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## **Rationally deduced Morality in Thomas Hobbes’ “Leviathan”**

Thomas Hobbes wrote his book “Leviathan” as a thesis of political theory. By examining the core of the human behavior, he sets the ground for what he conceives to be a stable, peaceful commonwealth. Through fear, man’s passions and an absolute ruler, Hobbes systematically demonstrates the process in which a self-centered individual develops moral laws that affect the people around him.

Living in a time when morality and ethics were undeniably dictated by the Christian Church, Thomas Hobbes deconstructs the tenets of obligation to dogmatic rules, stating that moral laws achieved through the deliberation and reason of man are superior to those given by dogmatic authorities like that of the Church.

Thomas Hobbes speaks about Reason and Rationality to explain the process that leads man out of the State of Nature and into a cooperative existence within a commonwealth. However, his definition of these terms is vague, and depends on the development of man’s natural thought process.

Before he can analyze the conditions that drive an individual and define his core behavior, Hobbes begins with a set of broad definitions. These definitions aid his analysis of man’s behavior and the forces that drive him. Then, he wishes to use these to construct a theory to produce a functional, moral commonwealth.

Hobbes begins by subdividing the thought processes of man<sup>1</sup>. A single sensation, originating from an “Externall Body, or Object, which presseth the organ proper to each Sense...as in the Tast[e] and Touch ... as in Seeing, Hearing, and Smelling” is the cause for “Sense”<sup>2</sup>. Sense is a natural phenomenon. It is a mechanical function of the human body that begins with external inputs that are transferred by the nerves to the brain<sup>3</sup>. The conclusion an individual produces begins with a single thought and continues in a train of thoughts that have “dependence upon one another.”<sup>4</sup>

In time, thought processing changes as experience and imagination add ‘variables’ into the equations. Hobbes defines the process of reason as mathematical – adding and subtracting individual thoughts brings a chain of conclusions about the action to be done. Man’s past experiences – his memories – are mixed with the inputs he received from his environment, and produce conclusions that are dependent on them<sup>5</sup>.

This process of receiving inputs, processing them and filtering the response using past experience is what society generally call “Understanding”, and is common to both man and beast. Dogs understand when their masters call them, but they are incapable of mentally constructing conditional thoughts that follow one another in logical sequential conclusions. This process is called “Mentall Discourse”<sup>6</sup>, which is the unique trait of man, is the first step towards defining Reason and rationality according to Hobbes’.

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<sup>1</sup> “Concerning the Thoughts of man, I will consider them first Singly, and afterwards in Trayne, or dependence upon one another.” Thomas Hobbes. *Leviathan* (Penguin Classics), “Of Man”, Chapter I, p. 85.

<sup>2</sup> Thomas Hobbes. *Leviathan* (Penguin Classics), “Of Man”, Chapter I, p. 85.

<sup>3</sup> “... by the mediation of Nerves, and other strings, and membranes of the body, continues inwards to the Brain, and Heart... to deliver it self...” Thomas Hobbes. *Leviathan* (Penguin Classics), “Of Man”, Chapter I, p. 85.

<sup>4</sup> Thomas Hobbes. *Leviathan* (Penguin Classics), “Of Man”, Chapter I, p. 85.

<sup>5</sup> “Much memory, or memory of many things, is called Experience.” Thomas Hobbes. *Leviathan* (Penguin Classics), “Of Man”, Chapter II, p. 89.

<sup>6</sup> Thomas Hobbes. *Leviathan* (Penguin Classics), “Of Man”, Chapter III, p. 94.

Man is curious about his surroundings and wishes to understand them. Reason is the action of “conceiv[ing] a sum totall” of causal thoughts<sup>7</sup>. Man groups together consequential propositions to create alternative forms of action. The purpose of reason is not to add and subtract, but to process the propositions in sequential, logical order, and decide upon a conclusion<sup>8</sup>. Reason does not suggest a correct answer or conclusion<sup>9</sup>, and is not by any means any form of justice; it is merely the method by which a person’s mind operates.

By analyzing the natural, most basic, behavior of man, Hobbes hopes to produce conclusions that can be used to create a functional community. His social structure is a direct outcome of his understanding of how the human mind operates in what he sees as a primarily self-centered human.

Hobbesian Reason has two faces: The personal reason that one achieves with his own thoughts (“marking”<sup>10</sup>), and the cooperative reason that men achieve together, by convention (“signifying”<sup>11</sup>). Hobbes goes to great lengths explaining what he means by “signifying” man’s reckoning, thereby using cooperative reason. Creating a convention relies on collaborative definitions of words. For one to communicate successfully with others, he needs to first define basic terms and definitions and use them correctly to convey his intentions.<sup>12</sup>

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<sup>7</sup> “When a man Reasoneth, hee does nothing else but conceive a summe totall... or conceive a Remainder... which... is conceiving the consequence of the names of all the parts, to the name of the whole” Thomas Hobbes. *Leviathan* (Penguin Classics), “Of Man”, Chapter V, p. 110.

<sup>8</sup> “The Use and End of Reason, is not the finding of the summe ... but to begin at these; and proceed from one consequence to another.” Thomas Hobbes. *Leviathan* (Penguin Classics), “Of Man”, Chapter V, p. 110.

<sup>9</sup> “But no one mans Reason, nor the Reason of any number of men, makes the certaintie...” Thomas Hobbes. *Leviathan* (Penguin Classics), “Of Man”, Chapter V, p. 111.

<sup>10</sup> “For Reason, in this sense, is nothing but Reckoning (that is, adding and subtracting) of the consequences of generall names agreed upon, for the marking and signifying of our thoughts; *I say marking them, when we reckon by ourselves;*” Thomas Hobbes. *Leviathan* (Penguin Classics), “Of Man”, Chapter V, p. 111.

<sup>11</sup> “...and signifying, when we demonstrate, or approve our reckonings to other men.” Thomas Hobbes. *Leviathan* (Penguin Classics), “Of Man”, Chapter V, p. 111.

<sup>12</sup> Chapter IV, “Of Speech”, deals primarily with the definition and convention of conversation.

The principle of convention enables Right Reason in a commonwealth. When people disagree about certain conclusions, they “must, by their own accord, set up for right Reason, the Reason of some Arbitrator, or Judge<sup>13</sup>,” otherwise the situation may result in conflict and war. In a communal living there is an external judge or “arbitrator” by which such convention of Right Reason is established. But in the State of Nature, each man stands alone with his own reckonings.

In “The Logic of Leviathan”, David P. Gauthier explains the definition of Right Reason by stating that “right reason must be established by convention...In the absence of society, each man must presumably judge for himself; *his* reason is, for *him*, right reason.”<sup>14</sup> Personal self-centered reason in the State of Nature is the Right Reason of man. In a community, where an external arbitrator is chosen to create these very conformities, Right Reason is defined by the sovereign, the ruler of the community. In the State of Nature, without conventions of Right Reason, all actions that support man’s self-centered desire to live and improving his own state of living are reasonable. The same actions that are considered unreasonable in a commonwealth can be completely reasonable in the State of Nature.

In the State of Nature each individual has specific attributes in which he is better than his neighbors. The apparent inequality between different individuals is but an illusion: the sum of an individual’s talents is equal to the sum of that of his neighbors<sup>15</sup>. This theory of equality, however, does not represent harmony. Men have natural passions that affect their judgment and cause quarrels. This supposed equality of strengths creates conflicts between individuals, and result in a state of instability, where each man lives in constant fear for his life. As a result, Hobbes defines life in the State of Nature as “solitary, poore, nasty, brutish, and short.”<sup>16</sup>

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<sup>13</sup> Thomas Hobbes. *Leviathan* (Penguin Classics), “Of Man”, Chapter V, p. 111.

<sup>14</sup> David P. Gauthier. *The Logic of Leviathan*, p 13.

<sup>15</sup> “*Nature hath made men so equall, in the faculties of body, and mind; as that though there bee found one man sometimes manifestly stronger in body....the difference between man, and man, is not so considerable...*” Thomas Hobbes. *Leviathan* (Penguin Classics), “Of Man”, Chapter XIII, p. 183.

<sup>16</sup> “*...and which is worst of all, continuall feare, and danger of violent death; And the life of man, solitary, poore, nasty, brootish, and short.*” – Hobbes. p 186.

As long as there is a threat to his life, man lives in a State of War<sup>17</sup>, where there is no cooperation. Industry and progress are impossible<sup>18</sup>, because these rely on communication and mutual trust. These features are nonexistent in such a self-centered environment, where man's process of reason is affected by his experience and his passions.

Passions exist naturally in a man, and are completely objective. They are the outcome of the desire to achieve the unattained, and are, therefore, inherently self-centered. They transform a man from a thought-analyzing machine to a being with "voluntary motions"<sup>19</sup>, which are the decisions that "depend always upon a precedent thought of whither, which way, and what"<sup>20</sup>, and define an immediate courses of action.

In the State of Nature, therefore, passions are compliant with the natural reason of the self-centered man. The desire to preserve one's own life and subdue his opponents is the source of quarrel, and his fear of death gives birth to the hope for stability and cessation of violence. This stability best manifests itself through peace, which allows for the ability to deduce precepts for communal Right Reason; these precepts are called the Laws of Nature<sup>21</sup>. This is a process, and it begins with the natural, self centered, state of man. However, passions themselves originate from the self-centered nature of

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<sup>17</sup> "... the nature of War consisteth not in actual fighting; but in the known disposition thereto..." Thomas Hobbes. *Leviathan* (Penguin Classics), "Of Man", Chapter XIII, p. 186.

<sup>18</sup> "In such condition, there is no place for Industry; because the fruit thereof is uncertain: and consequently no Culture of the Earth; no Navigation, nor use of commodities that may be imported by Sea ... no knowledge of the face of the Earth; no account of Time; no Arts; no Letters; no Society; and which is worst of all, continuall feare, and danger of violent death;" – Hobbes. p 186.

<sup>19</sup> "There be in Animals, two sorts of Motions peculiar to them... the other is Animall motion, otherwise called Voluntary motion" Thomas Hobbes. *Leviathan* (Penguin Classics), "Of Man", Chapter VI, p. 118.

<sup>20</sup> Thomas Hobbes. *Leviathan* (Penguin Classics), "Of Man", Chapter VI, p. 118.

<sup>21</sup> "The Passions that encline men to Peace, are Feare of Death; Desire of such things as are necessary to commodious living; and a Hope by their Industry to obtain them... These articles...are called the Lawes of Nature..." – Hobbes. p 188.

man, and as such they seem to be a negative force on this rational process. Specifically, Hobbes defines three passions he refers to as 'quarrel-causing' passions: Competition, Diffidence and Glory.<sup>22</sup>

If the core desire of a man in the State of Nature is to preserve his life, then acting upon these three passions can cause a direct contradiction to that goal. Man, by his will to survive, aspires to avoid conflict with his (naturally 'equal') fellow men. If one is to proceed from this initial premise that a man is inherently self-centered, then these passions require further examination. Competition and Diffidence have a purpose of self preservation, which makes them compliant with man's self-centered rationality. Glory, however, seems to exist solely as a hindering passion and does not follow man's rational thought process that stems for the need to survive.

Glory is affiliated with the reputation of an individual, and seemingly, it contains no rationality for the survival of man – which is the basic premise for rationality in the State of Nature. Mark S. Peacock, writing about "Rationality in Leviathan", claims that the introduction of natural passions contradicts the notion of natural individual rationality in the State of Nature. Peacock writes: "... glory – is unlike the other two causes, independent of (and perhaps detrimental to) the pursuit of self-preservation and hence sits uneasily with the rationality account."<sup>23</sup>

Defining the three quarrel-causing passions, Hobbes says that Glory is "for Reputation"<sup>24</sup> and "for trifles, as a word, a smile, a different opinion, and any other sign of undervalue"<sup>25</sup>. On the surface, it seems that Peacock is correct, and Hobbes' rational step-by-step creation of the natural rationality of man encounters a problem. However, Glory can actually be seen as advantageous to one's self-centered rationality in the State of Nature, when examined under a different light.

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<sup>22</sup> "So that in the nature of man, we find three principall causes of quarrel. First, Competition; Secondly, Diffidence; Thirdly, Glory." – Hobbes. p 185.

<sup>23</sup> Mark S. Peacock. Rationality in Leviathan: Hobbes and his game-theoretic admirers. Euro J. History of Economic Thought 12, no.2 (2005): 7.

<sup>24</sup> Thomas Hobbes. *Leviathan* (Penguin Classics), "Of Man", Chapter XIII, p.185.

<sup>25</sup> Thomas Hobbes. *Leviathan* (Penguin Classics), "Of Man", Chapter XIII, p.185.

When analyzed under the premise of one's self preservation, Glory, is a preemptive strike against man's potential enemies. Individuals, "in the way to their End (which is principally their own conservation, and sometimes their delectation only,)" seek to "destroy, or subdue one another."<sup>26</sup> The desire to subdue one's neighbors and present oneself as more powerful is the key to explain Hobbes' consistent use of rationality, even in the face of man's passions.

Glory is rational, because it preserves a man's life by causing his potential enemies to think twice before attacking the "Glorified" individual. Glory is a part of man's reason because the reputation and value of a man dictates the treatment he receives from his neighbors. Much like the other passions, this too fits the natural rationality of man.

As a rational being, man desires a better existence where the threat to his life is diminished. Analyzing the situation of the State of Nature, man realizes that the only way to achieve a sense of security is to convince other men to abandon their right to kill him. The action of "mutual transferring of right"<sup>27</sup> is called a contract, and is the first step towards a cooperative existence.

A contract is a "voluntary act"<sup>28</sup>. Man is not forced to create a contract; he creates one seeing his own self interest<sup>29</sup>. The fact a contract has some self-serving benefit to the individual is compliant with the self-centered character of man. However, contracts are achieved through mutual agreements – both sides give up certain rights. This raises an important question: What would drive a man to voluntarily lay down his rights, if he is a self-centered being?

Hobbes solves this apparent paradox by introducing the catalyst for a cooperative society: Fear. The same fear that exists in the State of Nature that drives a man to defend himself also drives man to seek standards that will protect him personally. Having a set of moral standards in a society will ensure

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<sup>26</sup> Thomas Hobbes. *Leviathan* (Penguin Classics), "Of Man", Chapter XIII, p.184.

<sup>27</sup> Thomas Hobbes. p 192.

<sup>28</sup> Thomas Hobbes. *Leviathan* (Penguin Classics), "Of Man", Chapter XIV, p.192

<sup>29</sup> "*voluntary act: and of the voluntary acts of every man, the object is some **Good to himself***" Thomas Hobbes. *Leviathan* (Penguin Classics), "Of Man", Chapter XIV, p.192

that his neighbors have a deterrent against killing him. In return, he will not kill them. Morality, therefore, is not deduced out of a sense of some immaterial 'higher good', but rather out of a self-centered desire to produce rules that protect the individual man from others that may harm him.

The question of morality demands further examination of Hobbes' definition of "the good". Examining other works written by Hobbes, Gauthier proposes the following definition: "... for Hobbes, the formal meaning of 'good' is conveyed by the equivalence: 'this is good' = 'this is an object of desire'."<sup>30</sup> The notion of "Good" is not immaterial; it is a direct derivative of man's desires. An action that follows his desire to preserve his own life, therefore, is "good". This definition, then, must characterize Right Reason in both individual and communal existence of man.

The Right of Nature is a man's subjective reasoning for doing whatever he sees fit in order to preserve his life<sup>31</sup>. Reason according to this definition is personal; one man's reason can dictate killing his neighbor to achieve a goal, while another's reason dictates the opposite. As long as a person acts in accordance to his own preservation, he acts in accordance to his Right of Nature.

Gauthier summarizes Hobbes' logical argument in creating the definitions of the Right of Nature and concludes that the Right of Nature means "A has the right to do X" = "A doing X is in accordance with (right) reason"<sup>32</sup>. Right Reason, in this definition, is still man's self-centered reason assuming the lack of an impartial judge. Hobbes is creating a situation where an action that comes from reason fits the intrinsic self-centered nature of man. This serves as a major pillar of his arguments towards building rationally-deduced moral laws.

By defining the Right of Nature using such personal parameters, Hobbes' argument encounters a problem. If reason is personal, or even 'right reason' is personal, and each man has his own individual

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<sup>30</sup> David P. Gauthier. *The Logic of Leviathan*, p 9.

<sup>31</sup> "*The Right of Nature... is the Liberty each man hath, to use his own power... for the preservation of his own Nature...of his own life...of doing any thing, which in his own Judgement, and Reason, hee shall conceive to be the aptest means thereunto.*" Thomas Hobbes. *Leviathan* (Penguin Classics), "Of Man", Chapter XIV, p 189.

<sup>32</sup> David Gauthier. *The Logic of Leviathan*. Chapter 2; "Law of Nature", p 33.



reason, it seems impossible for people to find common ground for cooperation and creation of contract; each sees reasoning in preserving his own interests with no consideration of the other.

Hobbes solves this apparent problem with the definition of the Laws of Nature. Unlike the Right of Nature, which is derived from the self-centered nature of man, the Laws of Nature are precepts of cooperative reason. The Laws of Nature – discovered and supported by reason – are a list of factual requirements, coming from observations about the human nature. Reason becomes a convention.

Hobbes describes the element that makes men fulfill their agreements in a primarily self-centered environment. When a man decides to forgo a certain right he possesses, he automatically puts himself under the obligation not to perform whatever that right allowed him. Obligation is a derivative of contract.<sup>33</sup> This also follows logic; the action of giving away a certain right means that the right is no longer available for practice, and this is what Hobbes refers to as Obligation.

The initial behavior of man leaves no room to consider communal morality. A man has a right to do anything that correlates with his subjective reason. However, as an individual understands he has a potential for a more stable and less hostile environment in a cooperative community, his ability to reason leads him to conclude communal rules to avoid deteriorating to a state of war, where his own life may be in danger.

Man agrees to trust his fellow men by producing covenants. A covenant is an extension of a contract, where one of the contractors “may deliver the Thing contracted for on his part, and leave the other to perform his part at some determinate time after, and in the mean time be trusted”<sup>34</sup>. The transference of rights or goods in a covenant is not immediate, but rather scheduled for a later time, and therefore assumes a leap of trust. Men, however, are not naturally trusting. Hobbes does not directly

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<sup>33</sup> “... when a man hath in either manner abandoned, or granted away his Right; then is he said to be Obligated, or Bound, not to hinder those, whom such Right is granted.” Thomas Hobbes. *Leviathan* (Penguin Classics), “Of Man”, Chapter XIV, p 191.

<sup>34</sup> Thomas Hobbes. *Leviathan* (Penguin Classics), “Of Man”, Chapter XIV, p 193.

deal with this problem, but in his construction of a commonwealth, he introduces another element that enables the process: fear of consequence.

The construction of moral rules seems to be an altruistic act, but man's self centered rationality proves otherwise. If a man is to harm another, he breaks the covenant that protected his own life, and puts himself at risk. The self-centered fear of death leads man towards a cooperative environment, and explains his seemingly altruistic deed of giving up rights.

Man is, therefore, capable of concluding sets of moral rules that protect others, out of self centered rationality. Why, then, is there a need for such a powerful sovereign in Hobbes' commonwealth?

Hobbes states that people "must, by their own accord, set up for right Reason, the Reason of some Arbitrator, or Judge"<sup>35</sup>. The need for an external force that limits man's actions and creates consequences of not following a covenant is essential, out of man's self-centered core behavior and his passions<sup>36</sup>.

Fear is a constant companion of man; it is the source of his passion and the main tool that drives a man away from the State of Nature and into a cooperative commonwealth. The role of the sovereign is to act as the perpetual fear factor in such a cooperative society, and to create the fear of consequence in man. It is replacing the fear of death in the State of Nature.

Not only do the conditions of man allow him to deduce moral laws by the use of Right Reason, but these moral laws are superior to the dogmas given by the church, whose sovereignty over issues of ethics and morality in Hobbes' time was absolute. Throughout "Leviathan", Hobbes equates the

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<sup>35</sup> Thomas Hobbes. *Leviathan* (Penguin Classics), "Of Man", Chapter V, p. 111.

<sup>36</sup> A group of people, banding together, create a commonwealth, which is "*said to be Instituted, when a multitude of men do Agree, and Covenant, every one with every one, that to whatsoever Man, or Assembly of Men, shall be given by the major part, the Right to Present the Person of them all*" (Thomas Hobbes. *Leviathan* (Penguin Classics), "Of Commonwealth", Chapter XVIII, p. 228). The sovereign is the incentive to preserving the laws in the commonwealth despite man's quarrel-causing passions. The commonwealth cooperated to create moral law and designated a sovereign to preserve order. The sovereign receives his power from the rights that were given to him by the citizens. The citizens of the prospective common-wealth agree to transfer certain rights to the sovereign for the purpose of preservation of their lives.

powers, rights and limits of the adherence to the Sovereign and that of God in the natural kingdom. Comparing the two, Hobbes emphasizes the importance of using reason to examine the 'word of God' because of the doubtful legitimacy of the texts. Hobbes is offering a strong alternative to Religious dogma, which states morality results from fear of God's punishment. This alternative is made possible through the fear of consequence from a communal sovereign, legitimately acting for the good of his subjects, out of morality deduced by Right Reason.

Living at a society where the Church had sovereignty over morality and ethics, Thomas Hobbes goes to great lengths to tiptoe on the church's legitimacy on those issues. At a time where the church banned the works of thinkers like Galileo Galilei, threatening his life and banning his ideas, Hobbes attempts to describe his own ideas without overstepping his boundaries and risking the rejection of his theories on grounds of blasphemy.

His message, however subtly written, is obvious and sharp: The church and its bible is not the legitimate source for morality; its grasp on the understanding of God's true message is doubtful, and its methods unjust. Human rationality is the only true method by which morality should be deduced.

The seed of religion exists only in humans<sup>37</sup>, and drives their desire to know the cause of things. Man automatically seems to assume that everything with a beginning must have a cause<sup>38</sup>. This curiosity to know the cause of things (as opposed to the way they work – what Hobbes constitutes is true science), and the observations about cause-and-effect in nature, lead man to develop anxieties and fears about his surroundings and his own future. As some events' causes are hidden from plain sight, and require a deeper investigation, man often takes a position of relinquishing responsibility and placing it on an external source, to avoid blaming himself for evils or misfortunes. This, Hobbes

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<sup>37</sup> "... there is no cause to doubt but that the seed of religion is also onely in Man..." – Thomas Hobbes. *Leviathan* (Penguin Classics), "Of Man", Chapter XII. p 168.

<sup>38</sup> "... upon the sight of any thing that hath a beginning, to think also it had a cause" – Thomas Hobbes. p 169.

suggests, is the birth of religion<sup>39</sup>. He refers to the “Gentile Religions”<sup>40</sup>, but treats Christianity with no less criticism.

Hobbes separates the “creator” God from the biblical “judge” God. He claims that if deducing the cause of things one after the other, the conclusion “that there must be...one First Mover” is inevitable. However, this “First Mover” is a God that acts “without thought of their [man] fortune”.<sup>41</sup>

Hobbes raises a significant observation about the power of the sovereign. He states that a sovereign without power is immaterial<sup>42</sup> and therefore ineffective. A sovereign operates by the power given to him by the citizens. The citizens avoid breaking covenants out of fear of his powerful consequences.<sup>43</sup>

The laws of God need to be known by all, much the same way as the laws of a commonwealth need to be known by its citizens<sup>44</sup>. Ignorance of laws should be avoided, to prevent people from acting against the Sovereignty or to follow rules that are against God’s true will. In nature, God is the sovereign, and Hobbes’ comparison between a commonwealth sovereign and God points to the method which to examine moral laws.

First, it is necessary to explore the limits of a sovereign. In a commonwealth the Sovereign is absolute and acts by his given power. The citizen has no right to disobey the laws in general, and Hobbes gives specific instances of when such disobedience is allowed. The absolute Sovereign

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<sup>39</sup> “...therefore when there is nothing to be seen, there is nothing to accus,...but some Power, or Agent invisible... the Gods were first created by human feare...” – Thomas Hobbes. p 170.

<sup>40</sup> “... In which sense perhaps it was, that some of the old Poets said, that the Gods were at first created by humane Feare: which spoken of the Gods, (that is to say, of the many Gods [53] of the Gentiles) is very true.” Thomas Hobbes. *Leviathan* (Penguin Classics), “Of Man”, Chapter XII, p 170

<sup>41</sup> Thomas Hobbes. p 170.

<sup>42</sup> “That a sovereign without a Sovereign Power, is but a word, without substance, and cannot stand: That Subjects owe to Sovereigns, simple Obedience ... I have sufficiently proved ....” Thomas Hobbes. *Leviathan* (Penguin Classics), “Of Common-Wealth”, Chapter XXXI, p 395

<sup>43</sup> The difference between God and Religion is further explored in the Chapter 31 of *Leviathan*: “Of The Kingdom of God”.

<sup>44</sup> “There wants onely, for the entire knowledge of Civill duty, to know what are those Lawes of God. ... To avoid both these Rocks, it is necessary to know what are the Lawes Divine.” Thomas Hobbes. *Leviathan* (Penguin Classics), “Of Common-Wealth”, Chapter XXXI, p 395

deserves absolute obedience by the clauses of the contract. However, the contract may become void – allowing the citizen to disobey a command – if the conduct of the sovereign defies rationality, and acts against the Right of Nature. A sovereign can send his people to war, if the ultimate goal is to achieve peace (honoring the contract by aspiring to preserve the lives of his citizens), but he cannot order an individual to commit murder, or suicide. Such a command is completely against the initial contract by which the sovereign received his power from the transference of right of his citizens, and is therefore void.

A Sovereign, therefore, is an absolute ruler within the limits of the initial contract that brought him his power. A commonwealth is built on the initial structure of contract, a common agreement between people, which sets forth the powers a Sovereign (the external judge and power) will use to enforce the laws. Though a sovereign in a commonwealth is absolute, the citizen of this commonwealth knows that the rules were deduced from his own, personal initial contract that allowed the building of the commonwealth he now lives in. By comparing God to the Sovereign of a commonwealth, Hobbes sets the ground for method that must be used to analyze the validity of God's laws. As the natural Sovereign, God's laws need to follow the same criteria: man needs to know they are built upon reason.

Recognizing that the comparison between the commonwealth sovereign and God is structured, it is now possible to examine the authenticity and value of the dogmatic morality given by the church. Since God gave man his ability to reason, God's laws follow reason undoubtedly. Therefore, the biblical account of God's laws needs to be examined and tested according to reason. Hobbes speaks at

length about the doubtful authenticity of written scripture,<sup>45</sup> and the necessity to doubt “former authors”<sup>46</sup>.

Much like the rationalization of disobeying the sovereign in a commonwealth if he works against the Right of Nature, there is an obligation to examine divine commands. Reason comes directly from God's creation, and would never contradict his word.

Hobbes observes that God is alleged to communicate through one of three ways: Reason, Revelation, and through prophecies of men.<sup>47</sup> Revelation is the “sense supernaturall”<sup>48</sup>, in which God is revealing himself directly. It is impossible to authenticate such revelations, because “God speaketh not in that manner, but to particular persons”<sup>49</sup>, and these unique individuals are scarce and receive these revelations in different manners. The only communications that can be examined by man to judge their authenticity are prophecy and reason. Prophecy requires faith, while reason is independent, and relies on the divinely given rationality. It is, in essence, the only method that is trustworthy for each individual to discover God's intentions. This distinction is the basis of further examination of the reliability of the biblical accounts of God's laws.

In his third part, “Of a Christian Commonwealth”, Hobbes deals with the authenticity of the biblical accounts thoroughly. He claims a prophet is unreliable<sup>50</sup>, even in the eyes of the bible, a fact that casts doubt on prophecies as truly representing God's word. The claim that the rules should be

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<sup>45</sup> “For though there be many things in Gods Word above Reason ... yet there is nothing contrary to it; but when it seemeth so, the fault is either in our unskillfull Interpretation, or erroneous Ratiocination.” Thomas Hobbes. *Leviathan* (Penguin Classics), “Of Common-Wealth”, Chapter XXXII, p 410.

<sup>46</sup> “By this it appears how necessary it is or any man that aspires to true Knowledge, to examine the Definitions of former Authors; and either to correct tem, where they are negligently set down; or to make them himself.” Thomas Hobbes. *Leviathan* (Penguin Classics), “Of Man”, Chapter IV, p 105.

<sup>47</sup> “But God declareth his Lawes three ways; by the Dictates of Natural Reason, by Revelation, and by the Voyce of some man, to whom by the operation of Miracles, he procureth credit with the rest. From hence there ariseth the triple Word of God, Rational, Sensible and Prophetique: to which correspondeth a triple Hearing; Right Reason, Sense Supernaturall, and Faith.” Thomas Hobbes. *Leviathan* (Penguin Classics), “Of Common-Wealth”, Chapter XXXI, p 396.

<sup>48</sup> Thomas Hobbes. *Leviathan* (Penguin Classics), “Of Common-Wealth”, Chapter XXXI, p 396.

<sup>49</sup> Thomas Hobbes. *Leviathan* (Penguin Classics), “Of Common-Wealth”, Chapter XXXI, p 396.

<sup>50</sup> “If one prophet deceives another, what certainty is there of knowing the will of God, by other way that that of Reason?” Thomas Hobbes. *Leviathan* (Penguin Classics), “Of a Christian Commonwealth”, Chapter XXXII, p 412.

obeyed because they are God's word is void, because the authenticity of these laws is unknown.<sup>51</sup> Man has no way of knowing which laws are truly God's and which aren't, other than by deducing them through Reason, which was given to man by God.

Hobbes' criticism on the judgment of the biblical occurrences is extensive. The number of people that support the biblical occurrences is irrelevant, because the amount of supporter is no proof for validity of claims;<sup>52</sup> masses can be wrong. He claims that an individual who falls into blind-faith and "takes up conclusions on the trust of authors", without thinking for himself<sup>53</sup> is acting irrationally, out of belief, and not out of knowledge. Eventually, he takes a further step to completely crush the justification of the authority of the church itself (though he does not mention its name explicitly). He states that a group of individuals who insist on claiming they know better than others, and who insist that everything follow their own reason and no one else's is "as intolerable in the society of men as it is in play after trump is turned, to use for trump on every occasion, that suite whereof they have most in their hand."<sup>54</sup>

Not only do religious leaders contend they know best of all, but they also "play a trump" whenever they wish to, using the holy scriptures and their own interpretations of it. Using this analogy, Hobbes finalizes his argument against this tactic, gracefully walking a thin line in the time where the Church severely punished many that dared suggest such "radical" ideas.

Finally, Hobbes attacks the individual believer. Claiming that those who rely solely on the biblical accounts are fools, who neglect their reason and go directly against nature and the will of God:

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<sup>51</sup> "*But the question is not of obedience to God, but of when, and what God hath said;*" Thomas Hobbes. *Leviathan* (Penguin Classics), "Of a Christian Common-Wealth", Chapter XXXIII, p 415

<sup>52</sup> "... *But no mans Reason, nor the Reason of any one number of men, makes the certaintie; no more than an account is therefore well cast up, because a great many men ave unanimously approved it*" Thomas Hobbes. *Leviathan* (Penguin Classics), "Of Man", Chapter V, p.111

<sup>53</sup> "... *he that takes up conclusions on the trust of Authors, and doth not fetch them from the first Items in every Reckoning, (which are the significations of names settled by definitions), loses his labour; and does not know any thing; but only beleeveeth*" Thomas Hobbes. p.112.

<sup>54</sup> Thomas Hobbes. p.111-112.

“But the captivity of our Understanding, is not meant a Submission of the Intellectual faculty, to the Opinion of any other man;”<sup>55</sup>, and earlier: “But yet they that have no Science, are in better and nobler condition with their naturall Prudence; than men, that by mis-reasoning, or by trusting them that reason wrong, fall upon false and absurd generall rules.”<sup>56</sup>

Hobbes continues to crush the validity of blind faith by defining the difference between reason and faith. “Reason is the pace; Encrease of Science, the way; and the Benefit of man-kind, the end”<sup>57</sup> he states eloquently, putting the emphasis on the betterment of mankind. The holy books are read through metaphors and words that lack proper definition. Reasoning upon these “is wandering amongst innumerable absurdities; and their end, contention, and sedition, or contempt.”<sup>58</sup>

For Hobbes, the lack of doubt is contemptible, and the construction of rules upon metaphors and ambiguous words – of which the bible is written – is senseless. The only way to achieve the truth is through the proper use of reason, built upon the premise of man’s natural state and his basic desires to keep himself alive.

Hobbes uses what he conceives as the basic and most fundamental behavior of man to construct logical path towards rationality and cooperation. Through these, he explains the need and use of morality within a society. Rationality is always glorified, and is used to explain man’s behaviors and a sovereign’s just actions. By setting up the basis for options of disobedience through rationality, Hobbes destroys even the most basic argument that undeniable obedience to God is derived by his power.

By claiming God is the natural sovereign, Hobbes equates the two roles, and sets forth the adherence to God’s rules as driven by rationality as well. And by giving reason an origin of divinity, Hobbes puts forth an alternative to trusting dogmatic laws that may be proven to be false.

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<sup>55</sup> Thomas Hobbes. *Leviathan* (Penguin Classics), “Of a Christian Commonwealth”. Chapter XXXII. p 410.

<sup>56</sup> Thomas Hobbes. *Leviathan* (Penguin Classics), “Of Man”, Chapter V. p 116

<sup>57</sup> Thomas Hobbes. *Leviathan* (Penguin Classics), “Of Man”, Chapter V. p 116

<sup>58</sup> Thomas Hobbes. p 116-117



Logically deducing morality gave Hobbes the basis he needed to construct a functional society, and invalidating the premise of the ultimate truth of biblical laws completed his contention that morality through Reason is superior to morality that is given by external, unreliable, senseless dogmas.

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