideas. In the Introduction to *Leviathan* Hobbes claims that the body politic describes how the society operates, how the active members of the society relate to each other in their actions. The social contract describes how the society is created and what joins its members together. "... the Pacts and Covenants, by which the parts of this Body Politique were at first made, set together, and united..."[240] The body politic describes the organization of an existing commonwealth, the social contract describes how a commonwealth comes to exist. A more accurate opposition that Hale briefly notes is between body politic and the corporation. "Society, in fact, was no longer conceived as an organism, but as a joint stock company."[241] Both images consider the commonwealth's organization. Hale does not consider

---

[238] Hale, p. 12 with reference to Vivian de S. Pinto, *The English Renaissance: 1510-1688*.

[239] Hale, p. 127.

[240] Hobbes, *Leviathan*, p. 84.

[241] Hale, p. 13.

whether a joint stock company is itself understood as an organism, nor does he consider how Hobbes associates the people's safety to the "business" of the commonwealth.

The stream of associations that connects the commonwealth to the animate object helps Hobbes understand the nature and arrangement of the commonwealth's parts. These associations fit within the general structure of his discussion. Whereas physical associations described static relations, the animate associations describe the processes and functional interdependencies of the commonwealth. But these two associations are insufficient for understanding a human community. The idea of the body politic applies to any functionally diverse group of animals, which would include bees and wolf packs. Humans are partially understood in these terms, but their relations are also relations of language. The third group of associations is thus the ideas of symbolic relations, which is the final set of associations to be considered.

The Symbolic Commonwealth

The final group of associations that Hobbes makes compares aspects of the commonwealth with a variety of possible symbolic relations. The first is Hobbes's concern for contractual relations, where individuals make promises, transfer their persons to the sovereign, and become obedient to civil laws. The second is Hobbes's attention to honour, threats and social placement that associates the commonwealth with a play. Humans create signs and experience the signs of others. The sovereign usually relates to his subjects through signs; civil laws, for instance, are a sign of his will. These signs lead to the idea that people have customs and are expected to play roles. The political question is not whether the signs and roles are based on experience, but who controls them. The symbolic becomes the artificial, the artificial becomes the theatrical.

There are two currents in Hobbes's discussions concerning the political location of language. The first makes language rely on political power. Covenants are but "words" and "breath" and have "no force to oblige, contain, constrain, or protect any man, but what it has from the publique Sword". Language becomes epiphenomenal and of little political value. When the claim that words have no physical force is tied to the claim that the mind is private, some commentators conclude that words have no power at all. The second current makes language *the* central political issue.

> If there had not first been an opinion received of the greatest part of England, that these Powers were divided between the King, and the Lords, and the House of Commons, the people had never been divided, and fallen into this Civill Warre....[242]

The commonwealth depends on the sovereign controlling people's opinions by controlling books, education and language itself. If language becomes ambiguous, people can become confused, and therefore contentious.

---

[242] Hobbes, *Leviathan*, ch. 18, pp 236-237.

This apparent contradiction can be understood by the way that Hobbes organizes his account of political order. Just as an animate object depends on physical objects, the symbolic object depends on animate objects. The symbol is understood as a particular kind of process that occurs within and between animate objects. Although symbols lack force they do not lack power. The kind of power that symbols have over humans is different from other kinds of power that are more accurately labelled as force. If people resist the social order stridently enough, words alone are insufficient to control them; and sometimes physical force is the only effective response.

Symbolic Matter. The commonwealth is in part made up of sign relations. Humans use language to communicate their thoughts and to affect other people. The symbolic relations are the only way that minds can relate to each other. The unavoidable gap between minds has been called Hobbes's "privacy thesis." The separation of minds has negative implications in the state of nature.

> Hobbes's privacy-thesis, as we may call it, has important implications for his civil philosophy. It obviously contributes to the desolate picture he draws of men's isolation and self-dependence in a state of nature.[243]

Without language, humans can only relate as animals, which means as constant threats. In *De Cive* Hobbes writes:

> To speak impartially, both sayings are very true: *That Man to Man is a kind of God*; and that *Man to Man is an arrant Wolfe*.[244]

Savages exist at the border between the animal and the human. They have the physical character of humans, but they lack language and all that language entails. Any government they have can only be based on "natural lust."[245]

---

[243] Watkins, p. 70.

[244] Hobbes, *De Cive*, p. 24. Although Man to Man is an arrant Wolfe is used here to describe the relationship between commonwealths, the relationship can be easily transferred to the relationship between individuals in the state of nature.

[245] Commonwealths relate to each other in the same way. In the same passage from *De Cive* Hobbes describes the Roman people as "a beast of prey."

The savage marks a border that carries practical, political, and moral implications. The way that Hobbes divides the human from the savage entails that the distinction between animal and human is not essentially a division of physical characteristics. Savages do not lack a particular organ that gives them language. What they lack is exposure to language; they lack a teacher.

Hobbes's privacy thesis may suggest that humans exist outside of language, with the use of a private language to resist the public one controlled by the sovereign. Hampton, for instance, never questions the ability of the rational subject to think separately and against the commonwealth. However, this is not a claim that Hobbes supports. Privacy is not the same as isolation. The claim that the individual has a private aspect, something that other people do not have direct access to, is very different from claiming that the inner self is isolated from the outside world. Hobbes supported the notion of privacy but not the notion of isolation. He claims, rather, that the human mind begins as more or less blank. Individuals do not create their own language the question, and it is an important political question, is whose language the people are given. Language becomes something that is passed down from teacher to student, and it is something that seditious people can corrupt. No one is born with a language and no one can create a language outside of society. Humans are always caught by discourse, whether the natural discourse of God's creation or the social discourse of Man's.

The individual's language always exists within the symbolic structures of the world. Experience is a system of signs. Hobbes asks his readers to *Read thy self*, an act that will teach us

> that for the similitude of the thoughts, and Passions of one man, to the thoughts and Passions of another, whosever looketh into himself, and considereth what he doth, when he does think, opine, reason, hope, feare, &c, and upon what groups; he shall thereby read and know, what are the thoughts, and Passions of all other men, upon the like occassions.[246]

[246] Hobbes, *Leviathan*, p. 82.

The similarity between individuals is limited to the existence of passions; the objects of passion

> are so easie to be kept from our knowledge, that the characters of mans heart, blotted and confounded as they are, with dissembling, lying, counterfeiting, and erroneous doctrines, are legible onely to him that searcheth hearts. And though by mens actions wee do discover their designes sometimes; yet to do it without comparing them with our own, and distinguish all circumstances, by which the case may come to be altered, is to decypher without a key....[247]

The thoughts of our internal motions are a sign of everyone's internal motions. Our knowledge of other minds becomes more difficult when we have to rely on the signs that they create, because these signs can be blotted, like a picture, or counterfeited, like money. We can have a clear picture of our own hearts, but the pictures we have of others are always suspect; and yet they are crucial to the political order.

There are four significant changes to the human condition when language becomes a dominant mode of interraction. The first is the spread of knowledge, and in particular science.

> For a dogge by custome will understand the call, or the rating of his Master; and so will many other Beasts. That Understanding which is peculiar to man, is the Understanding not onely his will, but his conceptions and thoughts, by the sequall and contexture of the names of things into Affirmations, Negations, and other forms of Speech.[248]

Language is tied to the ability to control nature, which allows humans to lead prosperous and basically worry-free lives. History is the register of facts while science is the register of demonstrations. This change is tied most closely to the individual's immediate self-interest, but its ramifications move well beyond simple prosperity. With science, humans become obedient, rational subjects.

The second change in the human condition is the emergence of contractual relations. Humans can make promises. The relevance of contracts

---

[247] Hobbes, *Leviathan*, p. 83.

[248] Hobbes, *Leviathan*, p. 93

is not simply that people can make signs of promise, nor is it the existence of the central political power to enforce those contracts. Contracts are relevant because they give humans control over their future. What contractual relations entail is that humans become beings capable of making promises, that is to say, they become obedient. According to one commentator,

> Hobbes assumes that the transition from savagery to civil society must have begun with an express agreement or contract, the so-called 'social compact'[249]

The relation of speech to moral competence is a core association in 17th century England. Because they lack language, savages lack divine qualities such as justice and charity. Language allows humans to become either good or evil.

> Whatsoeer distinguisheth the civility of Europe, from the barbarity of the American savages is the workmanship of fancy, but guided by the precepts of true philosophy.[250]

Humans are changed because they use language, and in the way that they use language. Insofar as they exist at the symbolic level, humans are called citizens.

> What is to be understood about men insofar as they are men, is not applicable insofar as they are citizens; for those who are outside of a state are not obliged to follow another's opinion, while those in a state are obliged by covenants.[251]

One of the key words in this passage is "oblige," which must mean more than physical coercion because physical coercion exists in the state of nature. The citizen is at least someone who is obliged. The citizen is more than this. Obligation leads to order, but it also leads to a particular kind of human: one who recognizes duty and honour.

The third change in the human condition is the emergence of value relations. Humans can honour or dishonour each other. Political conflicts can be fought over the roles and honours that individuals have or want in the commonwealth. It is proper for servants to honour their masters, for children

---

[249] Taylor, 77.

[250] Hobbes, *E.W. IV*, p. 449.

[251] Hobbes, *Man and Citizen*, p. 68.

to honour their parents, and for subjects to honour the sovereign and God. The individual becomes a social persona that can be attacked, protected and fashioned. Humans can even come to value their reputations more than their lives and be willing to sacrifice the one for the other.

The fourth change in the human condition is that humans relate to each other as actors in a theatre. Examples of how humans manipulate their social appearance are numerous in Hobbes's texts. People can make themselves look like saviours when they are in fact dangerous; they can look like wise men when they are in fact fools.[252] People can look disinterested when they are in fact highly interested. Masks, whether acted or written, let people hide their true political agenda from other people. Because masks are ways of appearing to other people that are not (necessarily) how we appear to ourselves or how we really are, the claim that someone has adopted a mask is a very significant judgement concerning how that person should be appraised and approached. The citizen is schizophrenic, experiencing Descartes's mind-body dualism as a way of life.

A human's social persona is conditioned by and refers back to the passions. There is an underlying reality. Everyone desires power. The intensity of the passions may vary, the objects of passion may vary, and the strategies of action may vary. Chapter XI contains a list of characters. For instance,

> Vain-glorious men, such as without being conscious to themselves of great sufficiency, delight in supposing themselves gallant men, are enclined onely to ostentation; but not to attempt: because when danger or difficulty appears, they look for nothing but to have their insufficiency discovered.[253]

This quote is well-chosen on two counts: it shows how a person's character becomes a mask and a way of acting in society and it shows how Hobbes appeals to a more basic level of human identity that leads to certain kinds of

---

[252] Hobbes, *Leviathan*, p. 696.

[253] Hobbes, *Leviathan*, p. 163.

action. The vainglorious people lack "true knowledge of themselves" and estimate their sufficiency "by the flattery of others." The way that they act is therefore not based on a proper understanding of who they are. They are individuals who are out of touch with themselves.

> The [theatre] metaphor has a levelling effect ... for to conceive of kingship as a dramatic part, an expensive costume and some well-rehearsed lines, is potentially at least to demystify it, to reduce its sacral symbolism to tinsel.[254]

By depending on the equality of people, Hobbes's contractarian position, depends on a similar kind of demystification. Beneath the masks, everyone is roughly the same. But to make this judgement, it is necessary to simplify humans and focus on their respective physical characteristics. Physical equality is evident in the state of nature because physical power is the most important way that human relate when there is "no power to over-awe them all."[255]

Symbolic relations exist in the state of nature. One of the three principle causes of conflict is the desire for a reputation or for other people to give signs of respect. In the state of nature, violence can occur:

> for trifles, as a word, a smile, a different opinion, and nay other signe of undervalue, either direct in their Persons, or by reflexion in the Kindred, their Friends, their Nation, their Profession, or their Name.[256]

The state of nature is as symbolic as the commonwealth, but the symbols are not organized. They can cause chaos because they are themselves chaotic. The sovereign's awe is not only from the physical power that the sovereign can use, it also the prestige that the sovereign has in the commonwealth. By having the greatest reputation, the sovereign is able to designate who should be reputed and how. The person exists in the state of nature as the most direct place where the symoblic value of human beings is formed. The account of who the political actor is complex, even in the state of nature.

With the discussion of the person, Hobbes is also offering a relatively

---

254 Greenblatt, *Renaissance Self-Fashioning*, p. 27.

255 Hobbes, *Leviathan*, p. 185.

256 Hobbes, *Leviathan*, p. 185.

complex account of who is speaking. The *person* is a legal shadow of the individual who exists in the symbolic field of political interaction. Attributing speech is not the same as determining who is speaking. The person is the symbolic substitute for the physical body. It is the social equivalent of the Christian soul.

The person can be split from the body and transferred to someone else. The transfer of the person creates a relationship of representation in which the author of the person's actions is different from the actor. The split is a physical distance that maintains the connection of responsibility. The author, not the actor, owns the actions of the person. Any object can be understood as a person, which means that any object can be represented. But there is an important distinction between being personated and being an author. A bridge can be personated but it cannot act, cannot own its actions, and therefore cannot authorize someone to act for it. A bridge is "represented by Fiction" and thus depends on the actor who owns the bridge. The marginal group in Hobbes's classification is the group of humans that "have no use of Reason," which include "Children, Fooles, and Mad-men." The irrational have bodies and personas, but the irrationality severs the natural connection and thus takes away the body's ownership of its person. Irrational humans are equivalent to inanimate bodies: they can only be represented "by fiction," which is to say by social power. While only a rational being can have political power, anything that can be made dependent on a rational being, including humans that are judged to be incompetent, can be given a political location.

Although the person is connected to a legal vocabulary, Hobbes also connects the person to the theatre. The connection is made explicit when he claims that the idea of the "actor" originates in the theatre and is later "translated to any Representer of speech and action."[257] In the same paragraph Hobbes associates the person with the Face, "the *disguise*, or the *outward appearance* of a man." The person, like language, is a sign that the

[257] Hobbes, *Leviathan*, p. 217.

individual creates in a social context. The individual obviously could create the appropriate signs in any situation, but it is only taken to be or considered as a sign by other individuals.

Hobbes's understanding of the person sharply contrasts with the modern understanding of the person as the bearer of rights. Hobbes ties rights to the body, they are liberties that

> each man hath, to use his own power, as he will himselfe, for the preservation of his own Nature; that is to say, of his own Life ....[258]

Liberty is defined as the absence of external impediments. The idea of person is connected to the idea of representation, of taking the words and actions of one human to be those of another. The person has a legal element that could be understood in terms of rights, but it is principally a social presence for other humans.

The distinction between bodies and persons corresponds to Hobbes's distinction between ethics and justice. In Hobbes's organization of the sciences, ethics considers the "consequences from the Passions of Men" whereas justice considers the "consequences from Speech in Contracting."[259] Commentators often ignore this distinction. However, Hobbes's usage remains latent in our language insofar as justice is connected to the maintenance of a legal order and ethics is connected to moral issues. The confusion arises because both justice and ethics consider rules of conduct. One essential difference is that rules of justice are derived from civil laws and ultimately the sovereign, whereas rules of ethics are derived from natural laws and ultimately God. Another difference is that justice depends on agreements between humans whereas ethics does not. Ethics is concerned with relations of force and passions. Its goal is to use reason to organize how humans connect their passions with their actions.

Because justice depends on the sovereign defining and enforcing laws, it

---

[258] Hobbes, *Leviathan*, p. 189.

[259] Hobbes, *Leviathan*, p. 149.

is often claimed that Hobbes gives a relativistic account of justice. However, this description can be misleading. Hobbes defines justice in universal terms.

> For where no Covenant hath preceded, there hath no Right been transferred, and every man has right to every thing; and consequently, no action can be Unjust. But when a Covenant is made, then to break it is *Unjust*: And the definition of INJUSTICE, is no other than *the not Performance of Covenant*. And whatsoever is not Unjust, is Just.[260]

Although the enforcement of rules of justice depends on force, justice as a descriptive vocabulary does not. The particular laws change from commonwealth to commonwealth, but justice and injustice exist everywhere that contracts exist. It is therefore possible to speak of injustices in the state of nature and in the subject's relation to the sovereign. To depose a sovereign is to "take from him that which is his own" which is injustice.[261] If justice depends on force, then this statement would be contradictory. If a sovereign is deposed, then the social power has been transferred or lost, and in either case the "injustice" would not exist. What does not exist in the state of nature, and in the rebel's relation to the sovereign, is the ability for the grieved party to seek redress. The application of the vocabulary of justice cannot occur; there is only war.

The distinction between ethics and justice points to a problem that Hobbes may face concerning the distinction between animals and humans. Ethics describes the physical processes that are centred around the passions.. In Chapter VI of *Leviathan* the passions are associated with any the processes of animal motion; they are the *"Interiour Beginnings of Voluntary Motions."* The potential problem with this usage is that the division between humans and animals may not be viable and, as a consequence, animals may become ethical beings. If animals have passions, then Hobbes's vocabulary entails that animals are ethical beings with rights. Animals cannot make covenants, and so are not relevant to justice. Hobbes increases the

---

[260] Hobbes, *Leviathan*, p. 202.

[261] Hobbes, *Leviathan*, p. 229.

distance between animals and humans by limiting ethics to the "*Passions* of Men."[262] Humans may act like animals, but their actions are described with a completely different vocabulary. Animals simply move; humans have rights and the status of ethical beings. But even when Hobbes defines a right, the physical and therefore potentially animal associations occur. A natural right is simply the liberty to do what must be done for self-preservation; it is a physical possibility that could just as easily be attributed to any animal. The ambiguous division between humans and animals thus wanders alongside Hobbes as he characterizes human nature.

The objects that exist at the symbolic level are related back to the prior levels of complexity. The symbolic is a kind of physical relation. Words are a kind of motion that can affect people like any other motions. Words are also like military weapons. Persons are things that can be exchanged and carried. Individuals who "distrust" their own wit are more likely to "strike first" than those who "suppose themselves wise, or crafty." A person's honour can be "salved." Vain-glorious men would rather "hazard their honour" than seek safety.[263] With the change from physical to symbolic associations, images of physical chains, punishments, death, control over food and land change into images of threats, disciplines, education and honour.

Some commentators have attempted to marginalize the value of symbolic relations to Hobbes's image of politics. What matters is the legitimacy and extent of sovereign power, which is required to keep people from rebellion. If the symbolic relations are not accepted as part of Hobbes's account of the commonwealth, then many of his claims become very odd. Watkins, who does not take the relations of persons seriously, writes that:

> Hobbes also says that men shall 'appoint one man, or assembly of men, to bear their person'. How this should be understood we will consider shortly; here I will only remark that it, too, obviously cannot be taken literally.[264]

---

[262] Hobbes, *Leviathan*, p. 149.

[263] Hobbes, *Leviathan*, pp. 163-164

[264] Watkins, p. 116.

Taylor and Watkins both object to Hobbes's use of persona because it is a "legal fiction," a lie that people have to believe in order to think that the sovereign can personate them.[265] However, there is a strict parallel between the symbolic field of the commonwealth and the general character of science. Persons, words and experiences are all taken to be signs for something else. Each of them depends on the individual judging the sign to be a sign. Therefore, the relation between the person and the individual is as "literal" as the relation between experience and bodies.

Symbolic End. Hobbes understands the goal of the commonwealth to be like the goal of symbolic relations. The public can be brought "into Distraction and Civill warre."[266] In the best commonwealth, the symbolic relations are clear. This characterizes human interaction in a particular way, focuses our attention on certain things (like the use of language), but also helps to characterize the general process of interaction as being like language. The dissolution of the commonwealth described in *Behemoth* is a tragedy of manners. *Behemoth* is not just people talking past each other—it is two conflicting plays, agendas, or plots.

> ... it is our abuse of language—making false statements, lying, making insincere promises, speaking metaphorically, boasting, insulting our fellows, and the like—that makes us wary and distrustful and that puts us, in short, in that 'state of Warre' that is the state of nature.[267]

The goal of symbolic relations is to be meaningful, to connect the thoughts of different humans. The clarity of symbolic exchanges is the subject's goal when entering into the contract. It is also the sovereign's goal when it publicizes laws, expects the subjects to know them, and acts as the final judge of what the laws mean. The goal of meaningfulness may in part explain why Hobbes advocates that laws be made public.

---

[265] Taylor, p. 95.

[266] Hobbes, *Leviathan*, p. 226.

[267] Ball, "Hobbes's Linguistic Turn," p. 749.

Hobbes also understands the end of the commonwealth to be the fashioning of individuals into obedient subjects. He makes a considerable effort to show that God's primary commandment is to be obedient, obedience being understood to be a character trait. The fall from the Garden is understood as Adam's rebellion. One of the sovereign's functions is to make people obedient again. But obedience here does not simply mean that the sovereign has physical control over its subjects. With language humans acquire the ability to make promises, to become obedient to their words, and therefore to allow their words to organize their passions.

Symbolic Generation. The generation of the commonwealth is associated with the generation of symbols or language. Hobbes provides contractual and authoritarian versions of the origin of language, neither of which are very conclusive. The contractual account presupposes language in order to make the linguistic contract possible; otherwise, how could humans agree on a language? Alternatively, a sovereign decree presupposes that the subjects understand what the ruler is commanding. In *Leviathan* he claims that God "instructed Adam how to name such creatures as he presented to his sight" and that after the tower of Babel, the common language was lost.[268] In terms of his overall discussion, Hobbes is able to establish the existence of language and claim that language is a changing human creation. Hobbes does not have to show how signs can be generated, but rather how they can be organized. What is being generated at the symbolic level is a symbolic economy of promises, honours and roles.

Words were once inspired by God, but now they are invented by humans in particular times and places for various reasons.[269] There is a point of transparency that can serve as a possibility and an ideal, but there is also a field of confusion that people can change. There is a combination of

[268] Hobbes, *Leviathan*, p. 101.

[269] Land, *The Philosophy of Language in Britain*, p. 16

scepticism and objectivity in Hobbes's discussions of the origins of language.

Because thoughts are a "mental discourse," humans are born with language and so all they have to acquire are the correct words.[270] Thoughts, already a form of language, only have to be translated into language. This shifts the subsequent discussion to questions of training and instructing someone who can already understand most of what the instructor is saying. Hobbes is able to use a discourse of discipline rather than of origin. Verbal definitions, which connect what is defined to other words that define it, can then be the central way to discipline language. In addition, the sovereign stabilized the commonwealth by controlling what words mean and, when a conflict arises, by judging between the combatants,

> as when there is a controversy in an account, the parties must by their own accord, set up for right Reason, the Reason of some Arbitrator, or Judge, to whose sentence they will both stand, or their controversie must either come to blowes, or be undecided, for want of a right Reason constituted by Nature; so is it also in all debates of what kind soever.[271]

The possibilities of being meaningful shift between objective certainty and mass confusion. Although Hobbes deploys arguments that organize how and what words mean, he also deploys arguments that undercut the possibility of being meaningful. Ultimately, the organization of words occurs through a judgement whose justification leaps out of the terms of the controversy to a political rather than a scientific justification.

Humans have to understand each other for the commonwealth to exist. What has to be generated is clear language that allows humans to understand one another. As one commentator claims, "when words lose their meaning,

---

[270] By way of association, Wittgenstein writes of how

> Augustine describes the learning of human language as if the child came into a strange country and did not understand the language of the country; that is, as if it already had a language, only not this one. Or again: as if the child could already think, only not yet speak. And 'think' would here mean something like 'talk to itself'. *Philosophical Investigations*, p. 16

[271] Hobbes, *Leviathan*, p 111.

communication—and therefore community—is impossible."[272] If ideas have to be grounded in experience, and everyone experiences things differently, then understanding can only be relative and language can only be confusion. In *Human Nature* Hobbes admits that understanding someone else is not easy:

> It is therefore a great ability in a man, out of the words, contexture and other circumstances of language, to deliver himself from equivocation, and to find out the true meaning of what is said.[273]

Hobbes's immediate response, which was built into the way that he described human thoughts as physical processes, is to associate the mind to material and animate objects. The mind wanders or searches along the paths of memory.

> For the thoughts are to the desires, as scouts, and spies, to range abroad, and find the way to the things desired.[274]

The mind is like a community that exchanges thoughts like commodities. Thoughts are objects that the mind walks through, loses, searches for or changes. Elizabeth Cook claims that using the concept of "endeavour" to label the basic parts of the mind

> allowed Hobbes's description of 'mental discourse' to adhere to a system of causality without reducing the mind to a crude and lumbering machine.[275]

Some experiences that may appear to be sensible, like the impression left after gazing at the sun for a long time, or after "being long and vehemently attent upon Geometrical Figures,"[276] are in fact products of the imagination. Dreams are not new experiences, they result from the "agitation of the inward parts of mans body." Different dreams are in part explained by different external conditions, in particular the temperature. "In summe, our Dreams are the reverse of our waking Imaginations; The motion when we are awake,

---

[272] Ball, "Hobbes's Linguistic Turn," p. 746.

[273] Hobbes, *Human Nature*, p. 200.

[274] Hobbes, *Leviathan*, p. 139.

[275] Elizabeth Cook, "Thomas Hobbes and the Far-fetched," p. 230.

[276] Hobbes, *Leviathan*, p. 90

beginning at one end; and when we Dream at another."[277] Each of these experiences can still be talked about, but they ought to be treated differently. Through his vocabulary Hobbes has given himself access to the inner machine of consciousness which allows him to consider different kinds of experiences without claiming to provide a complete account of any particular mind.

The organization of language creates a series of expectations concerning the character of other humans and what they are likely to do. By publicizing the laws, the sovereign's intentions become known. The value of the future to political order helps to explain why priests are a threat to the sovereign's power. The sovereign can only control the body, whereas the priests claim to affect the individual's soul after death. Once the body is dead, the individual's future depends on the priest more than the sovereign.

Humans create the commonwealth in particular by exchanging promises, which form expectations of actions. They enter into a covenant with each other. In the Introduction to *Leviathan* Hobbes writes that:

> the Pacts and Covenants by which the parts of this Body Politic were at first made, set together, and united, resemble that Fiat, or the Let us make man, pronounced by God in the Creation.[278]

One of the major problems with Hobbes's argument has been the implausibility of a mass social contract. Given that people are in a perpetual state of war, how could such an event ever take place? According to Taylor, Hobbes's argument inverts the historical development in which the "contract depends upon society more than society upon the contract."[279] The reason why Hobbes first describes the generation of the commonwealth as a mass social contract is because the generation of the commonwealth is described just after he has created the image of total chaos in the state of nature.

---

[277] Hobbes, *Leviathan*, p. 91.

[278] Hobbes, *Leviathan*, pp. 81-82

[279] Taylor, p. 79.

Creating life requires spontaneous generation, not reproduction or growth. The extreme kind of dissolution made it necessary to present an extreme kind of generation. However, just as Hobbes admits that smaller groups, such as families, can exist without a large social contract, he also admits that contracts that create the commonwealth occur over time. There are two ways that a commonwealth can be generated: the first is by institution, the second is by conquest. What this suggests is that the historical occurrance of a social contract is not crucial to Hobbes's argument. He is claiming that there are two ways to create a commonwealth. The first is voluntary: when people bind themselves to a commonwealth, in a process of spontaneous generation. The second is by force: when people are forced to be a part of the commonwealth. Either way, a commonwealth is created. And either way the contract is important to the discussion. The contract describes how humans are added to an already existing body, how they become obedient.

Another significant problem with Hobbes's discussion of the social contract concerns the nature of the social contract.

> Hobbes often appears to be saying that they transfer something occult and intangible to him—their powers, or their wills, or their persons, or their rights. But it becomes clear that what he writes in these veins, though suggestive of his underlying idea, is not to be taken quite literally.[280]

Watkins ends up claiming that if people do not give the sovereign their names,

> then we still have no answer to the question: what is it that men in a state of nature—men, one might say, with nothing to lose (or give) but their names—transfer to one or more of their fellow men that transforms him or them into a sovereign authority?[281]

It is important to distinguish between the social contract and the contracts that arise through force. When a slave is set free in exchange for obedience, the relation is different from a social contract in that the force already exists. Therefore, although it is true to say that, for Hobbes, all relations of obedience

---

[280] Watkins, p. 116.

[281] Watkins: p. x.

are relations of agreement (promise and contract), it is not true to claim that all commonwealths result from a universal social contract. The idea of the social contract is concerned with specific aspects of the relationship between sovereign and subject. If the relation is one of force, then humans remain in a state of war. The slave has not submitted to the master, and therefore remains a threat.

Another aspect of the symbolic generation of the commonwealth is the creation of laws and the organization of visible violence. The social order is based not only on people promising to obey the sovereign, but also on the sovereign promising to punish people. Punishment is neither a contractual nor an animate relation. Hobbes's discussion of punishment depends on the idea of the theatre. The individual who is punished becomes an example, a promise. Punishment is a symbolic relation between the sovereign, who controls the theatre of violence, and the subjects, who participate as spectators and as authors.

The symbolic commonwealth is also created when social roles and locations are organized. The theatre connects to ideas like masks, manners, customs and rituals, all of which suggest patterns or promises of behaviour. A social persona can be acquired from the examples of other individuals, whether teachers or characters in stories. Readers of classical stories can associate themselves with Hercules or Alexander or they can be taken over by plays that they see performed.

> There was once a great conflux of people in *Abdera*, a City of the Greeks, at the acting of the Tragedy of *Andromeda*, upon an extream hot day: whereupon, a great many of the spectators falling into Fevers, had this accident from the heat, and from the Tragedy together, that they did nothing but pronounce Iambiques, with the names of *Perseus* and *Andromeda*; which together with the Fever, as cured, by the comming on of Winter: And this madness was thought to proceed from the Passions imprinted by the Tragedy.[282]

By adopting a role, people become predictable, although they may still be

[282] Hobbes, *Leviathan*, p. 142.

politically dangerous.

> Hobbes claims that sects and fanatics were 'Cromwell's best cards' in the card game for sovereignty. The distinction, implicity here, between the calculating and the noncalculating, between the players and the played-with, is consistently drawn.[283]

Individuals also think and act according to the scripts or expectations they have.

> To a large extent, in fact, "this late rebellion of the presbyterians and other democratical men" was a reader's revolt, an uprising led by unsupervised students of the Bible, on the one hand, and of Greek and Roman history, on the other.[284]

The character and control of books become important concerns for organizing the commonwealth. Hobbes understands his own political texts as interventions within the symbolic order.

> ... when I shall have set down my own reading orderly,and perspicuously, the pains left another, will be onely to consider, he also find not the same in himself.[285]

By reading themselves and his book, Hobbes wants to substitute his "way" for humans to secure life and liberty.

Hobbes's position on what should happen when people read echoes the Elizabethan period. Commenting on the earlier time, Stephen Greenblatt writes that the "absorption of the book at once provides a way of being in the world and shapes the reader's inner life; Christian obedience is simultaneously a form of action and an internal state."[286] For someone like Tyndall the book represents a way to mould the obedient Christian person. The book is a way to penetrate the social mask and affect the soul. For Hobbes, the book is powerful, whether subversive or not.[287]

---

[283] Holmes, *Behemoth*, xxv, reference to p. 136.

[284] Holmes, *Behemoth*, xxvi, reference to p. 20.

[285] Hobbes, *Leviathan*, p. 83.

[286] Greenblatt, *Renaissance Self-Fashioning*, p. 84.

[287] It would be interesting to question how much Hobbes's image of the citizen is a repetition of Tyndall's image of the Christian. "It is the goal of the Obedience then to free men from their own corrupted imaginations, to restore them to that obedience that Christ himself taught." Greenblatt, Renaissance Self-Fashioning, p. 88. In Leviathan Hobbes writes that "The

Symbolic Form. The arrangement of the commonwealth is compared to various symbolic arrangements that derive from the material qualities specific to the symbolic level. The most obvious symbolic arrangement in *Leviathan* is the contractual relations that are a keystone in Hobbes's image of the commonwealth. However, when the role of the social contract is recognized in Hobbes's argument, the idea's value in articulating the formal arrangements becomes evident. The social contract describes one important aspect of how a commonwealth is created but does not consider the social arrangements that result. We should be very clear about the importance of this. The contractual relationship does not describe any of the functions, obligations or expectations possessed by either the sovereign or the subjects. To claim that the sovereign is the final arbitrator, for instance, may involve an association with legal ideas, but it is neither included in nor strictly derivable from any idea of the social contract. What the social contract describes is how the sovereign became the final arbitrator. The meaning of sovereignty has to be found outside the contractual account of the generation of sovereignty.

There is a distinction between the form of the government, the form of the commonwealth, and the modes of governing. The different forms of government "consisteth in the difference of the Soveraign, or the Person representative of all and every one of the Multitude."[288] The form of the commonwealth is a broader image of the relations between the commonwealth's parts. The mode of governing considers the relationship

---

Scripture was written to shew unto men the kingdome of God; and to prepare their mindes to become his obedient subjects ..." (p. 145). In Greenblatt's discussion, Hobbes could be located as the combination of More and Tyndall. "As Utopia had envisaged the reduction of all men to citizens with the identical language, traditions, customs, and laws, the Obedience reduces all men to the common condition of subjects: this includes dukes and earls, as well as cardinals and bishops."

[288] Hobbes, *Leviathan*, p. 239.

between the governor and those that are governed, with a specific concern for the ways that the governed are governed. These forms of the commonwealth and the modes of governance have already been described.

In contrast to the images of symbolic chaos, Hobbes also suggests a variety of symbolic organizations. A principal structure in the commonwealth consists of the relations of honour. The hierarchy of physical power is parallel to a hierarchy of value. Men "set values" upon themselves and on other men. Titles are given to subjects by the sovereign, who has the power to organize the value-relations in the commonwealth. There ought to be a public rate of the "worth" of men.[289]

One argument that Hampton makes against Hobbes's position is that the sovereign will want to increase its honour and therefore oppress the subjects.[290] The sovereign is the "fountain" of honour and "the dignities of Lord, Earle, Duke and Prince are his Creatures." In terms of honour, the sovereign relates to his subjects as the master relates to his slaves.[291] The sovereign is more concerned to be compared with other sovereigns. There is competition between sovereigns. But in this case the status of the sovereign in the eyes of other sovereigns is not based on comparing the sovereign to his subjects but rather on the comparative status of the commonwealths.

The organization of the commonwealth as a theatre describes the masks that people are given or give themselves. These may imply roles, but they can also suggest reputation, honour, worthiness and so on. What is important is how people appear to each other.

> Reputation for power, is Power; because it draweth with it the adhaerence of those that need protection.[292]

People give signs of their opinion of others.

> For let a man (as most men do,) rate themselves as the highest Value they can; yet

[289] Hobbes, *Leviathan*, p. 235.

[290] Hampton, p. 194.

[291] Hobbes, *Leviathan*, p. 238.

[292] Hobbes, *Leviathan*, p. 150.

> their true Value is no more than it is esteemed by others.[293]

Hobbes also

> explicitly invokes status anxiety to explain why the Scottish nobility cooperated in the abolition of episcopacy: 'Men of ancient wealth and nobility are not apt to brook, that poor scholars should (as they must, when they are made bishops) be their fellows.'[294]

Some masks can be "counterfeit." A subject may, for instance, gives signs of love when the feeling is really hatred.[295] The social relation is thus tied to the relation of sign and thought and to the relation of money and wealth. "Words are wise mens counters, they do but reckon by them but they are the mony of fooles ...."[296] In a similar way, perhaps, "Persons" are the counters for legal relations and masks are the counters for social relations.

The theatre suggests a structure that points to the artificiality and the mobility of structures that is consistent with Hobbes's description of social interactions. People relate to each other within organizations of manners and honours. One way of understanding how the commonwealth is organized is as system of honours. Within a commonwealth an individual can be punished without being physically touched. The sovereign, or anyone else, can damage the individual by dishonouring the social persona. Honour is a kind of social power that is compared to physical power.

Some of Hobbes's political attacks are directed against particular scripts that move actors towards actions that disrupt the social order. But Hobbes does not attack the general theatricality of politics. Everyone is an actor, but the play ought to be a simple one. One political problem is that people forget the theatrical nature of politics and they internalize the plots and characters, when they take their social position too seriously. Among other things, the theatre suggests that the social persona should be adaptable and that the

---

[293] Hobbes, *Leviathan*, p. 152.

[294] Holmes, *Behemoth*, xxi, reference to pp. 29-30.

[295] Hobbes, *Leviathan*, p. 162.

[296] Hobbes, *Leviathan*, p. 106.

individual ought to be somewhat indifferent to what their social persona is.

The idea of the plot indicates, among other things, a structure of actions. If someone is acting out a role in a play, those actions are prefigured. For Hobbes, the unfolding of a play can be connected to the unfolding of an argument. The vocabulary of the theatre is less important than the vocabulary of the academy. The fight is over principles rather than narratives or symbols. Some propositions are good for the social order, others are not. An extended discussion of key ideas occurs late in the book.[297] The principle and the narrative structure seem to be distinct. Whereas the first concerns deductive arguments and justifications, the second concerns patterns of human action and imitations. Narrative structures may be used, acquired, altered and so on, but they are seldom thought to need justification. Principles may be affirmed or denied, found to be false or confirmed to be true, but they seldom are thought to be social masks of human actions. The narrative structures exist in the realm of pragmatic human action, in common language, whereas principles exist in the realm of abstracted thought, in logic. However, the division between principle and narrative structure does not have to be that severe. The principle is, arguably, a particularly strategic point in a narrative structure while a narrative structure is organized around key principles. The connection between principle and action is one of application and implication: translating the principle into a set of actions and determining what the principle signifies.

The sovereign is part of the symbolic structures, whether by design or necessity. The sovereign must "govern" opinions. It is "annexed" to the sovereign to be the judge of what is "averse" and what "conducive" to peace and consequently, on what occasions, how "far", and what men are to be trusted to say when speaking to "multitudes of people."[298] The sovereign has control over "publique instruction, both of Doctrine and Example"[299] The

[297] Hobbes, *Leviathan*: p. 694 on.

[298] Hobbes, *Leviathan*, p. 233.

role of the sovereign is to establish and enforce the rituals of the society—the external show which all people ought to accept and perform—and in this way organize and moderate social interactions. The sovereign provides guidelines, possible characters, possible situations and possible actions; it may be left up to the individual to determine which of the given plots will be followed.

A good sovereign is one that allows language to become clear. If the sovereign forces its subjects to lie, it becomes surrounded by flatterers and is eventually disconnected from the body, which Hobbes understands as a disease.

> The sovereign .. is far from all-powerful. It is only men's outward behaviour which he should attempt to control; inquisitions into their inner beliefs are futile.[300]

However, the nature of this limit is such that the person cannot become seditious. The person is not able to profess what he or she believes and is therefore unable to either resist the sovereign or convert other people. The image of Christ is extended to the citizen, who remains silent when being interrogated (the violent sovereign would then be associated with the Roman interrogator).

Hobbes also associates a commonwealth with an interpretive community. With symbolic relations, we can read the Bible, we can understand God's promises, and we can therefore become Christians. The sovereign is the "Chief Pastor"[301] who carries the person of God, just as Moses did. Another connection is that the sovereign gives laws to those who would otherwise fall into the state of nature just as Moses gave God's law to the utterly corrupt.[302]

Hobbes attempts to show that a Christian citizen ought to be obedient to an atheistic or heretical ruler. Since God willed that this commonwealth exist

---

[299] Hobbes, *Leviathan*, p. 376.

[300] Watkins, p. 120

[301] Hobbes, *Leviathan*, p. 499.

[302] Cantalupo, "By Art," p. 54. Reference to *Deut*. XXI. 29.

as it does, it is serving his purposes and is therefore legitimate. This is not necessarily a cynical claim. The commonwealth is necessary for salvation because people have to be taught to be obedient.

> This idea that a subject is the author of all his sovereign's acts is hard to reconcile with Hobbes's attempt to justify a Christian subject's duty to obey an infidel sovereign who commands him to deny Christ. In this connection, Hobbes says 'that whatsoever a subject ... is compelled to do in obedience to his sovereign ..., that action is not his, but his sovereign's'.[303]

However, because the sovereign cannot read the thoughts of the citizens, a citizen is able to publicly deny Christ while being a Christian. What matters, at least to God, are the citizen's intentions when denying Christ.

Hobbes is able to reconcile radical skepticism and the need for shared beliefs by putting a wedge between the expressed word and the thought. He allows two levels of judgement: the personal (internal) and the political (external). The external judgement is the sovereign's. Hence there is a difference between judging what ought to be taken as true and judging what ought to be professed. The Enlightenment project, much like the Christian project, is underground, hidden, and real. The philosophers become like the Protestants at the time, but they accept the political necessity of obedience in the ceremony of politics. In a sense, everyone becomes like the persecuted Christians, attacked by the Roman political power. Science is placed with Christianity in the City of God.

The symbolic relations provide reasons why the sovereign must be singular. Just as he appealed to the singularity of will in the body, he appeals to the singularity of the commanding voice. In his discussions of the common law, Hobbes frequently asks who speaks for the common law. It is only with a voice that the law can be interpreted and controversies can be decided. The inability to speak is also tied to the subject's inability to collectively resist the sovereign.

> There is little ground for the opinion of them, that say of Soveraign Kings, though

[303] Watkins, p. 118, fn 103, reference to *Leviathan* p. 271 and *E.W. III* pp. 493-4

> they be *singulis majores*, of greater Power than every one of their Subjects, yet they be *Universis minores*, of lesse power than them all together. For if by *all together*, they mean not the collective body as one person, then *all together*, and *every one*, signifie the same; and the speech is absurd. But if by *all together*, they understand them as one Person (which person the Soveraign bears,) then the power of all together, is the same with the Soveraigns power; and so again the speech is absurd: which absurdity they see well enough, when the Soveraignty is in an Assembly of the people; but in a Monarch they see it not; and yet the power of Soveraignty is the same in whomever it be placed.[304]

The chain of command cannot stop at different people. If there are many ends, then there will be conflict. It is clearly possible that the sovereign can delegate, and the ability to delegate does not remove the unity of the sovereign. Hobbes writes:

> [The] Governor must be one; or else there must needs follow Faction, and Civil war in the Common-wealth, between the *Church* and *State*; between *Spiritualists* , and *Temporalists*; between the *Sword of Justice* and the *Shield of Faith*; and (which is more) in every Christian mans own brest, between the *Christian*, and the *Man*.[305]

It may be difficult to sort out who has sovereignty except when a conflict arises, but then it is usually clear. Hobbes discusses the example of Pericles, who was the sovereign even though Athens was officially a democracy.

> ... ever there is a [Chief] Command, and alwayes exercis'd, except in the time of Sedition, and Civill War, and then there are two Cheife Commands made out of one.

In a civil war sovereignty is still not divided; there are simply two sovereigns. Civil war is more difficult because there is not the continuity of territory: people who are subject to different sovereigns are constantly running into each other, which is effectively a relation of war.

Baumgold splits Hobbes's discussion concerning undivided sovereignty into analytical and practical arguments. Hobbes's analytical claim involves the associations that have already been discussed. The idea of divided

---

[304] Hobbes, *Leviathan*, p. 237.

[305] Hobbes, *Leviathan*, p. 499.

soveriegnty is analytically absurd. Hobbes's practical claim involves showing the negative political implications of divided sovereignty.

> ... *Leviathan's* defense of the need for unified sovereignty, which rests on a causal generalization connecting divided sovereignty, elite conflict, and civil war.[306].

Baumgold's claim is that divided sovereignty is not an effective form of government.

> Looking back on the experience of the last decade, Hobbes discerns a causal connection between divided sovereignty and civil war.[307]

However, Hobbes is not claiming that divided sovereignty is impractical but that it is a contradiction. He is attacking "an opinion received of the greatest part of England."[308] because that opinion is confused and seditious. By controlling these ideas, the symbolic structures are able to reenforce the commonwealth's overall coherence.

❦

A large part of human existence involves human beings in symbolic relations with other humans. The symbolic commonwealth includes relations of understanding, of promising, of honouring, and of acting. It is with language that humans can escape the state of nature, become civilized and finally become obedient. Symbolic relations are partially understood as relations of force, but force does not adequately characterize the power of symbols. It is always possible to resist any particular words through rejection or silence. Suppressing doctrines often makes their proponents more fixed in their beliefs.

> Suppression of doctrine does but unite and exasperate, that is, increase both the malice and power of them that have already believed them.[309]

The strategies used for maintaining the symbolic order are different from those used for maintaining the physical order. The coherence that language creates is largely based on individuals becoming part of the linguistic group,

---

[306] Baumgold,p. 13.

[307] Baumgold, p. 69.

[308] Hobbes, *Leviathan*, pp. 236-237.

[309] Hobbes, *Behemoth*, p. 62.

learning the beliefs of others and internalizing the moral structures of the commonwealth. In modern terms, it is through the symbolic relations that the subject comes to love Big Brother.

Leviathan's Shield:
the frontispiece of *Leviathan*

> When we first begin to believe anything, what we believe is not a single proposition, it is a whole system of propositions. (Light dawns gradually over the whole.)
>
> Ludwig Wittgenstein

I will end with the beginning and consider how Hobbes introduces his vision of the commonwealth. The frontispiece to *Leviathan* functions as a "book blurb and dust-jacket," offering both a summary of and enticement to read the book.[310] However, the picture may be more than an introduction. One of the key problems that Hobbes faces as a writer is how to use words in a way that his readers can understand. He assumes a great deal: that people have experienced the same events in the same world in roughly the same way. Language can only be used to convey meaning when it has become orderly. The discipline that God exerts over the world, and over human experiences, is augmented by the discipline that Hobbes advocates over human language.

The frontispiece is located between experience and the word. By using images rather than words, Hobbes presents a picture of politics that depends more on the order of experience than on the order of language. The picture is not a secondary thought, but rather a primary form of presentation that, according to Hobbes's epistemology, would be more effective than words. The text of *Leviathan* requires that the reader understands Hobbes's language, the frontispiece requires far less. The art of the frontispiece is not something that opposes or contaminates science; art includes anything that human beings create, including science. The picture is a constructed stage on which the later text will be played out. Hobbes's arguments begin before he starts to write.

---

[310] Rugow, p. 158 and Brown, "The Artist," p. 29.

Illustration 1. The Frontispiece to *Leviathan*, 1651

The frontispiece of *Leviathan*, with its symbolically rich image of the body politic looming over an idyllic countryside, is the first image of the commonwealth that the reader encounters. An alternative to writing, the page is both a stage and a curtain for what follows—a *mise en abyme*, a heraldic device.[311] The frontispiece establishes borders, first between the book and the outside world, and second between the different elements in the frontispiece itself. The page is a shield against the outside that both presents a miniature reflection of the book and a cover for the book against hostilities.

The strong lines that divide the page into compartments suggest a strength and a determinism that give the other images security, fixedness, and location in the general order. The lines form a scaffold on which the parts of a system can be attached. The page is divided horizontally into two. The top half is further divided by horizontal lines into the landscape, the body, and the sky and by vertical lines into the sword, the body and the crozier. The bottom half is divided into three vertical columns. The outside columns display images of warfare and religion. A cloth of honour, hanging below the sovereign in the middle column, displays the book's extended title and its author's full name. The placement establishes a complex relation and interaction between the images in the picture. The objects in the picture point the viewer towards leviathan while leviathan points the viewer to the rest of the picture.

The writing at the top of the picture states that nothing on earth can be compared to what is pictured—*Non est potestas Super Terram quae Comparetur ei. Job. 41.24.* The viewer may pause and ask how it is then possible for Hobbes to give us a picture of it and promises to discuss it. Is there not a certain contradiction in offering a picture of something that nothing can be compared to? If there is in fact only one of them, as the claim suggests, how is it possible to understand it? Giving something a proper name, such as "leviathan," is a way to refer to something, but proper names do not

[311] See Dällenbach, *The Mirror in the Text* for a discussion of the *mise en abyme*.

necessarily make the thing meaningful. And this proper name actually refers to two things—the body and the Biblical character—which suggests a comparison. The way that the rest of the frontispiece attempts to make leviathan understandable is through associations of symbols from everyday experience: bodies, swords, cities and churches. Through tracing the associations, it is possible to consider how Hobbes uses the frontispiece to begin his account of political order. What Hobbes may mean by "comparison" must remain open.

The Body. The top half of the picture suggests various hierarchies or directions of control centred around the figure of an armoured man, the commonwealth. The foreground of the picture is the countryside of mortal existence; the background is the sky of heaven. The churches in the landscape are clearly under the body's control. Their spires may point towards heaven, but they do not even reach as high as the commonwealth's lowest visible parts. At the very top of the page is the word of God, which locates the leviathan in the universal order. There is no thing on earth which can be compared to him—third person masculine, gender specific, a thing with power, a Man of power wielding power. The body has a stature because it is able to rise so high above the landscape, and a power because it acts like a human body. But what is this thing? What is it made of? Where does it come from? How is it put together? The frontispiece only responds to some of these concerns.

While the picture is focused on the body, it suggests the problem of how the parts of the body connect. How can the artist make the commonwealth look coherent? By drawing the people in an organic or mechanistic whole, the commonwealth could be visually distinguished from a simple collection of individuals. The artist traced a faint—or perhaps implied—line around the people and placed a face and two hands at the body's extremes. The people in the body connect the face to the hands and are in turn trapped within the

body by the face and hands. The face and hands of the artificial person are the hands of a natural person. A connection between the artificial and the natural is established. The border of the commonwealth becomes natural because it is associated with the human body while at the same time it becomes artificial because it is something that people create, like fences. The hands and the head are organizing images—plugs—that stop the body from being dis-membered or the people from being drained away.

The hands and the face may strike the reader as problematic. What do they signify? Are the hands to be understood as something other than more people? Where do the hands come from? Who makes them? What are they made of? The same issues occur with the image of the head. Historically, the idea of the body politic sometimes considered the tongue, the eyes and so on as separate groups of people. With what justification is the head drawn differently than the main body—as a superhuman face rather than as a composite of people or as a single person? Whatever response is given to these questions, the symbolism of the picture implicitly denies the ability of people to organize themselves, while the lack of an outside organizer is hidden by the humanness of the commonwealth's extremities. Paradoxically, the hands and head organize a body that cannot organize itself even though the hands and head are parts of the body. The picture thus points to the problem of generation, which it does not answer.

Images of protection and threat are intertwined in the body. The people protect the commonwealth like a suit of chain armour while at the same time they are part of the commonwealth being protected. Because their backs are turned to the outside, they do not pose a threat to the viewer; they are potential sacrifices that would make a threat plausible. The large sword and the face are ambiguous. They are not directly threatening the viewer but they are capable of doing so. The observer may find comfort in the father figure gazing reassuringly back as if saying "There is nothing to fear so long as you

fear, and find peace in me." It is the face and the posture of deterrence.

Some commentators claim that the leviathan is the ruler, others that it is the commonwealth, still others mix the two. In one sense the distinction is not important: the will and the body are related such that they could be talked about at the same time: what the sovereign wills, the commonwealth performs. However, although the connection of will and body in a human body is "natural" or generally given, the distance between the sovereign and the body undermines the givenness of the connection in the commonwealth. A disjunction between the body and the will in the political body is possible because the parts of the political body, the human bodies, have wills of their own. When the political body falls apart, the commonwealth's power reverts back to the subjects. This suggests two things: first, that the subjects have ultimate control over their personal power; and, second, that the sovereign is in a position of power but does not possess power. If "having power" means that the person's will has control over something that is powerful, then determining who has the power in the picture becomes more difficult. The answer is complex: the head "controls" power, the people in the body "are" powerful and the commonwealth as a whole "has" power. It is the commonwealth's will that controls the commonwealth's body, and it is the individual's will that creates the commonwealth's will.

In the drawn version of the frontispiece, the copy presented to Charles II, the body is made up of faces turned away from the sovereign towards the reader. Some commentators have argued that this image is a better representation of Hobbes's position than the engraved frontispiece where leviathan is made up of human bodies.[312] They argue that the commonwealth is created by a connection of wills. People contract with each other to promise that they will follow the sovereign's judgements. The individual will is subsumed under the will of the commonwealth, the sovereign('s) will. Other commentators have suggested that the engraving portrays the people "in the act of making the covenant"[313] whereas, perhaps,

[312] Brown, "The Artist," p. 32.

the drawing portrays the people after the fact. In the first image they are looking towards the sovereign face, in the second image they are looking with the sovereign face at the viewer. However, neither the face nor the body is the will. Although the will may be closer to the face than the body, the will is an intangible or at least a hidden part of the body which either the body or the face could signify. An alternative way to account for the change is to consider the change in the artistic medium. An engraving can contain more detail than a line drawing on vellum. Had the artist drawn bodies for the presentation copy, the picture would have been smudged or too blackened. The difference between the detailed hair in the engraving and the darker, less distinct hair in the drawing suggests a similar shift. If the medium forced a change in the picture, it is plausible to think that the faces would make the best substitute for the bodies, but this does not indicate a conceptual change.

The commonwealth appears as a king, and the head (the human king) becomes the organizer of the extended king: an existing king who is necessary for the king to exist. Attempts have been made in the commentaries to determine who is pictured as the face of the commonwealth. One reading that is now more or less rejected is that the face on the engraved frontispiece resembles Cromwell while the face on the drawn frontispiece resembles Charles II.[314] Most other readings identify the face with one or the other ruler. Both faces show some resemblance to both leaders. Hobbes may have wanted both potential leaders of England to see their own image at the front of the book. Drawing a parallel between himself and Plato, Hobbes claims that only when a person with political power accepts the rational politics found in the book will politics become rational.[315] The merging of sovereignty and rational politics hinges on the mirroring of the sovereign and the ideal sovereign, the face and its simulacrum, the seeing face and the face the reader

[313] Corbett and Lightbown, *The Comely Frontispiece*, p. 224.

[314] Hale. *The Body Politic*, p. 128. See Brown, "The Artist," p. 24.

[315] Hobbes, *Leviathan*, p. 407.

sees. It has also been argued that the commonwealth's face is a portrait of Thomas Hobbes.[316] If this is true, then the theorist, merging with the text, may become the face of the king. The theorist would not assume power, but rather prestige; hewould not invoke the active coercion of control, but rather the cool gaze of rationalized organization. The theorist becomes an *eminence grise*, or secret sharer in the power relations of the commonwealth. The theorist, the king and the subjects must reach an agreement for the body politic to exist. While the crown may emphasize the "supremacy of Leviathan" over his subjects,[317] it is more accurate to say that the crown is carried by the subjects, by the king, and by the theorist. All three must maintain their position for each to continue carrying it. Without a face, a head or a body, the crown would fall away from the commonwealth on to the landscape below.

Why is the body pictured without feet?[318] The most direct answer is that the artist could not maintain the aesthetic power of the picture if the body politic was pictured whole. The top of the body is menacing. A complete body—which would have been more difficult to draw and would have taken more space—may have hampered the force of the image. Another answer connects the traditional view that the feet of the body politic were the workers. One key example is John of Salisbury, who writes that "The husbandmen correspond to the feet, which always cleave to the soil...."[319] In the medieval images of the body politic, even the most vulgar groups of people were connected to the king and the aristocracy. Usually, the connectedness of all the parts was stated alongside claims that some people were naturally superior to others. The people at the feet were there because

---

316 Corbett and Lightbown, *The Comely Frontispiece*, p. 229.

317 Corbett and Lightbown, *The Comely Frontispiece*, p. 224.

318 Corbett and Lightbown, *The Comely Frontispiece*, p. 219.

319 John of Salisbury, *Policraticus*, p. 61. See David Hale, *The Body Politic: A Political Metaphor in Renaissance English Literature*, p. 39.

they belonged there, because God willed them to be there. John of Salisbury suggests a paternalistic relationship between the head and the feet. However, when the naturalness of social positions is denied, when people become naturally equal, the images and implied values of the parts of a body politic are threatened. The workers and the nobility, when pictured alongside each other, become different only because of their artificially constituted social positions. Thus the frontispiece may exclude the lower class from the body politic—they are not worth picturing—and yet grudgingly accept that they are essential. Hobbes, if he was attempting to preserve some distinction between the vulgar and the cultured, may have then used this image of the body politic to resist unwanted implications of his equalitarian account of human nature.

Why are there no women in the body of leviathan? There are a variety of possible explanations. One possible answer is that, even though there is no significant difference between men and women in the state of nature, the exclusion of women from the commonwealth is assumed. Another reading is that the people in the body do not represent individuals, but rather smaller social groups, persons in law, that have a single will, such as families and associations. The building in the landscape and in the top panel of the left column suggest that the exercise of social coercion and justice is through the household by the patriarch. It is the will of the patriarch that becomes the will of the family.The location of women is not part of the vision of politics. Why a patriarchal system should be the case is not established. Like the class division, any political hierarchy that is thought to be natural becomes a significant problem because people are naturally equal. Women are therefore put into a body that is symbolically male, surrounded by symbols of traditional masculine activities, in a way that obscures their general equality to men.

The image of the face as a part of the body, controlling the sword and crozier, and dominating the countryside is powerful. The head is at the centre

of the body's power, and it is thus able to claim status. But what kind of status? What is important is the structure of functions in the whole and not the qualities of particular parts.[320] The head can claim a functional status, but that status is not a privilege of a particular head. Hobbes's mechanistic vocubulary, which makes the replacement of body parts more plausible, means that any particular head could be replaced by any other. The image of the body suggests simply that there can only be one head at any given time. The head also appears powerless in relation to the body. The head remains distant from the body, the hands and the countryside, and depends on the body and the countryside for support. Each part of the picture has its own power, its own ability to move and to resist motion. The hand, although perhaps guided by the head, must move by its own power. There may be ways for the head to guarantee that the hand will move, such as through muscles and nerves, but these also are guided by the head that is nonetheless separated from them. The head's control appears to depend on the compliance of at least some parts of the body. Thus the head's power is largely implied by its location and largely denied by the way that the rest of the body is situated around and away from it.

The image of the body politic resists the idea of disorder. The naturalness of the commonwealth is placed above the unnatural image of people existing outside the sovereign order. A person who is outside the commonwealth must be either irrational or superbly powerful; in other words, an idiot or a (mortal) God. Although the state of chaos is later called the state of nature, it is the sovereign state that is here pictured as natural. What would a dead commonwealth look like? Prima facie, the parts of a body cannot survive the death of the body and so the idea of the body politic supports arguments for obedience. For the same reason, the body cannot survive the loss of its parts. Although the debates in the 16th and 17th century focused on the possibility of decapitation, the discussion can be extended to any essential part of the

[320] See Sorrell's discussion of the preface to *De Cive*, p. 2. The king is superior to the people, he is not just an administrator.

body.[321] The body politic could also be used as an argument for moderation.

An attempt to picture a disordered commonwealth was published in the same year as *Leviathan*. *The Fables of Æsop*, paraphrased in verse by John Ogilby, contain seventy-two fables that consider a variety of moral and political problems. One fable in particular, "Of the Rebellion of the Hands and Feet," is directly relevant to the discussion of the *Leviathan* frontispiece because the corresponding picture is of a decapitated body that appears to be attacking itself. The fable is a retelling of *The Fable of the Belly*, an old but often transformed story. The story begins with the hands and feet, the workers, complaining that the stomach, the parliament, does not work but only takes nutrients from the body. The stomach responds by cutting the supply of nutrients to the hands and feet. Every part of the body suffers. Eventually, in weakness and desperation, the parts reach an agreement and the body is restored to health. To this point, Ogilby's version of the fable is relatively traditional. However, the fable and the picture have an additional element—the decapitated head lying next to the body. The fable concludes that

> ... the Chief Cause did our Destruction bring Was we Rebell'd 'gainst Reason our true King.

The fable's moral, also suggestive of Hobbes, is that civil war—"Civil Commotions strongly carried on"—leads to chaos and collective ruin. If the head, which explicitly represents reason and implicitly suggests Charles I, had remained on the body, the rebellion would not have occurred in the first place. The stark contrast between the noble, classical head, and the bloated off-balance body further emphasizes of the impact that reason and the king have on the health of the body politic. But the picture is not completely successful in picturing a decapitated head or an incoherent body. The face has been shifted to the stomach and the body remains coherent while it fights against itself. The body may be grotesque, but it remains a complete body.

---

[321] Hale, *The Body Politic*, p. 81.

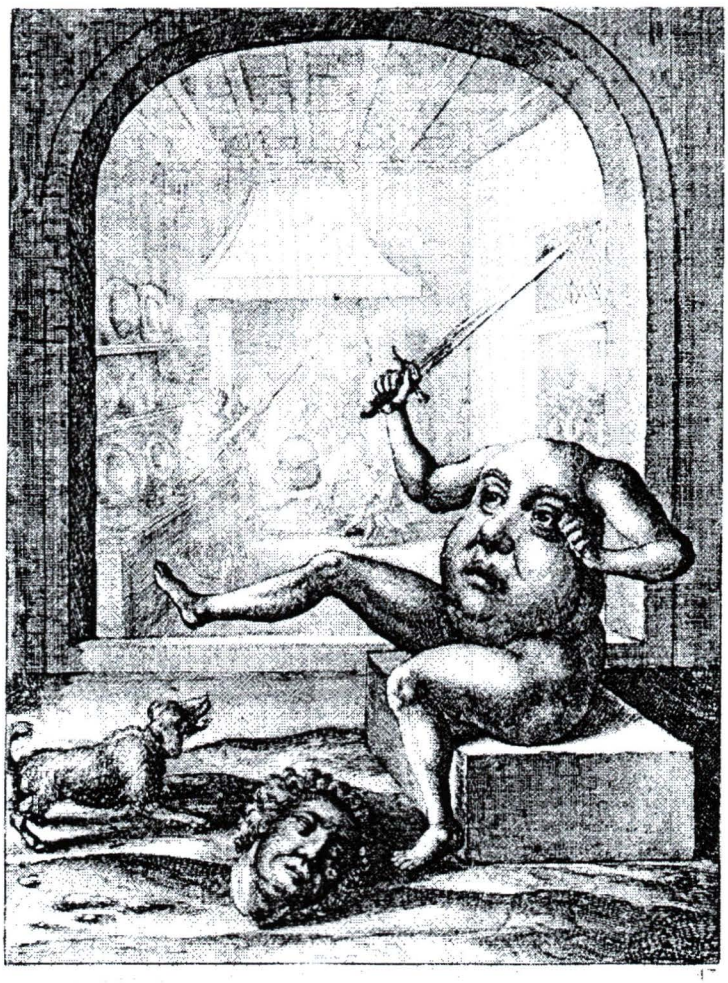

Illustration 2. *The Fables of Æsop Paraphras'd in Verse,* 1651

Ogilby's fable is an imperfect mirror of Hobbes's picture. One difference between Hobbes and Ogilby is that, for Ogilby, dissolution is a problem because people depend on each other whereas, for Hobbes, it is a problem because people threaten each other. The arms and the stomach need each other: people in the state of nature do not. There may be a greater parallel if Hobbes's discussion is followed to its next stage. He argues that cooperation creates commodious living. In order to be wealthy, healthy and so on, people must cooperate. Therefore, although people do not need each other to survive, they do in order to thrive. If the parts of the body in Ogilby's fable continued to exist after the body was dismembered, they would experience the pain that humans feel when the fall from the state of commodious living into the state of nature.

The Sword. The sword has been understood to symbolize either control over warfare or political authority. If the sword is a symbol of military authority, then it is directed outward. The sovereign would then control how the commonwealth relates to the outside. If the sword is an image of political authority, then it is directed inward. But at whom and by whom? The sword may be an appropriate symbol of authority when one person in a group has the sword. An example is the way that a king with a sword would be pictured at court. But the symbolism becomes muddled when the group holds the sword against itself. The punished and the punisher become the same. In effect, the threat of the body stabbing itself maintains the body's coherence. Protection and self-destruction become very close. The image is akin to suicide. The sword suggests an extreme form of punishment; it does not suggest medical intervention. This severity suggests two different conclusions. The first is that the sword symbolizes the absolute control that the sovereign has over the subjects. The second is that the sword symbolizes the dangers inherent in punishment. Punishments are extreme forms of

intervention that should be used sparingly. The whole body, even the sovereign, suffers when punishments are used unnecessarily.[322] An undercurrent of restraint and limitation could be read in the picture. The sword should not be used for minor vices. Only in life-threatening situations, when the nerves and muscles—the disciplining parts—no longer work and the body is starting to be dismembered, should the body use the sword. Rather than indicating absolute and arbitrary sovereignty, the image may suggest that the sovereign's actions are reflexive and ought to be moderate.

The division between inward and outward, between policing and warfare, may not be as definite as has been suggested so far. There is an intimate connection between extreme punishment and warfare. When individuals or groups threaten the social order, they have left the commonwealth and reverted to the state of nature. The out-law is at war with the commonwealth. Punishment still should not be directed inward, since not everything can be attacked without consequence, but the sword can attack whatever has rejected the body or fallen off.

The Crozier. The crozier may suggest ecclesiastical authority or God's words in Scripture. Just below the crozier's "richly foliated crook" is a ring of saints. There is no question that the crozier is controlled by the sovereign—that the sovereign decides how religion is to exist in the commonwealth—but the ends of the crozier suggest a more complex relationship. The expansion of the crozier's base beyond the picture may hint that the true religion exists beyond the body of the commonwealth. The crozier is a given object, something that the sovereign relates to and uses but does not change. The true religion, the one connected to heaven, will exist whatever the sovereign decides. The

---

[322] Thomas More writes: "A kingdom in all its parts is like a man; it is held together by natural affection. The king is the head; the people form the other parts. Every citizen the king has he considers a part of his own body (that is why he grieves at the loss of a single one). His subjects exert themselves in the king's behalf, and they all look upon him as head for which they provide the body" (Hale: p. 49). The quote is from More's *Epigrams* (1518), #94.

saints, one may say the apostolic tradition, exist apart from the sovereign. The picture also emphasizes the distance between the church and God. The church is below the commonwealth, below the sovereign and below the crozier. The (Christian) commonwealth, guided by the sovereign will, is either its own mediator or controls the way the crozier mediates between heaven and earth. It is the community, perhaps in imitation of Christ, that carries the crozier.[323] In this way everyone can be connected to heaven. The problematic relation that Hobbes may be suggesting here is between political and religious obligations. The reconciliation gives the sovereign control over the crozier but nonetheless suggests that the crozier exists apart from the sovereign.

The Landscape. The character of the landscape may affect how the picture is understood. In the engraved version, the only object that points upward is the church. In the drawing presented to Charles II the world points upward: the trees, the houses, the churches, the castles. Brown reads the change in the second picture as a further emphasis of the "rationalistic, anti-ecclesiastical" character of the work.[324] The viewer is taken into the picture and sent into the heart of leviathan by the way the world points to the body. However, although Hobbes opposed any independent ecclesiastical authority and a variety of theological doctrines, Hobbes's work is neither anti-religious or anti-Christian. The location of the crozier and the disputants in the panel below indicates the political location of the church better than small details in the landscape could. Brown also takes for granted that what the landscape is pointing to is unproblematic. Yet it is not clear whether the trees, churches and castles are pointing to the leviathan or beyond the leviathan to the sky and to heaven. The head, the crozier and the sword also point to heaven. The objects in the landscape may therefore actually reenforce a connection

[323] Brown, "The Artist," p. 32.

[324] Brown, "The Artist," p. 28.

between the commonwealth, the landscape, and God and may thus reinforce a theological reading of the picture.

One iconic tradition implied in the landscape is the depiction of an earth-goddess springing from a bulge in the ground.[325] The political God also springs from the land. Another possible symbolic allusion may be to the tradition of picturing the island of Britain as a woman. For instance, the frontispiece to Drayton's *Poly-olbion* shows the island as a virgin nymph, Albion. The cloak, which exposes her left breast, displays a countryside, rivers, hills, and churches. At her navel is the largest city, perhaps London. In this frontispiece, woman is symbolically tied to nature, and placed at the lowest level in the world order. The picture of Albion is surrounded by the four men who have conquered her. It does not take much imagination to think of the leviathan as a fifth.[326] The conqueror does not destroy the woman, but rather dominates her, lives on her and off her. Thus the frontispiece implies a dependence on the feminine while it glorifies the masculine.

One final difficulty in interpreting the landscape is the city and in particular the soldiers inside: "two men on the ramparts, and on an open space beyond the moat, others, two of them carrying pikes, possibly at drill practice."[327] It is not clear whether the soldiers are part of the commonwealth, and thus being ruled, are mercenaries controlled by the commonwealth, or are outside of the commonwealth, and thus being attacked. The location of the commonwealth could support either reading: the sovereign's height suggests either control or threat.

---

[325] Brown, "The Artist," p. 32.

[326] In a speech given by James I in 1601 he claims that "I am the Husband, and all the whole Isle is my lawfulle Wife; I am the Head, and it is my Body." Quoted in Hale, p. 111.

[327] Corbett and Lightbown, *The Comely Frontispiece*, p. 220.

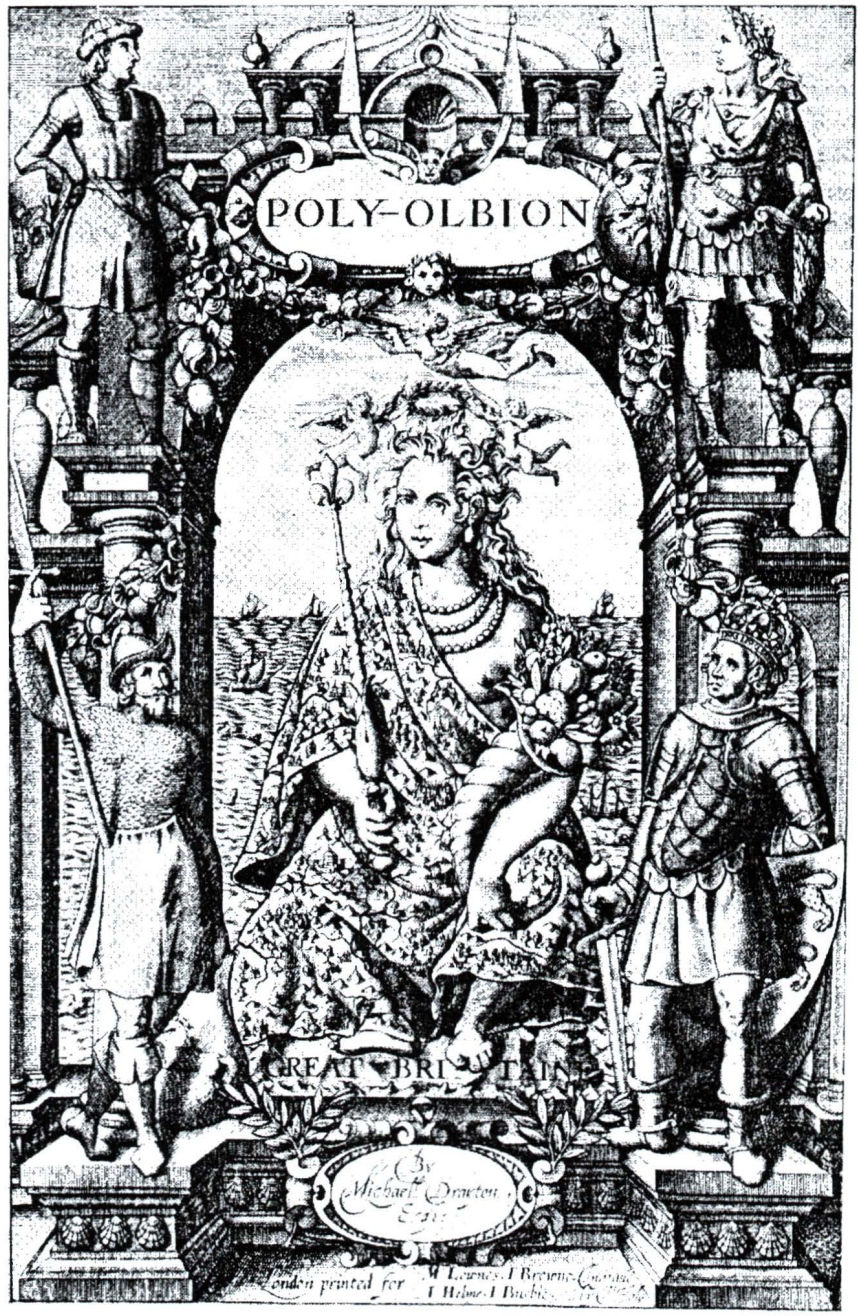

Illustration 3. The Frontispiece to *Poly-olbion*, 1612-1622

The Sky. The fourth part of the picture, the sky, has been discussed in various ways already. The existence of heaven beyond the picture is implied by the objects in the picture. The finality of the vertical progression is suggested by the angle formed by the sword and crozier. The sky is the final visible term in a series that suggests a final, invisible term. The hierarchy can be understood as a progression of scope: God controls everything, the sovereign controls the commonwealth, the commonwealth controls the subjects, and the subjects control themselves. The hierarchy can be understood as a progression of power: God's power is greater than the sovereign's power which is greater than the subject's power. Finally, the hierarchy can be understood as a progression of speed from God to air to flesh to stone. The sky is the penultimate point in the world that points beyond visibility and thus points to the edge of the complete cosmos. This way of locating God in the universal order is articulated later in *Leviathan*.

> For as a man that is born blind, hearing men talk of warming themselves by the fire, and being brought to warm himself by the same, may easily conceive, and assure himselfe, there is somewhat there, which men call *Fire*, and is the cause of the heat he feeles; but cannot imagine what it is like; nor have an Idea of it in his mind, such as they have that see it: so also, by the visible things of this world, and their admirable order, a man may conceive there is a cause of them, which men call God; and yet not have an idea, or Image of him in his mind.[328]

However, compared to other frontispieces of the time with similar hierarchies, the *Leviathan* frontispiece makes the existence and nature of God much less obvious. In James V's *Book of Psalms* (1623), God's name is explicitly placed at the top of the hierarchy. In John Daye's *Ecclesiastical History*, God is pictured as a human at the top of the page. The *Leviathan* frontispiece suggests a hierarchy, but significantly, the sky does not give an explicit image of God; it only shows some clouds. God's words are written, but they are explicitly referenced back to the *Bible*. Whether the *Leviathan* frontispiece suggests that God does not exist, or simply cannot be known,

---

[328] Hobbes, *Leviathan*, p. 167.

remains an open question.

One hierarchy that the picture does not suggest is that between the physical and the mental. The sword and the crozier are separate from each other but are in the same relation to the sovereign. The sword may be privileged because it is in the right hand, but this gives it a privilege of urgency rather than of domination. The physical and the mental are parallel and separate. As he writes later in the book, "the doctrine of Right and wrong, is perpetually disputed by the Pen and the Sword."[329]

The Panels. The bottom half of the picture is connected in various ways to the top. For instance, the sword held by the body is above a castle in the landscape which is above the military images contained in the left column. The crozier is above a church in the landscape which is above the ecclesiastical images contained in the right column. The relation of symbols in the frontispiece thus suggests that the bottom half is a continuation of the top half. From the face to the body to the hands, the attentive reader is lead to the sword and crozier, to the castle and the church in the landscape, and finally to the columns below.

The bottom half of the frontispiece follows a different organization than the top. The picture is divided into smaller panels with separate but related images. The picture is more explicitly iconic. The panels can be arranged vertically and horizontally. Vertically, the right column is dominated by arrows while the left column is dominated by circles. The panels are also vertically connected by common themes. Horizontally, the panels are connected by their shared sizes and by their common topics: buildings, regalia, weapons, and conflicts. The relation of similitude can only give a partial meaning. It remains to be determined what each of the panels represents. Claiming that castles are like churches is different from, though connected to, establishing what castles and churches are. Understanding one will help us understand the other.

---

[329] Hobbes, *Leviathan*, p. 166.

Some commentators have attempted to limit the right column to religious topics and thus make it an expression of Hobbes's anti-clericalism. Hobbes is then using this panel to point to a problem. Stephen Holmes comments that "... the weapons of the Church were displayed as distressingly equal to the weapons of the state."[330] Hobbes's position also attempts to control the divisive and politically dangerous character of theological controversies, to "replace the unsatisfactory tools of traditional styles of theologico-philosophical discussion, which so often prove to strike equally well in opposite directions."[331] There are several important points that this reading does not consider. First, the scope of scholastic philosophy in the Middle Ages extended into "scientific" as well as "ecclesiastical" topics. The most problematic panel for limiting the right column to theology is the one with images from logic. It would be odd for Hobbes to put logical tools in a column that he rejects. Second, Hobbes does not claim that science can remove all conflicts. Only if the reader accepts his starting point, only if the reader can read him or herself the way Hobbes does, will the rest of the argument be convincing. Science, like religion, can strike in both directions. Third, when Hobbes wrote about the universities, he did not make them politically dependent only when they taught religious topics. Because intellectual controversies, or issues of interpretation, are disorderly and can lead to the dissolution of the body, they are always potentially dangerous and should always be controlled. The weapons of the church, which are also the weapons of science, are weapons of the state. The right column is therefore most coherently understood as ranging over any intellectual practice, whether scientific or religious.

The top set of boxes are places, specifically buildings, where the relevant participants collect. Although the castle at the top of the left column could symbolize royal power, and thus emphasize "the idea of overriding

---

[330] Holmes, *Behemoth*, xxxiv.

[331] Corbett and Lightbown, *The Comely Frontispiece*, p. 228.

control,"[332] it is more plausible that the castle is a symbol of delegated control and intermediate authority. In the top of the picture, the head of leviathan is above all the castles and presumably decides who controls which castles. Also, the castle in the panel resembles the castle in the countryside to the left of the city and not the walls that protect the city itself. This also puts the castle at the same level as the church, which is also a symbol of intermediate power. The idea of intermediate power is expanded in the subsequent columns. The panel just below the castle is a coronet, not a crown. In the right column, the parallel picture is a bishop's mitre. The third set of panels, the cannon and the lightning bolts of excommunication,[333] shows the means by which the lord and the bishop maintain order.

The fourth set of boxes contains weapons of engagement, or tools of controversy, such as pikes, war drums and logic. The stack of military weapons may be a war trophy. However, this reading works against the horizontal parallels. Although Brown claims that the panel on the right is a "trophy of theological weapons,"[334] it is unclear how this should be understood. What may be suggested here is not a war trophy, which indicates an end to hostilities, but rather a threat, a military dilemma. One of the flags with the stack of weapons is St. Andrew's cross, which may be an allusion to the threat Scotland posed to England during the Civil War. By reading the weapons as a potential threat, and Scotland as a possible military controversy, the parallel with the scholastic intellectual dilemma in the corresponding box can be maintained. These controversies are the primary things that intermediate powers may have to use cannons and excommunication to resolve.

The final set of boxes shows the locations of engagement, where

---

[332] Brown, "The Artist": p. 26. See Corbett and Lightbown, *The Comely Frontispiece*, p. 225.

[333] For the reference to the Fulmen Excommunicationis (the Thunderbolt is of Excommunication) see Corbett and Lightbown, *The Comely Frontispiece*, p. 227 and *Leviathan*, 3.42.

[334] Brown, "The Artist," p. 31.

controversies become dangerous and where they are resolved. Military conflicts are decided by battle; intellectual conflicts are decided by disputation. What kind of battle is being pictured? One reading of the battle scene is that it is the state of nature, the war of all against all. The left column can thus be read upward as movement from the state of nature to the state of peace.[335] Beyond the fact that the sovereign does not exist in the state of nature, and thus cannot be said to control it, the people are not roughly equal and the situation is not chaotic. There appear to be two separate battles divided along class lines: in the foreground between aristocrats and in the background between commoners. Another reading is that it shows "the manner in which temporal states settle their differences."[336] The panel would then indicate the sovereign's ability to make war. In the ecclesiastical conflict both sides of the controversy are under the sovereign's control. It would be odd to depict a battle between sovereigns as if the sovereign had control over both sides. One reason is that the sovereign cannot control inter-state warfare: the sovereign is at war with another sovereign. In either case a parallel with the right column cannot be maintained. The panel may instead suggest conflicts between political factions or more generally personal conflicts that have become violent.[337]

A play of duality and unity can be observed in the columns. The vertical column of warfare, which is topped by the sovereign's sword, is split from the vertical column of religion topped by the crozier. The outside vertical columns become bent by and towards the sovereign. The sovereign is near the top of a third, implied, vertical column that runs up the centre of the page. At the very top of the middle column, suggested by the angle formed by

---

[335] Brown, "The Artist," p. 30.

[336] Corbett and Lightbown, *The Comely Frontispiece*, p. 226.

[337] This reading is more consistent with Deborah Baumgold's claim that Hobbes is principally concerned with elite conflicts. "Understand, Hobbes says [to his readers], that you are victimized by elite power struggles. In the conflicts of the great, common people suffer." Baumgold, p.123. She does not refer to the frontispiece in her commentary.

the sword and crozier, is the reconciliation found in God. Below Him is the reconciliation created by the sovereign power. A third reconciliation may be the bulk of the body, which mediates between the body's extremes and joins a multitude of human bodies into a unity. The vertical column continues in the bottom half of the page with the book's title, author and finally publisher. There may be a parallel between the centre and the two outside columns of boxes. The locations of conflict, the bottom boxes, are mediated by the publisher, which may indicate a shift from direct to indirect forms of conflict. Textual locations and the distance between combatants would be less dangerous than face-to-face confrontations. The weapons of conflict are mediated by the sovereign author who, through right reason, assumes the role of judge, advocate and truth-teller. Finally, the top three boxes—the matter, form and power of a commonwealth—are reconciled by the knowledge contained in *Leviathan*. The matter of the commonwealth is the places where people collect, principally in castles and churches. The form of the commonwealth is the distribution of powers to intermediate authority. The power of the state is its ability to respond, by violence or excommunication, to people who resist the commonwealth's order. To construct a lasting organization, it is essential to correctly understand the locations, organizations and abilities of the commonwealth. Power flows down the page. The power of the intellectual depends on the power of the sovereign. The power of the sovereign depends on the power of God. Although the book and the author may claim (a cloth of) honour, they cannot claim authority.

❧

Most commentaries on *Leviathan* marginalize the images in the frontispiece, especially the body politic, and focus almost exclusively on Hobbes's discussion of the social contract and absolute sovereignty. Annabel Patterson, for instance, claims that

> Hobbes imagined that the problem the civil wars exemplified was unbounded

> human ambition, and that the solution to individual greed was the imposition of an arbitrary and unlimited sovereign power supported by military strength. Yet he chose to represent this solution as a giant body, which clearly finessed the central issue.[338]

The scholarship on Hobbes has effectively denied what the frontispiece has made central and made central what the frontispiece at best implicitly presents. The picture of the body politic is treated in the same way as Hobbes's discussion of the body politic in the book itself. The image on the frontispiece becomes the negation of Hobbes's science of politics.

---

[338] Patterson, *Fables of Power*, p. 134.

The Trivial and the Mundane:
By Way of Conclusion

> What, in the end, is common?
>
> Words are acoustical signs for concepts; concepts, however, are more or less definite image signs for often recurring and associated sensations, for groups of sensations. To understand one another, it is not enough that one use the same words; one also has to use the same words for the same species of inner experiences; in the end one has to have one's experiences in common.
>
> Therefore the human beings of one people understand one another better than those belonging to different peoples even if they employ the same language; or rather when human beings have long lived together under similar conditions (of climate, soil, danger, needs, and work), what *results* from this is people who "understand one another"—a people. In all souls an equal number of often recurring experiences has come to be predominant over experiences that come more rarely; on the basis of the former one understands the other, quickly and ever more quickly—the history of language is the history of a process of abbreviation—and on the basis of such quick understanding one associates, ever more closely.
>
> Nietzsche, *Beyond Good and Evil*, 268

Why is the division between metaphor and science so fascinating to modern commentators?

A great deal of this essay has been spent implicitly fighting against a title that had been discarded many months ago: "Hobbes's Use of Metaphor." My strategy at that point was straightforward. The commentators had allowed Hobbes to get away with a blatant contradiction and had spent much of their time covering up the evidence with either silences or other words. All his metaphors died; his language became predictable, uninteresting, uneventful. Hobbes could then stand like a Leviathan in political theory: solid, geometrical and predictable. He is a man alone, without history or associates. Most commentaries offered theoretical cages designed to keep rocks from escaping.

I came to realize that it is as true in commentary as elsewhere that you

should choose your enemies well, because you end up becoming like them. Thus the enemies of the "standard" reading came to sound like the people giving the "standard" reading. Hobbes remained contradictory, although his alibis were taken away ... or changed. The thesis title became the focus for rethinking my strategy. To affirm metaphors appeared as misguided as to hide them. What did I mean by metaphor? What did Hobbes mean? It became necessary to change the title, and to consider more closely how Hobbes used his words. It is then that I perceived a way through the "wild ranging" of commentary. Hobbes may be contradictory, but he wasn't here.

Commentators approach Hobbes with their own epistemological assumptions and intellectual clichés. When they begin, they already have a way to classify what they are reading. Chapter one considered some of the patterns that structured how *Leviathan* has been understood. What kind of text did Hobbes write? The kind of commentary that can be given changes depending on how the book is initially identified. Is it scientific or literary? Political or entertaining? Rhetorical or logical? How these dichotomies are woven together varies —does politics entail logic or rhetoric?—but the attitudes do not. The classification system creates an imperative to mould text that do not conform to the ideal. This pattern is prominent in the scientific readings of Hobbes, but it also occurs in the literary readings. The first ignores or reforms the metaphors, the second ignores or reforms the logic. In both cases, an initial fixation on the split between science and metaphor leads to the reduction of one term into the other. Commentary becomes a normalizing activity.

These clichés also have very particular political implications, specifically with the status and nature of knowledge-claims. If there is an absolute distinction between science and literature, then science can be understood as the realm of facts. The expulsion of metaphors entails the expulsion of creativity and, ultimately, of subjectivity. In contrast, by attacking the idea of deductive purity, the literary readings of Hobbes call into question the general

status of objective science. The observer is as much a part of knowledge as is the object known. Hobbes has become part of the conflict around science because he has been made into a prominent origin for the science of politics. The presence or absence of metaphors in Hobbes's text thus indicates what modern political science is or can be.

By calling into question the way that the division between science and metaphor was used to constitute *Leviathan*, it was possible to approach Hobbes's text in a way that was more consistent with his own assumptions. He rejected the use of metaphor in deduction, but only after making associations central to science. He supported science, but a science that is more "medieval" than "modern." Chapter two began by tracing Hobbes's discussion of experience and knowledge, and ended by showing how aspects of science, such as deduction, causality, and prediction, were tied to the assocationist account of general ideas that is basic to his epistemology. Realism, subjectivity, skepticism and deduction are all intertwined in an epistemology that many commentators have not appreciated.

The third chapter demonstrated how the structure of Hobbes's text is in accordance with his account of science. The text became much more coherent. Ideas that had been ignored before, such as the body politic, were shown to be useful, while other ideas that had been discussed before, such as the social contract, were given a new place in the overall structure. *Leviathan* is not about the creation of an absolute sovereign power through a social contract. This is one theme in a more general account of how political groups are created, organized, and maintained.

The fourth chapter extended the analysis of Hobbes's work back to the frontispiece and showed how the picture was a highly complex abbreviation of what Hobbes wrote. The frontispiece is no mere ornament, it is another way to show the same picture.

I grant that there is an apparent contradiction in beginning this thesis by criticizing commentators who make a text uninteresting and then end by

giving my own account of what Hobbes meant. How have I made him any more fascinating than he was before? My defense depends on working out the specific relation between fascination and commentary. While is could be argued that the two are antithetical—that the role of commentary is to make something trivial—this attitude entails that fascinating texts are ones that we can say nothing about. I have adopted a different attitude. Fascination depends on a specific kind of commentary, one that engages with a text. A sense of fascination opens the reader to the possibilities of reading.

I feel the need to return to the beginning of this thesis, and rethink the overly hasty attack on Wittgenstein presented there. It must be realized that "fascination" is equivocal. In one sense it means to be interesting but in another sense it suggests an unseen or seductive control that fastens the person to something. I attacked Wittgenstein in terms of the first meaning, but he used the word in the second. The role of philosophy is to show how language mystifies thought, how it turns the mundane into the trivial, the experienced into the already understood.

Wittgenstein's idea of fascination suggests why commentary is politically relevant. History is not only the register of what has been said, but also of what has been believed. We must realize that Hobbes accepted many of his claims about the commonwealth and that these ideas informed how he participated in his world. Language is connected to a way of life, and is therefore connected to the question of freedom. How do the structures of thought affect the ways we understand the world and ourselves? How do our thoughts about politics affect how we act or fail to act politically? Language is an important point where disciplinary practices condition the character of human identity. Through learning a language, the savage becomes the Christian and the subject becomes the citizen. Perhaps Hobbes was fastened to his language, perhaps he attempted to fasten his readers to his language. The political question that remains is to what extent it is possible to understand and respond to the languages that fascinate us all.

Bibliography

Ashcraft, Richard. "*Leviathan* Triumphant: Thomas Hobbes and the Politics of Wild Men" in Dudley and Novak (eds.) *The Wild Man Within.* University of Pittsburgh Press, 1972, pp. 141-182.

Ball, Terence. "Hobbes' Linguistic Turn". Polity 17 (1985) pp 739 - 760.

Barnes, Jonathan. *The Toils of Scepticism.* Cambridge University Press, 1990.

Baumgold, Deborah. *Hobbes's Political Theory.* Cambridge University Press, 1988.

Bell, David. "What Hobbes Does With Words," *Philosophical Quarterly*, v. 19, 1969, pp. 155 - 158.

Black, Max. *Perplexities.* Cornell University Press: Ithaca, 1990.

Brown, Keith. "The Artist of the *Leviathan* Titlepage" in *The British Library Journal* (Vol 4: 1978).

Browne, Sir Thomas. *The Major Works.* Penguin Books, London, 1977.

Cantalupo, Charles. "By Art is created that great *Leviathan*" *Mid-Hudson Language Studies* #5, 1982, pp 53-62.

Cantalupo, Charles. "Hobbes's Use of Metaphor" in *Restoration* Spring v12 (1) pp 20-31.

Cantalupo, Charles. *A Literary Leviathan: Thomas Hobbes's Masterpiece of Language.* Bucknell University Press: Lewisburg, 1991.

Cohen, Ted. "Metaphor and the Cultivation of Intimacy" in *On Metaphor.* University of Chicago Press: Chicago, 1979. pp 1-10.

Cook, Elizabeth. "Thomas Hobbes and the Far-fetched" in *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes*, Volume 44, 1981.

Corbett, Margery and Ronald Lightbown. *The Comely Frontispiece: The Emblematic Title-Page in England 1550-1660.* Routledge: London, 1979.

De Man, Paul. *Allegories of Reading.* Yale University Press: New Haven, 1979.

De Man, Paul. "The Epistemology of Metaphor" in *On Metaphor*. University of Chicago Press: Chicago, 1979. pp 11-28.

Derrida, Jacques. "White Mythology" in *Margins of Philosophy*. University of Chicago Press: Chicago, 1982.

Di Censo, James. *Hermeneutics and the Disclosure of Truth*. University Press of Virginia: Charlottesville, 1990.

Di Stefano, Christine. *Configurations of Masculinity: A Feminist Perspective on Modern Political Theory*. Cornell University Press: Ithaca, 1991.

Eco, Umberto. *Semiotics and the Philosophy of Language*. Indiana University Press: Bloomington, 1986.

Engel, S. Morris. "Analogy and Equivocation in Hobbes" in *Philosophy* 37 (1962, pp. 326-335.

Foucault, Michel. "The Discourse on Language" in *The Archaeology of Knowledge*. Vintage: New York, 1972

Foucault, Michel. *The Order of Things*. Random House: New York, 1973.

Foucault, Michel. "My Body, This Paper, This Fire." *Oxford Literary Review* 4, 1979, pp. 5-28.

Goldsmith, M.M. *Hobbes's Science of Politics*. Columbia University Press: New York, 1966

Greenblatt, Stephen. *Learning to Curse: Essays in Early Modern Culture*. Routledge: New York, 1990.

Greenblatt, Stephen. *Renaissance Self-Fashioning: From More to Shakespeare*. University of Chicago Press: Chicago, 1984.

Haimon, John. "Dictionaries and Encyclopedias" in *Lingua* 50 (1980), pp. 329-357.

Hale, David George. *The Body Politic: A Political Metaphor in Renaissance English Literature*. Mouton: The Hague, 1971.

Hampton, Jean. *Hobbes and the Social Contract Tradition*. Cambridge University Press: Cambridge, 1986.

Hobbes, Thomas. *Behemoth* Stephen Holmes (ed.) University of Chicago Press: Chicago, 1990.

Hobbes, Thomas. *De Corpore*in Molesowrth, Sir W. (ed.),*The English Works of Thomas Hobbes*, vol. 1., London, 1939-45.

Hobbes, Thomas. *Leviathan*. Penguin Books: London, 1988.

Hobbes, Thomas. *Man and Citizen* Bernard Gert (ed.). Anchor: New York, 1972.

Johnston, David. *The Rhetoric of Leviathan: Thomas Hobbes and the Politics of Cultural Transformation*. Princeton University Press: Princeton, 1986.

Lakoff, George and Johnson, Mark. *Metaphors We Live By*. University of Chicago: 1980.

Land, Stephen. *The Philosophy of Language in Britain: Major Theories from Hobbes to Thomas Reid*. AMS Press: New York, 1986.

Lang, Berel. *The Anatomy of Philosophical Style*. Basil Blackwell: London, 1990.

Lovejoy, Arther. *The Great Chain of Being*. Harvard University Press: Cambridge, 1964

Mace, George. "An Abuse of Words" in *Western Political Quarterly* 20 (1967), pp. 639-644.

Martin, R. M. "On the Semantics of Hobbes" in *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research* 14 (1953), pp. 205-211.

Milton, John. *Areopagitica and Of Education*. Appleton-Century-Crofts: New York, 1951.

Nietzsche, Friedrich. *Beyond Good and Evil*. Vintage Books: New York, 1966.

Oakeshott, Michael. *Hobbes on Civil Association*. Oxford-Basil Blackwell, 1975.

Ogilby, John. *The Fables of Æsop Paraphras'd in Verse*. University of California Press: Los Angeles, 1965.

O'Neill, John. *Five Bodies: The Human Shape of Modern Society*. Cornell University Press: Ithaca, 1985.

Parry, Geraint. "Performative Utterances and Obligation in Hobbes," *Philosophical Quarterly*, v. 17. 1969, pp. 246 - 252.

Patterson, Annabel. *Fables of Power: Aesopian Writing and Political History*. Duke University Press: Durham, 1991.

Peck, Linda Levy. *Court Patronage and Corruption in Early Stuart England*. Unwin Hyman: Boston, 1990.

Pye, Christopher. "The Sovereign, the Theater, and the Kingdome of Darknesse: Hobbes and the Spectacle of Power." in *Representing the English Renaissance*, Stephen Greenblatt (ed.), University of California Press: Berkeley, 1988.

Richards, I. A. *The Philosophy of Rhetoric*. Oxford University Press: New York, 1965.

Ricoeur, Paul. *Hermeneutics and the Human Sciences*. Cambridge University Press: Cambridge, 1988.

Ricoeur, Paul. *The Rule of Metaphor*. University of Toronto Press, 1987.

Rugow, Arnold. *Thomas Hobbes: radical in the service of reaction*. W.W. Norton: New York, 1986.

Sacksteder, William. "Some ways of Doing Language Philosophy: Nominalism, Hobbes, and the Linguistic Turn" in *Review of Metaphysics*, 34, March 1981, pp 459 - 485.

Sacks, Sheldon (ed.). *On Metaphor*. University of Chicago Press: Chicago, 1979.

Selden, Raman. "Hobbes and Late Metaphysical Poetry" in *Journal of the History of Ideas*, 35, 1974, pp. 197 - 210.

Shapin, Steven and Simon Schaffer. *Leviathan and the Air-Pump*. Princeton University Press, 1985.

Shapiro, Gary. "Reading and Writing in the Text of Hobbes's *Leviathan*" in *Journal of the History of Philosophy*, 18, 1980, pp. 147 - 158.

Shulman, George. "Hobbes, Puritans, and Promethean Politics" in *Political Theory*, Vol. 16 No. 3. August 1988 , pp. 426-443.

Shulman, George. "Metaphor and Modernization in the Political Thought of Thomas Hobbes" in *Political Theory*, Vol. 17, No. 3. Aug. 1989, pp. 392-416

Skinner, Quentin. "Hobbes's *Leviathan*" in *Historical Journal* 7, 1964, pp. 321-333.

Skinner, Quentin. "Meaning and Understanding in the History of Ideas" in *Quentin Skinner and His Critics* .

Sorell, Tom. *Hobbes*. Routledge & Kegan Paul: London, 1986.

Springborg, Patricia. "*Leviathan*, The Christian Commonwealth Incorporated" in *Political Studies*, Vol. XXIV, No. 2, pp. 171-183.

Taylor, A.E. *Thomas Hobbes*. Archibald Constable & Co: London, 1908.

Tuck, Richard. *Hobbes*. Oxford University Press: Oxford, 1989.

Tuck, Richard. "The Christian Atheism of Thomas Hobbes." Unpublished.

Watkins, J. W. N. *Hobbes's System of Ideas*. Hutchinson Univesity Library: London, 1973.

White, Hayden. "The Forms of Wildness: Archaeology of an Idea" in Dudley and Novak (eds.) *The Wild Man Within*. University of Pittsburgh Press, 1972, pp. 141-182.

Wittgenstein, Ludwig. *The Blue and Brown Books*. Harper & Row: New York, 1958.

Wittgenstein, Ludwig. *On Certainty*. Basil Blackwell: Oxford, 1969.

Wittgenstein, Ludwig. *The Philosophical Investigations*. Basil Blackwell: Oxford, 1986.

Wolin, Sheldon. *Politics and Vision: Continuity and Innovation in Western Political Thought*. Little Brown: Boston, 1960.

Vita

Surname:	Richardson	Given Names:	Brian William
Place of Birth:	Victoria, B.C., Canada	Date of Birth:	March 11th, 1966

Educational Institutions Attended:

University of Victoria 1984 - 1989 (undergraduate)
University of Victoria 1989 - 1992 (graduate)

Degrees Awarded

B.A. (Honours Political Science)	University of Victoria, 1989
B.A. (Honours Philosophy)	University of Victoria, 1989

Honours and Awards:

University of Victoria Fellowship	1989 - 1991

Partial Copyright License

I hereby grant the right to lend my thesis (or dissertation) to users of the University of Victoria Library, and to make single copies only for such users or in response to a request from the Library of any other university, or similar institution, on its behalf or for one of its users. I further agree that permission for extensive copying of this thesis for scholarly purposes may be granted by me or a member of the University designated by me. It is understood that copying or publication of this thesis for financial gain shall not be allowed without my written permission.

Title of Thesis: Webs of Association: the Textual Construction of a Commonwealth in Thomas Hobbes's *Leviathan*

Author [redacted]

BRIAN RICHARDSON

September 23rd, 1992