

COSMOLOGY without HEADACHES

(Lecture Series)

(compiling, transcribing, researching, editing always in progress)

LECTURE XVI: Thomas Hobbes & The Beast/Robot Who Makes Deals

Before we take on the physical science of Newton, let us notice the first glimmer of social science through the ideas of Thomas Hobbes:

The assigned reading, Lawrence Bern's essay on Hobbes, may seem to have nothing to add to mathematics or astronomy or to cosmological lore in general. With Hobbes, however, we have the prime example of new and important thinking that is related to the new cosmology as represented by the new physics.

Famous for his political thought, as most notably expounded in his *LEVIATHAN*,

Thomas Hobbes [1588-1679]

Thomas Hobbes was deeply influenced by Machiavelli's works, *Prince & Discourses*, (particularly by the concept of man as imperfectible—not a would-be god, or even a fallen angel, but a beast with a brain—and thus incapable of utopia) and equally moved by Thucydides, whose *Peloponnesian War* he translated into English, and with whom he agreed that history ought to be instructional as to human behavior—or indoctrinational—and particularly as a warning against the dangers inherent in democracy. Then, much later, he was struck by Euclid, whose *Elements* brought about Hobbes' understanding of the world as geometry, which Hobbes' contemporary, John Aubrey, tells us



...happened accidentally. Being in a gentleman's library Euclid's *Elements* lay open and 'twas the forty-seventh proposition in the first book. He read the proposition. 'By G,' said he, 'this is impossible!' So he reads the demonstration of it, which referred him back to such a proof; which referred him back to another, which he also read. Et sic deinceps, that at last he was demonstratively convinced of that truth. This made him in love with geometry.

[A BRIEF LIFE OF THOMAS HOBBS, 1588-1679

http://oregonstate.edu/instrct/phl302/texts/hobbes/hobbes_life.html]

He was also affected by Francis Bacon (at that time Lord Chancellor Bacon) whom he knew personally. Thus Hobbes came to science and to accept completely the world-as-mechanism hypothesis, gaining him many accusations of heresy.

He began to see the real world as only body and motion, agreeing with the more advancing mechanistic science of his time. Our sense of the world, he explained, was due merely to the impact of objects on our senses, which was then transferred to the brain where the motion was recorded or ‘felt.’ External objects, which we apprehend either directly or by means of a medium such as air or the ether, impart movement to the sense organ, “which pressure, by the mediation of the nerves, and other strings and membranes of the body, continues inwards to the brain and heart, causeth there a resistance, or counterpressure, or endeavour of the heart to deliver itself, which endeavour, because outward, seemeth to be some matter without” [*De Corpore*].

So the heart’s endeavor is what makes or allows us to interpret reality as outside or apart from us. But this activity does not stop at merely recording sense impressions. It proceeds to actions on the part of the perceiver. So our actions, which have an impact on the world that has impacted us, are nothing more than *reactions* in turn to the movements induced by the external motions—an early foretaste of the Pablovian stimulus-response ‘mechanism’ of late 19th century physiology. Here Hobbes foretells an important element in the later development of the behavioral sciences. Thus it has been traditionally assumed and taught by many that Hobbes’ political philosophy was born of mechanistic science and that Hobbes was a strict materialist.

Hobbes saw humans not as robots incapable of self-motivation but as natural animals, nonetheless mechanistic, whose behavior is based on passion. This starting from scratch, as it were, is due to the influence of geometry: beginning with the most simple and obvious and proceeding up the ladder of complexity using only the lessons learned or ‘axioms proven’ on the preceding levels. How passion is first constituted is not clearly explained, but it seems natural in both animals and humans, and the primary passion is fear. Even fear *per se*, he thinks, is too broad a base. Hobbes narrows it to fear of death, specifically, *fear of violent death*, especially at the hands of other humans.

From passion, in the case of humans, apparently comes reasoning: at least the natural ability to calculate is utilized prudentially in subduing passion, particularly the ultimate passion, fear of violent death, by initiating behavior conducive to self-preservation. The passions, he holds, are natural, and only if nature is strictly mechanical, and the passions are thus physically motivated (i.e., brought about by the overall motion of the physical cosmos), can they be understood scientifically. That Hobbes actually understood it in that way is not so clear in his writing; at least he seems to have made no effort to establish exactly how that works. Of course it may have been merely an assumption based on his thoroughgoing materialism that seemed to him as something like an axiom of Euclid; an obvious truth. Or maybe (as we will see with Newton and gravity) Hobbes did not feel the need to ‘explain’ how the passions actually work. His job as a political scientist was merely to investigate the fact of their effect on human behavior in connection with the genesis of civil society and the development of politics.

Since Hobbes proclaims passion as natural, fear must be natural. It is from this that Hobbes derives the *natural right* of self-defense. But the right of each person to exercise the rights that accrue from these unavoidable passions extends beyond mere self-defense. Since each person’s conscience is the final arbiter of what is ‘right’ in the pre-civil world, whatever one sees as necessary to his survival is, philosophically, allowed. But one can twist just about any situation into a threat, somehow, to his or her existence. Since there is no general morality, only individual conscience—meaning there is no sin;

there is no crime—every action is defensible morally in the pre-civil or ‘natural’ condition. *There is no justice, in fact, until there is civil law*, which requires civil society. The development of reason leads past momentary acts of self-protection to an unending drive for power: the need to control all others based on this fear of a possible violent death at their hands. This natural right extends even to the pre-emptive killing of others (not ‘murder,’ as murder requires that there be anti-killing civil laws to be broken).

To this point, humans are no different than other innocent animals, except in superior cleverness reaching to reasoning. There are two major elements brought into play by means of reason, which seem to mark humans as separate from all other animals:

(1) *Infinite appetite*. While all animals share the passion of appetite, all animals other than humans have temporarily satiable appetites. For Hobbes, says Leo Strauss:

The human appetite is essentially distinguished from animal appetite in that the latter is nothing but reaction to external impression, and, therefore, the animal desires only finite objects as such, while man spontaneously desires infinitely.

[THE POLITICAL PHILOSOPHY OF HOBBS: *Its Basis and Its Genesis*; Elsa M. Sinclair, Trans.; Phoenix Books (Univ. of Chicago), 1936, p.10]

Hobbes himself advises:

...the cause of this, is not always that a man hopes for a more intensive delight, than he has already attained to; or that he cannot be content with a moderate power: but because he cannot assure the power and the means to live well, which he hath present, without the acquisition of more.

[From LEVIATHAN, Ch.II, as quoted in Ibid.]

Though it springs quite naturally, Hobbes believes, from the growth of rationality in humans, it leads to an irrational excess of power-grabbing, beyond the reasonable or moderate or sufficient degree ‘allowable’ by virtue of our natural striving in accordance with the fear factor. Humans, it seems, once fear has been conquered, come to enjoy gaining superfluous riches and mastery over others, which they then attempt to increase simply for the sake of pleasure rather than out of fear—in other words:

(2) *Vanity*. This, too, it seems is natural, in moderation, and rises from the need of recognition from other humans: the desire for respect. But it leads to interaction on a deeper level, including imposition to some degree of the self upon the other and the desire for validation of one’s superiority. Thus, more than a greater sense of security, one also gains a sense of pride, not only by the admiration but by the submission of the other. The natural and universal need to secure power thus generates conflict. In a sense, Hobbes has suggested a natural morality by this recognition of a boundary (however difficult it may be to establish with any accuracy) between self-preservation and self-gratification. We have here an imposition, perhaps unwittingly, of a sense of fairness: a spark of justice against the icy coldness presented by Hobbes’ state of nature.

Still Hobbes proclaims the *state of nature is a state of war*—everyone against all others. The only morality derived from this condition—from nature—is the right to do anything one deems necessary for one’s own protection. There is no justice, here, beyond what might occur to each individual as to what actions will give him advantage; primarily to ‘prevent his death.’ Hobbes prefers to say it negatively rather than ‘preserve his life,’ reminding us that our ultimate motivation is based not on desire, which sometimes could be positive, but upon fear. Respect and what might pass for honor in this ‘state of nature’ is an outgrowth of that fear and results only from an unending series of victories.

Such a pre-social condition would surely lend itself to increasing the sense of insecurity rather than repressing it. Conflict would be unavoidable, and when faced with violent death in battle, to avoid death reason would dictate submission of the weaker party in exchange for the victor granting to the loser the right to continue his life as a slave. Here we have *natural basis number two* for sovereignty and civil order: the master/slave relationship. *Natural basis number one*, Hobbes assumed, is the parental relationship growing into the ‘patriarchal’ relationship, its fullest manifestation perhaps being a large tribe. The latter serves as a suggestion, perhaps; a guide for *the artificial basis* of civil society: a *rational* agreement based on experience of many internecine battles and continual disruption and constant fear, a covenant called the **social contract**. This amounts to the submission of *all* parties, in essence, to fear, and includes consensus concerning the character and/or person of a newly invented sovereign power.

Here Hobbes makes his most significant break from Aristotle, who he says was ‘the worst teacher that ever was’ [from Aubrey: BRIEF LIVES; as quoted in Strauss, *Ibid.*, p.35]. Aristotle held that man is the ‘political animal,’ i.e., politics is *natural*: as if instructions for civil society and the polis might be contained somehow in human genetic material.

For Hobbes, as we have seen, there was, indeed, a natural way to a limited society: the patriarchal tribe. But tribalism did not lead to the state—merely to a somewhat more controlled sort of barbarism. The state had to be invented. It is thus seen as an *artificial* construct resulting from a rational agreement of its members. Thus it has democratic origins, and herein lies the major impetus for our concept of government by the consent of the governed and equality under the law. It is a strategy for ending or avoiding the state of nature. Thus all law and all morality and all the might of civil power is a human construct, a work of art; not natural, but a reaction *against* nature and the conditions that engendered and maintained the universal primal fear of a violent death. So humanity is pitted against nature (“red in tooth and claw”) by reason. Politics is the means of organizing an army of citizens and establishing leadership, and science—at least the technological fruit of science—becomes the major weapon in that battle.

Furthermore, we find the foundation of political egalitarianism in Hobbes, for in nature all humans were equal, in that they were all driven by the same passion: their natural fear of death, so they all share the natural right to self-preservation: the foundation of civilization (therefore they have an equal right to kill each other). Thus they have an equal stake in any covenant established with the intention of terminating the state of nature. Since humans plainly do not possess equal ability or enjoy identical fortune, once they are joined as artificial citizens of the state that natural equality is virtually lost along with natural freedom.

For Hobbes it is a case of exchanging complete *freedom to*—to do what ever they will within the obvious restrictions of an absolutely primitive and savage world—for *freedom from*—from their continual fear of violent death, whereby they might thrive in a politically controlled and thus relatively stable and secure environment. Theoretically, they were totally free in the state of nature, but realistically the choices were minimal and they were, in effect, slaves to sheer passion prior to the birth of reason. Under the sovereign they might be seen as completely bound, yet only thus are they actually able to begin to make progress toward both individual and social potential. Only under government can civil virtues sprout, justice develop, trust and loyalty commence, commerce grow, and honor ensue—respect based on ability and honesty instead of fear.

On the other hand, now that there are laws there can be law breakers: criminals will have to be punished for their failure to live in accord with the covenant, especially because, if fear is the primary motivating factor, fear of the law must now replace fear of everyone. The worst elements may have to be removed from society by the sovereign in the effort to preserve the stability of the whole. All that the citizens (even criminals) retain from their former condition of each against all is their natural right to self-defense, which amounts, in the worst case scenario, to the right to try to kill the executioner and escape. Only in that do they remain equals and natural entities.

The political covenant is necessarily simple: the establishment of a sovereign power. To paraphrase someone's famous comparison: 'the purposeful substituting of one great public criminal for a whole countryside full of unruly thieves and cut-throats.' "In Hobbes's final theory of sovereignty," Strauss tells us,

...the involuntary as well as the voluntary nature of subjection is more systematically reconciled: men—the individuals, not the fathers—at the founding of the artificial State delegate the highest power to a man or an assembly from mutual fear, the fear of violent death, and fear, in itself compulsive, is consistent with freedom. In other words, they voluntarily replace compulsive mutual fear by the again compulsive fear of a neutral third power, the government, and thus they substitute for an immeasurable, endless, and inevitable danger—the danger threatened by an enemy—a measurable, limited, and avoidable danger—the danger which threatens only the law-breakers from the courts of law.

[THE POLITICAL PHILOSOPHY OF THOMAS HOBBS, p.67]

Hobbes does not entertain the possibility that laws might be one day be made that criminalize practically every citizen's behavior, but he does say that the sovereign is not, itself, a social contractor (Having been invented by the contract, the sovereign is a result rather than a participant.) and thus is not subjected to the laws it makes, so it can do anything it pleases. However that may be, by reducing their fear to fearing one invincible lion (that can eat only one or a few at-a-time), rather than being surrounded by innumerable and unpredictable jackals, citizens can concentrate on other than their immediate self-defense—like agriculture, manufacturing, trade, the arts: the fruits of civilization. So a stable society is the primary aim, even if it must be a despotic one. But are there really no controls on the sovereign?

In a sense, there are none. The primary law is to obey the sovereign. That is the essence of the social compact. While the sovereign's duty is to the security and stability of the whole society, how he accomplishes that is strictly up to him or her—or them, should a committee happen to be sovereign. Hobbes has in essence created an artificial political person. 'He' may be completely self-motivated and exploit 'his' subjects. After all, as much as anyone else, 'he' (even if the office is an artificial person, the real human administrator) is subject to natural passions. 'His' will, according to the agreement (or what might be considered the constitution), contractually may represent the will of all, but 'he' is still bound by natural law (which, here, depends on Hobbes' own version of logic). While Hobbes sees reason as a servant of the passions, reason is used primarily to find the best and quickest route to their satiation, and so we cannot entirely ignore or overcome them, yet the best route is not necessarily the quickest. In serving these passions, one might re-prioritize them (except of course for avoidance of death) in such manner as to ultimately gain the greatest overall satisfaction for the most passions.

Still, fear of death remains always the primary passion. Security thus must be established. The best security is a civil society. The greater the control over that society, and the greater protection from outside enemies, the greater security and stability is enjoyed. Control is only effected by a strong sovereign. The maximization of the sovereign's health and strength depends on the health and strength of the state, which is only as strong as its constituents, the people. So, for its own good, the head must do what will be best for the body and limbs. Even if he is motivated entirely by vanity, to rise to the true pinnacle of power and glory he must lift the society with him. Of course there is no perfection to be had. There will be mistakes and recoveries and learning all along the way. If there is no right to revolt in Hobbes' scenario, as the contractors are forever bound by the contract to obey the sovereign as if his will were their own (thus ingratiating the real King—and appealing to royalty everywhere?), in reality, perhaps carelessly (or stupidly), the sovereign might overly oppress the society to the point where (just as in physics) the container explodes and the covenant is effectively broken and ended. But Hobbes maintains that while the sovereign may have acted inappropriately or stupidly, even maliciously, there is no right of revolution and it is the revolutionaries that are legally and morally in the wrong for violating the contract.

On the other hand (to further pick this bone with Hobbes), if the sovereign is not party to the contract, then the covenant is not with 'him.' It is with each and all other citizens. Can they not agree to disobey and replace him? Can contracts not be renegotiated? Can they not be terminated? That, it seems, would be John Locke's view.

So, then, this covenant, the social contract with all its ramifications, is reason-based: a logical construct and essentially an attempt to escape from nature. Is civil society, then, artificial—and the state a kind of machine based on man-as-robot? This is most often portrayed as the basis of political science. But Hobbes, who is usually credited with its invention, seems in some ways confused in that regard. He does proclaim civilization to be artificial based on its having been a creation of reason. Yet he has not shown that reason is unnatural. It is only a power deriving from raised animal intelligence. He also believes the state has arisen by means of reason from pure passion, which he admits is not only natural but is the basis of the right to self-preservation, although it is not exactly a materialistic entity—not a body in space. Passion, reason, and thus political ideas are certainly mental constructs: mind-things. We now seem to be in the same quicksand as Descartes, where the mind and body, thought and substance, do not connect. The political, as with other thought creations, is joined to the material world only by engendering human behavior that will affect the physical world. If thought or reason is artificial, we have here pure political philosophy (investigation of reasoning—which smacks of metaphysics), as very different from natural science (investigation of the interaction of matter). But this is not how Hobbes is usually understood. While he believes himself to be the first political philosopher, he seems to want to be a political scientist, but the term had not yet been invented. "For Hobbes," Lawrence Bern tells us:

...knowledge meant mathematical knowledge, or geometrical knowledge. Hitherto, he wrote, geometry has been the only science that has attained indisputable conclusions. The term geometry was sometimes used by Hobbes to refer to all the mathematical sciences, the study of motion and force, mathematical physics, as well as the study of geometrical figures...In accordance with the synthetic or geometrical mode of proceeding one would begin with the laws of

physics in general, from them deduce the passions, the causes of the behavior of individual men, and from the passions deduce the laws of social and political life. However, it is by means of the analytic method, the analysis of sense experience, that one arrives at adequate definitions of the first principles themselves.

[from Bern's essay on *Thomas Hobbes*
in Strauss & Cropsey; HISTORY OF POLITICAL PHILOSOPHY; Univ. of Chicago, 1987; p.397]

To be scientific in this, and not get caught in the mire of Cartesian duality, he must understand passion as somehow physical. The mental world, then, is some dimly understood corporeality where passion results entirely from motion; a determined 'inner' reaction (inside the brain) to the 'outer' causal action of the material world. So not only passion but reason: thinking itself is part of physics—must be, if sheer atomic motion engenders the passions. But then, in a totally physical cosmos, nothing is artificial because all material things are natural. “René Descartes,” Steven Shapin reminds us, “announced that ‘there is no difference between the machines built by artisans and the diverse bodies that nature alone composes,’ except that the former must necessarily be proportioned in size to the hands of their builders, whereas the machines that produce natural effects may be so small as to be invisible. ‘It is certain,’ Descartes wrote”:

...that there are no rules in mechanics which do not hold good in physics, of which mechanics forms a part or special case (so that all that is artificial is also natural); for it is not less natural for a clock, made of the requisite number of wheels, to indicate the hours, than for a tree which has sprung from this or that seed, to produce a particular fruit.

[THE SCIENTIFIC REVOLUTION; Univ. of Chicago, 1996 (ch.1 p.32)]

If passion is natural (but ‘so small as to be invisible’—as if gaseous), and if it is the root of natural right—the right to avoid violent death particularly—and if that right is the basis of the social contract, it seems the contract, too, must be natural, even determined, so that Aristotle was correct (though not in the sense he had meant it) when he said ‘man is the political animal.’

There Hobbes disagrees and seems to want to say the ability to reason makes all the difference. But reason is only a dividing category between animals and humans. Just because it makes us different from the animals, or even places us above the animals in the natural hierarchy, it does not make us *unnatural*; nor is reason itself unnatural. Therefore civil society, morality and justice and virtue in all their various forms, all are quite natural, differing from place to place only due to local variations in circumstance.

Science, too, then is natural, as everything must be in a completely physical and deterministic universe. But even after all that, let us grant Hobbes his distinction between (1) *the natural world of matter in motion, from which humans attempt to escape*, and (2) *an artificial world of science and politics invented by reason as the means of such escape*. Let us grant it because he seems to have believed he had discovered and established the logic of this difference, and because his ideas (as he prophesied) became widely accepted and formed a powerful force in the development of Western thought—and they still form the basis of our modern understanding of social and political things.

So things that stem from reason or from the mind, for Hobbes and for generations of his followers, are not understood as natural but are in some way ‘created’ or at least invented—brought into being by humans, as opposed to ‘Mother Nature’ or God.

Religion, in fact, is just such a construct. Thus we have Hobbes downplaying religion as artificial—not that God Himself is invented. Even if he believed that, he could not have expressed it overtly in those days. He does venture to say that our view of God and the various ways of worship, as well as the rules by which we live, are the work of humans. Humans seem to need the comfort derived from the idea of an ultimate Sovereign over the material world, having created it for us—and controlling it presumably in our overall best interest, as well as promising us a place beyond it when we have exhausted the natural body that, for better or worse, sustains us in it. Hobbes, though he assures us (despite our unavoidable suspicions) that he is not an atheist, does have his qualms concerning the meaning of scripture, what has actually been revealed thereby, and the various perspectives imparted by priests and preachers. Generally he values religion as a convenient tool of politics, which ought to be kept under the control of the state in the interest of unity and stability. Hobbes version of God must have been something like that of Newton: remote in His infinity and governing the Universe lightly and impersonally, allowing His laws of nature to keep control of things—the attitude that led to Deism, an increasingly popular view among eighteenth century intellectuals, inspiring our own Thomas Jefferson to write a complete Deist version of the Bible in the midst of his myriad political, philosophical, literary, agricultural, architectural, and musical interests.

Hobbes whole argument concerning the artificial character of politics and the state seems spurious. In venturing this opinion I do not profess to be a philosopher, and certainly not a first rate thinker of Hobbes' elevation, but merely a scholar registering an observation. Still, even should I win that point, establishing that 'all is natural' does not really change much. In fact, it could be said that the case for social science is strengthened if mental activity is strictly a natural physical process that engenders an illusion of thought (however absurd that seems). That would make thought or mental activity even more conducive to understanding via scientific methods—or, actually, it merely subjects 'thought' to some method(s) of mathematical formulation, since 'understanding' would simply be another fantastic and misleading 'thought illusion.' We will hear these very arguments later as 'hard' physics (*ala* Isaac Newton) becomes the model for all the other upstart sciences.

Hobbes presents one side of the argument as to whether the mind is simply the receptor of sense perception and reacts strictly in accordance with laws of physics (laws that might be discovered, therefore, by science)—the widely accepted modern (Western) view, or whether, as dominant in ancient philosophy and modernized by Descartes, mental activity is divided into two separate functions—(*one*) the automatic impressions of the senses as above, but with the reaction being modified by evaluating the input through (*two*) a separate and quite different reasoning function. But the reasoning element is more than just a filter or a range of comparisons. This 'thinking' function also formulates its own concepts that have nothing to do with sense impressions: abstract concepts like good and evil, liberty, equality, envisioning future possibilities, even conjuring images of things that cannot or might not yet exist, spirits, abstract mathematical principles, versions of God, and even the mind itself. Mortimer J. Adler suggests [TEN PHILOSOPHICAL MISTAKES; ch.2, *The Intellect and the Senses*; Macmillan, NY, 1985] that we consider the recording and recognition function of the mind as 'sense,' and the evaluating and imagining part as 'intellect.' The followers of Hobbes—mostly English philosophers like John Locke, George Berkeley, David Hume, and other English

empiricists, spent a great deal of time discovering, conniving, and explaining how the abstract world of pure mentality might be reduced to their simplified view of ‘sense,’ so as to make the whole mind susceptible to scientific processing and to the laws of the new physics—Man as machine. The ancient, dualistic view survived for a while on the Continent via Descartes, through Immanuel Kant’s reaction to Hume’s excessive empiricism, and on to Georg Fredrich Hegel. But this attempt to recover the soul has been less successful, it seems, than the machine-like concept of humans. While the Cartesian two-phased version of mind has continued to circulate, it was much weakened by the great success story of classical physics after Newton, to which it was later appended. Although it has been long ignored, the idea of ‘intellect’ as an adjunct to ‘sense’ is still alive and is waiting in the wings for a possible revival. Perhaps, now that Newtonian mechanics has been superseded by quantum mechanics, the time is ripe. But an overview of that process will entertain us later.

To summarize, society (thus politics) becomes artificial, being as it is rational rather than natural. Natural rights (those derived from the state of nature via fear of violent death and the ensuing right to self-defense—and even self-preservation through preventative offense) are suspended by mutual agreement, presumed even among the silent since they have not protested against the compact by leaving the territory of the new state. If they do not leave and still refuse assent, they will be considered enemies of the state and its people. They will be considered as remaining in the ‘state of nature’ [which is a state of war] *vis a vis* the civil society (represented by its sovereign, whose duty it then becomes to rid the society of their anti-civic presence; exclude them; banish them; incarcerate or exterminate them). The purpose of such a contract, according to Hobbes, will best be served by a hereditary Monarchy, thus preventing social turmoil over the continuance of sovereignty at each leader’s natural demise, thus giving the state virtual immortality. The purpose of government, therefore, is security of the citizens as the original contractors. How to go about that business is left up to the sovereign, whether a king, a ruling aristocracy, or a representative parliament organized as a government.

But we ought to ask Hobbes: If, as he claims, it is a natural right to try to avoid death in facing perhaps a hundred or so men, one at a time, over the course of one’s life, over each of which he might prove victorious (at least he would have a chance), why would one put his security in the hands of one man who has at his command a thousand or more men that might attack all at once (making you impotent should the sovereign decide one day that your wealth and all your possessions would better serve the security of society if they were in the hands of the state—or that it might be better for everyone if you did not exist)? Not only that, this security contract between you and everyman is irrevocable. You may try to ignore the state—but at your peril, since you have thus placed yourself back into a state of nature *vis a vis* the rest of society. But now it will be even worse for you, because it is no longer everyone against everyone, but only *you* against *all*, as everyone else is now organized as a social unit.

But then why would anyone want to rebel? Surely, rationally, they wouldn’t. Isn’t civil society, after all, the cure for insecurity? But the medicine may be worse than the disease, for freedom has been lost. Although the argument is mounted as favorable to Hobbes that binding oneself to the artificial state is the only means of freeing oneself from the state of nature, freedom is not exactly promoted by Hobbes, whose civilizing of pre-political barbarians much resembles the domestication of horses or dogs, foregoing

their generally unrewarding freedom for regular meals and a roof. His concept of the state, after all, is the Leviathan, a monster our primeval forebears created to save themselves from the fear of violent death, one which we embrace each day that we give our assent by simply living in that society; by not extricating ourselves by self-imposed exile (which Hobbes himself was forced to do when Cromwell usurped sovereignty in England). But what of despotism? Must we, then, embrace tyranny? Hobbes had no objection to despotism. In fact he seems to have thought highly of it as perhaps the best form of government; necessary to continually see to it that all the social contractors obeyed the conditions to which they agreed—the best chance at stability (until, perhaps, he witnessed the English civil war and the beheading of an English king and found himself running off to France to escape likely recriminations for his loyalist political ruminations).

HAND OUT for supplemental reading, *article by Mathew Cobb:*
READING AND WRITING THE BOOK OF NATURE: JAN SWAMMERDAM (1637-1680) &
DURANTS: AGE OF LOUIS XIV; CH.XXII, SPINOZA; PP.620-657