**Liberalism and the Prospect of Rational Order in Hobbes’s Political Philosophy**

**And**

**Responses of Oakeshott, Strauss and Voegelin**

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The word “liberalism” has numerous connotations, as do all “isms.” Classical liberalism, emphasizing protection of conscience and individual liberty, property rights and a rule of law, is in tension with welfare-state liberalism emphasizing reduction of unequal outcomes through government directed redistribution in a society still, in principle, committed to individual liberty. We thus engage in continual debates about the proper scope of governmental power, or whether there are limits to that scope.[[1]](#endnote-1) Such conflicts shape political debate in liberal democracies.

Another “ism” of modern times, “rationalism,” expresses high confidence in the capacity of human reason, assisted by empirical methodology, to make sense of our experience, to respond intelligently to our circumstances, and to find solutions to political issues defined as a series of problems which in principle have solutions. Liberalism in the progressive form classically expressed, for example, in John Stuart Mill’s belief in the continually improving society, embraces rationalism.[[2]](#endnote-2)

On the other hand, liberalism also celebrates the extraordinary diversity of hopes and desires human beings express which, coupled with the claim of the right to one’s own opinion, and skepticism about any proposed hierarchy of values, in principle resists nearly all limits on expression of opinions. The liberal tradition has both encouraged the rationalist pursuit of continuous social improvement through various attempts at a science of society, and also the proliferation of opinions which complicate and disrupt that pursuit.

Liberalism emphasizes individual self-enactment with all its open-endedness and uncertainty; rationalism encourages assessing the multiplicity of opinions through the expertise of decision-making elites who claim to possess methods empowering them to make truly rational decisions and to guide individuals in their choices. Observing contemporary politics, one sees the tension between these expressed in dramatic and often troubling ways.

This might chasten extravagant claims for problem-solving without, however, relieving us of the anxiety elicited by the kaleidoscopic character of public opinion. Hobbes recognized these issues: He lived through the English Civil Wars; he witnessed the abolition of the monarchy in England, and its restoration. He lived in the midst of the scientific revolution and the emergence of enlightenment rationalism. He knew Bacon and Descartes; he criticized Aristotle; and he stated boldly that *Leviathan* presented a philosophic understanding of politics superseding Plato’s. He saw, in the wake of the Reformation, the wars of religion and the emergence of commercial society, the broad awakening of individual self-consciousness. In the midst of this turmoil, both intellectual, religious and political, Hobbes expressed confidence in the potential of human reason to learn rational conduct, tempered by sober skepticism given the obstacles posed by the passions to reason’s undistorted use.

*Leviathan* addresses both what we know as liberal individualism and also the quest for a science of society parallel to the science of nature. Hobbes thus anticipated many issues we are familiar with, defending the power of reason while recognizing the constraints the passions impose on the uses of reason. I propose to discuss how these are related in his thought, and how Oakeshott, Strauss and Voegelin evaluated his achievement.

Michael Oakeshott, Leo Strauss and Eric Voegelin examined both liberalism and modern rationalism, and they understood that these are related but not identical. Each offered a distinctive interpretation of Hobbes’s thought; Hobbes’s argument guides their assessment of the liberal tradition and the function of reason. Their interpretations of Hobbes, and his influence in modern political philosophy, promote philosophic dialogue with Hobbes and other past thinkers, contributing to the dialogue in political philosophy in the classic sense. This meant to them analyzing the tension between millennialist optimism about the human capacity to control our destiny, arising in the late Middle Ages and persisting powerfully into our time; and our revulsion at the horrors of the twentieth century arising in the midst of liberalism’s cradle, arousing profound suspicion toward claims of reason’s self-sufficiency.

This finds expression, for instance, in the question whether we can sustain liberal democracy if it is believed to be sustained only by the habit of acceptance of the last few centuries. To take on these issues, Oakeshott, Strauss and Voegelin reflect on the liberal tradition as friends of liberalism and liberal democracy from a philosophic perspective which requires a certain detachment. Proponents of liberalism, not satisfied with such friends, attack these thinkers as “conservative,” “old-fashioned,” “theological,” “reactionary,” and so on. Their doubts about the methodological assumptions of modern rationalism suffer similar criticism; all three question progressivism.

Yet the anxiety about having a ground of meaning, under the influence of relativism and historicism, casts doubt on the status of the liberal tradition and the adequacy of secular reason, implying something is missing. Jurgen Habermas, neither conservative nor reactionary, strikingly expresses this concern in his well-known dialogue in 2004 with then Cardinal Joseph Ratzinger:

Does the free, secularized state exist on the basis of normative presuppositions that it itself cannot guarantee? This question expresses a doubt about whether the democratic constitutional state can renew from its own resources the normative presuppositions of its existence…[[3]](#endnote-3)

For several centuries liberalism has promoted the idea of rights antecedent to government, displacing the primacy of the public realm in favor of the private. Against this it is argued that we must repoliticize our relations, reawakening the political by ideals for the future, an ideological commitment to an imagined and perfected future. This is “political rationalism” or the politicization of reason, seeking not to respond to the world by acknowledging its mystery, but to change the world, demystifying it in the hope of a post-political existence in a purely rational order. At the same time, there is a “religious” implication in this, a disguised and reinvented version of the Augustinian doctrine of the two cities – the “city” we currently have and the “city” which we will bring into being in the future as our insight increases.

Hobbes saw, given the growing sense of individual self-awareness, the possibility of transferring the search for meaning in politics to the private adventure of individual self-development where meaning is found elsewhere than in politics which can be seen as purely instrumental. Hobbes sought to show how individuals, cultivating their private lives, might find greater fulfillment than in pursuing the life of political action or public participation, leaving governance to a sovereign authority to provide the conditions to make interactions of individuals manageable, but without illusions about transforming human nature. He recognized the power of reason but also the limit to reason’s capacity to transform human nature. In this he echoes the classical and Christian philosophers. Of course, his modern successors have often seen him rather as a waystation on the road to a transformation he did not advocate. For Hobbes, rational self-interest remains self-interest, requiring us to recognize that we are selves among other selves.

Hobbes’s critique of religion in Chapter 12 of *Leviathan* points to the famous Chapter 13 on “the natural condition of mankind.” That critique prepares for Hobbes’s description of a science of practice enabling us to understand ourselves better, to put aside anxious curiosity distracted by anticipating and fearing imagined future events, focusing instead on managing our common condition. To come to terms with oneself requires a realistic appraisal of the common features of human nature which the diversity of individual preferences obscures. Desires vary dramatically; reason is common to all. Hobbes describes the “laws of nature” as prudential maxims of conduct which are universally accessible and which will be clear to us when we reflect on the perils of potential conflict always lurking in human relations; the potential for conflict persists because we necessarily begin from our own individual responses to the world; all can see, if they look honestly, that, whether there are or are not final ends or goals, there are no universally agreed-upon final purposes or supernatural ends to direct the practice of those rational maxims. Rational self-interest dictates that we can and should agree on the need of rule-making authority precisely because we cannot agree on what is of highest value. Establishing a rule of law, the primary task of political authority, does not create the means for perfecting the human condition or creating collective understanding (apart from a formal public doctrine), nor need it do so.

We see the natural condition clearly only when we neither any longer think that the concerns of the “old moral philosophers,” nor that resolving disagreements about the meaning of life, are preconditions to understanding our situation and how to bring order to it. Nothing is required that cannot be confirmed in the experience of selves when considering themselves as selves interacting with other selves. Hobbes lays out the “laws of nature” as maxims accessible to individuals that can guide selves interacting with other selves in managing their conduct toward each other; the maxims guide us in the task of managing our desires, not by eliminating them but by pursuing them sensibly.

Hobbes coupled his emphasis on the divisiveness of the passions with the confidence that reason can discover the logic of human interaction which allows for a common understanding which does not require us to abandon our self-understanding. What is discovered is not a single answer to the question of the meaning of life, but instead the possibility that the conduct of the affairs of selves in relation to each other can be managed intelligently and made regular without having to settle questions about the *summum bonum* or *finis ultimus*. He defends the possibility of “self-regulation.”

Yet the “general inclination of all mankind” is the desire for power after power. “And 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 means to live well, which he hath present, without the acquisition of more.”[[4]](#endnote-4) Hobbes intends not to dissolve the mystery of existence but rather to subdue its impact on our interactions with each other, while we are free to continue to inquire into the mystery of life as a private pursuit. One could call this a constrained rationalist response in a world, as Hegel was later to say, where all understand themselves to be free (a restatement, in the wake of the revolutions of the 18th century, of what Hobbes had already declared).

Out of the tension arising in the interactions of selves with other selves emerge the aggregated customs of utterance, or habits of expression, constituting a society, bound together not by a bond of truth, or permanent certitude, but by a compulsion to explore the possibilities proposed by selves to themselves and others, and by the acceptance of some possibilities as more plausible than others. Nothing absolves a society from continual alteration -- making and remaking -- nothing in any proposal that precludes the thought of alternative proposals. To recognize this condition is a remedy for the pridefulness of self-assertion by showing the prudential necessity of self-regulation, of controlling without abandoning, self-assertion. There is permanent tension in each self between the natural person, intelligent but driven by passion, and the civil person which human beings must make themselves into, exhibiting self-restraint, through reasoning correctly about their natural condition. We are, Hobbes said, both the matter to be shaped and the makers of our shape.

Hobbes offers the *Leviathan* as a guide to thinking through these issues carefully and systematically. This is a rationalist expectation which yet accounts for all human beings beginning their interactions with others informed by their own experience of the world. Hobbes thought he had expounded in *Leviathan* the logic of human interaction in such a way that anyone could understand it – a philosophy to be taught in universities and preached from parish pulpits, the success of which would, in the long run, free us from relying on the philosopher who formulated it and thus diminish reliance on specialized knowledge claimed by elites (Hobbes targeted lawyers and bishops among others).

What we say is less than the whole of what we might say. The choice of utterance depends on the “discretion” of the speaker.[[5]](#endnote-5) It is one’s judgment of the appropriate thing to say that propels human discourse, what Hobbes calls the “conversation of mankind.” The sanity of discourse appears not by adhering to a permanent standard of what is to be said, but by the exhibition of steadiness or “direction to some end.”[[6]](#endnote-6) The character of speakers appears in how they direct to some end the flow of possibilities that constitutes their existence, limited by a speaker’s social imagination -- what one’s experience of time and place, and what one understands of the other selves present, seem to permit.

Discourse is prudential. In expressing oneself in the hope of engaging others, one also conceals what seems inappropriate to say here and now. What is not appropriate here and now may not be intrinsically impermissible, for the occasion may arise to voice expressions previously not acceptable. Human beings will differ in the degree to which they feel comfortable with restraints prudence imposes upon the self which wants constantly to show itself. The society of mankind, viewed as an aggregation of voices, a sort of discordant conversation, is a society of beings whose urge to self-assertion is always in danger of overreaching the bounds of prudence. Verbal expression under restraint often thwarts our desires to express ourselves; experience forces us to admit that what is significant for us is not necessarily significant for others. One learns prudently to pursue one’s desires.

And since “continual success in obtaining those things which a man from time to time desireth, that is to say, continual prospering, is that men call *felicity*,”[[7]](#endnote-7) felicity is to be found in the discovery of openings in the conversation and society of mankind where the overflow of the possibilities of the self may safely make their appearance. The danger in the restless search for power after power is that it can become strong enough in some to make them extravagant in their passions, beset with “madness.” Pride can incite rage or fury, the inability to accept that others contradict one’s “vehement opinion of the truth of anything.”[[8]](#endnote-8)

The aggregation of customs of expression is stable just so far as a balance among the voices composing society prevails. Life is complicated; each of us must be what we are, nature makes no two of us alike, and every private wish is born and nourished at the expense of others. Our capacity to speak makes possible expressing what is within, revealing our character. What is common is a convenience, an accommodation, a contrivance to be shored up and patched against the day that things might fall apart. This shows why sovereign authority is logically indispensable, but also what logically limits the exercise of that power to the purposes which make sense to the individuals subscribing to it because it is in their interest to do so.

If self-knowledge makes self-regulation possible, there is no guarantee that it will persist. On the contrary, there is much in life to seduce us away from self-regulation. The flow of desires within, and the temptations without, challenge us. We contend with ourselves, and the achievement of self-regulation is uncertain. On the one hand, one reasonably wants the peace and unity of a civil order composed of enforceable laws, a condition desirable for the security it provides to the self’s continual wish to explore itself, for enjoying the fruits of one’s industry, and even for an intellectual life. On the other hand, one may succumb to that self-assertion which is the madness of the proud, or perhaps to the experience of self-forgetfulness in the “mob” incited by “eloquence.”

This polarity cannot disappear because self-regulation can feel arbitrary, incomplete, unfulfilling, frustrating. Yet it is reasonable that one might learn to find meaning and purpose within oneself, settling for recognition in the form of forbearance from others, personal self-sufficiency, a way of showing that one knows what is proper to oneself, not needing collective reinforcement. One might come to feel that knowing what is proper to oneself is a greater achievement than overpowering others (or submitting to them), since what others may believe is extraneous business that compromises the task of knowing oneself, and overpowering the others does not, logically, confirm what one claims to know. How far we can achieve this outlook is the great experiment of the liberal tradition.

Such individuals accommodate others in order to be left to their own devices. To do this is to become the individual that one potentially is and to embrace individual self-sufficiency. In giving oneself direction, one may find significance that does not depend on confirmation from others, requiring merely that they put up with it.

This is Hobbesian individualism wherein, while respecting the need of public decorum, one’s private thoughts and desires are one’s own business bespeaking a sense of self-sufficiency, and a desire to define oneself for oneself. Of course, this self-understanding does not look for collective salvation in some putative future end-state. Hobbes’s skepticism on this point is reminiscent of Augustinian skepticism about the earthly city. There is a rational science of society for Hobbes, but it is about making the human situation manageable, not about perfecting the human condition. Hobbes’s thought leaves intact the private search for meaning, while discouraging the attempt to justify it by controlling the public realm or demanding affirmation from without. The highest achievement of civil order lies in creating a stable sphere of peace and freedom, values instrumental in safeguarding the pursuit of private ends.

We know the critique that this promotes “acquisitive egotism,” the situation of “alienated man” selfish and claiming rights, along with the contention that “individuality” is largely an illusion since groups, classes and nations are the constituting elements of one’s identity, that all constitutions are crystallizations of power constellations favoring some who strive to “depoliticize” everyone else but themselves, and so on.

II

Oakeshott, Strauss and Voegelin saw the dangers of excessive individualism, but they lived through the perils of twentieth century collectivism and the attacks on liberal democracy. They respond to Hobbes as a philosopher who, though a modern, maintained the ancient idea that thoughtful human beings could investigate seriously how they ought to live. Thus a serious exchange with him on how best to answer that question is possible.

Strauss on Hobbes

Leo Strauss’s work on Hobbes is well known and influential in Hobbes scholarship. The method of investigation for Strauss was to understand a thinker “as he understood himself” primarily through a careful analysis of an author’s texts. Serious criticism of liberalism must respond to the most profound formulations of the concepts which lie at the heart of the historical phenomenon in question. In this case this means that adequate assessment of liberalism requires careful reflection on Hobbes’s writings, leading to a philosophical critique of the philosopher’s thought.

In Strauss’s opinion, “Hobbes achieved the foundation of liberalism.”[[9]](#endnote-9) Thus an adequate assessment of liberalism requires an adequate critique of Hobbes. An adequate critique of Hobbes accepts the possibility that Hobbes might be right. If disputes over answers to the fundamental questions of human existence are inevitable, Strauss accepted that one has to argue for the standard by which one judges the thought of a thinker. In posing alternative philosophical judgments to those of Hobbes one could hope for a larger perspective within which a careful judgment of the modern situation is possible.

For example, in relation to Plato’s *Republic*, Hobbes claimed to have a more elegant solution to the establishment of political order than Plato’s by dispensing with the study of mathematics, but more importantly by dispensing with the “noble lie” through grounding the conviction of the necessity of political order on incontrovertible facts about the human passions observable by reflection to all if they take the trouble to think about it.[[10]](#endnote-10) Aristotle and Hobbes could agree that law is necessary to produce a minimum standard for men to observe, but Aristotle, contrary to Hobbes, pointed to that which is above the political as a means to establish the limits of the political, whereas Hobbes pointed to what lies below the political in the inconquerable self-preserving instinct. “In this respect, Hobbes’s criticism of Aristotle can be defended, although at the same time a very difficult question is raised as to which reservation against the law would in the long run promote the more overt or the more beneficial resistance to the law.”[[11]](#endnote-11)

Reflection of this sort may lead one to develop an inclination to one or the other alternative. By approaching the fundamental issues in this way, Strauss sought to revivify the ancient notion that politics is pre-eminently a realm of opinions about how we ought to live and about what purposes, aims, goals or interests we may reasonably pursue. Hobbes is a powerful voice in elucidating what is to be thought about in thinking seriously about politics. Hobbes’s response to the fundamental political questions preserves one element of the inquiries of classical political philosophy. He pursued a philosophic understanding of politics which cannot be reduced merely to debate over policy preferences. For Strauss, “Hobbes was indebted to tradition for a single, but momentous, idea: he accepted on trust the view that political philosophy or political science is possible or necessary.”[[12]](#endnote-12) Hobbes thus shared an element of classical rationalism to be distinguished from modern rationalism.

Hobbes is not, for Strauss, merely the prelude to imaginative constructions of progressive projects for the future; rather, it is possible to reconsider standards of moral judgment, an inquiry Hobbes accepted, but also to question Hobbes’s departure from ancient standards of natural right for a different standard (natural right as liberty rather than duty). Hobbes identified political philosophy “with a particular tradition [that] the noble and the just are fundamentally distinguished from the pleasant and are by nature preferable to it…there is a natural right that is wholly independent of any human compact or convention; or, there is a best political order which is best because it is according to nature. He identifies traditional political philosophy with the quest for the best regime.”[[13]](#endnote-13) And “By tacitly identifying political philosophy with the idealistic tradition, Hobbes expresses, then, his tacit agreement with the idealistic view of the function or the scope of political philosophy…he agrees with the Socratic tradition in holding the view that political philosophy is concerned with natural right…Hobbes rejects the idealistic tradition on the basis of a fundamental agreement with it”[[14]](#endnote-14) What Strauss means by this is made clear in his assessment of how the liberal tradition has evolved:

At the bottom of the passionate rejection of all ‘absolutes,’ [there is a] particular interpretation of natural right according to which the one thing needful is respect for diversity or individuality…When liberals became impatient of the absolute limits to diversity or individuality that are imposed even by the most liberal version of natural right, they had to make a choice between natural right and the uninhibited cultivation of individuality. They chose the latter…But it is practically impossible to leave it at the equality of all preferences or choices.[[15]](#endnote-15)

Strauss in other contexts drew a sharp contrast between those loyal to ancient wisdom seeking restoration against decline -- and the “progressive man” who seeks liberation:

Progressive man…looks back to a most imperfect beginning…Progressive man does not feel that he has lost something of great, not to say infinite, importance; he has lost only his chains…The life which understands itself as a life of loyalty or faithfulness appears to him as backward, as being under the spell of old prejudices…To the polarity faithfulness-rebellion, he opposes the polarity prejudice-freedom.[[16]](#endnote-16)

The tension Strauss describes makes politics seem a peculiarly unsatisfying activity; even if politics is unavoidably necessary, it seems irredeemably flawed. On the other hand, politics is the activity in which different kinds of people, living in close contact with each other, seek to make themselves creditable to each other, to associate. In this need for mutuality is an important element of our humanity. We can be both repulsed by, and attracted to, the world of politics, both optimistic and pessimistic.

What is important is not a hoped-for perfection that has never yet been achieved anywhere in the world; what is important is to draw out of this confusing experience the elements of an understanding of what it means to be a human being, and what is best for such a being; granted that we enjoy natural liberty, what then is the right order for such naturally free beings? In the political world where what was thought false yesterday may be thought true today and false again tomorrow, it is not surprising to feel baffled in trying to establish an enclave of stability and permanence. It is hard to avoid the thought that everything is either coming into being and not yet intelligible, or is intelligible only as it is exhausting its potential, the anxiety of time-bound beings. The multiplicity of attitudes, sects, judgments, opinions, laws and customs might teach us some moderation about our own judgments, neither to despise nor overrate them. It does not follow, however, that, because there is a dizzying variety of opinions, there are no better or worse opinions. On the contrary, the fact of this variety is the starting point of reflection in quest of the best or the right opinions, discovering really worthwhile opinions, distinguishing the sound from the unsound, the excellent from the base.

It is a modern prejudice that the basis for such discriminations is hopelessly absent (alongside and in tension with the view that we must become more “scientific”). To accept uncritically that assumption is already to have made up one’s mind on the most important issue. For Strauss, the serious person will note the magnitude of the consequences that follow from such a conclusion: If we cannot refer to values pertaining to all of us, we will become suspicious about each other and ourselves.

We may say there is no “right” that transcends time and place, that all is conventional. Yet, at the same time, we still speak of unjust laws or decisions. Many people today hold the view that standards are only operative ideals emergent in and shaped by our culture; but all societies have their ideals, cannibal societies no less than others. And if it is assumed that ideals are in a process of constant alteration, nothing but habit prevents accepting alterations in the direction of cannibalism.[[17]](#endnote-17)

Though we may suppose there to be no standard higher than the functional ideals of one’s society, we can and do still question such ideals, or dispute their proper interpretation, which suggests that we are not altogether in servitude to society. We seek standards with reference to which we can judge the ideals of our own and of other societies, standards that cannot be found only in the needs of the various societies, for societies have many needs which conflict with one another. The problem of priorities will arise and point to the necessity of a standard of reference for distinguishing genuine and fancied needs, and for determining the rank of needs. The task of resolving conflicts among felt needs is unguided if we do not or cannot gain knowledge of “natural right.”

This critique of liberalism questions the story of the unfolding of freedom, rationality and increasing technical prowess. To the extent that the modern predicament reveals profound inability to save highly regarded values from the status of subjective preference, belief in them is contingent, raising the possibility that we cannot commit to them wholeheartedly or at all (an issue Habermas, for example, recognizes).

For Strauss these are political questions in the deepest sense. He was driven to the conclusion that to abandon the search for acceptable answers to the decisive political questions is tantamount to abandoning the defense of humanity itself. Politics is a distinctive human activity, and, as such, it reminds us of our limits as well as our possibilities. Nevertheless, it is the place where we confront permanent human questions among them the question whether there is anything just or right.

To dismiss political activity is, in the long run, impossible. The issues can be suppressed for a time but they inevitably reemerge. Strauss thus arrived at the conclusion that politics, against its own inclinations, ironically encourages the desire for philosophy, or that the clash of opinions points beyond itself to the question of the right opinions, to the question, Is anything unqualifiedly right and can we articulate it in words?

For Strauss, politics, far from being purely instrumental, is among the most important of human things. Instead of the depressing conclusion that political activity is the display of humanity tending towards the lowest level, Strauss thought he had compelling reasons for thinking that the very meaning of life is intimated in the political engagement even if that meaning is elusive.

This conclusion offers a critique of liberalism as Strauss saw liberalism in our time, and led him to critique Hobbes as one of the primary progenitors of modern liberal thought particularly in his redefinition of natural right as a liberty rather than a duty. Strauss thought this eventually allowed for uncontrolled individualism. At the same time, one can respect Hobbes’s thought in that he put forward a fundamental alternative within political philosophy in responding to his ancient predecessors because he thought that the theorization of political life is a source for human wisdom about human predicaments.[[18]](#endnote-18)

For Strauss, Hobbes inaugurated a revision of classical political philosophy that remained true in part to classical political philosophy’s aims. Subsequent revisions of Hobbes’s revision, which together compose the story of modern political philosophy, have carried thought further from the proper appreciation of the fundamental questions of politics. Strauss saw the current political situation of the West as one of crisis.[[19]](#endnote-19) He preferred Hobbes to developments that proceeded after Hobbes, but in so doing he came to the conclusion that the proper assessment of Hobbes depends on engaging him in the context of classical political philosophy. In sum, to enter a fundamental debate between Hobbes and his predecessors will yield greater insight than concentrating only on the uses his intellectual descendants have made of Hobbes, though those descendants show us the dangers in what Hobbes achieved.

Voegelin on Hobbes

Voegelin’s essay on Hobbes in *The New Science of Politics*[[20]](#endnote-20) seeks to clarify the crisis of modern politics describing what Hobbes achieved and what he failed to achieve. Voegelin’s “new science” was to clarify both the nature of the modern political situation and the reason for its emergence from what preceded it.

For Voegelin, the history of Western civilization turned on the unfolding awareness of the human condition as what he called, following Plato, the “metaxy” or the “in between” condition of man, involving intense experience of the tension between the human and the divine (the incomprehensible “beyond”) marked by two primary high points of theorization in departing from the ancient idea of “cosmic truth.” The first was the elaboration of what he called the “anthropological truth” exemplified in the philosophy of Plato and Aristotle; the second he called the “soteriological truth” conveyed to us through the intense Christian experience of the presence of the divine beyond on earth which, for Voegelin, was a continuation and deepening of an experiential insight earlier clarified by Plato. A “science of politics” in this classic sense stands against the “science of politics” in the modern sense; it is new but with ancient roots.

A political society is “not only a microcosmos but also a macanthropos” the awareness of which leads both to an interpretation of society and a critique of it. Every society “reflects the type of men of whom it is composed…cosmological empires consist of a type of men who experience the truth of their existence as a harmony with the cosmos” whereas in the polis there appears the philosophic type who sees “the true order of man” is a “constitution of the soul” and the true order of the soul becomes the standard “for measuring and classifying the empirical variety of human types as well as the social order in which they find their expression.”[[21]](#endnote-21) “The theorist represents a new truth in rivalry with the truth represented by society” since the discovery of the soul occurs in the opening to transcendence which prepares the way for the experience of “soteriological truth” involving the intensification of the experience of the tension between the divine and the human.[[22]](#endnote-22)

The experience of the divine presence on earth, however, rather than bringing heaven down to earth, actually intensified awareness of the distance between the “heavenly” and the “earthly” cities. According to Voegelin, the gradual triumph of Christianity meant the “dedivinization” or downgrading of the status of the world but which also precipitated in reaction repeated efforts to “redivinize” it: De-divinization is “the historical process in which the culture of polytheism died from experiential atrophy, and human existence in society became reordered through the experience of man’s destination, by the grace of the world-transcendent God, toward eternal life in beatific vision.”[[23]](#endnote-23) “Modern re-divinization has its origins rather in Christianity itself, deriving from components that were suppressed as heretical by the universal church.”[[24]](#endnote-24)

In Voegelin’s view, the modern political problems stem from an unresolved tension inherent in Christian civilization. The tension is between the continued acceptance of the experiential distance of the human from the divine as a limit on the human condition which no effort of unaided man (without grace) can repair, and the attempt to perfect our condition – to erase the tension -- through human action. This tendency, present in Christianity from the beginning, was pushed into the background by the tour de force of St. Augustine’s *City of God*:

“This left the church as the universal spiritual organization of saints and sinners who professed faith in Christ, as the representative of the *Civitas Dei* in history, as the flash of eternity into time. And correspondingly it left the power organization of society as a temporal representation of man in the specific sense of a representation of that part of human nature that will pass away with the transfiguration of time into eternity. The one Christian society was articulated into its spiritual and temporal orders. In its temporal articulation it accepted the *conditio humana* without chiliastic fancies, while it heightened natural existence by the representation of spiritual destiny through the church.”[[25]](#endnote-25)

In the Augustinian conception of history, direction occurs in the realm of sacred history, not in profane history which is the story of the rise and fall of nations and empires. Increasingly, however, beginning with Joachim of Flora in the twelfth century, a distinctly modern theoretical problem has come to the fore: the question whether, as Voegelin puts it, history has an “*eidos*.”[[26]](#endnote-26) To Voegelin the answer is obvious: There can be no eidos of history because we have no demonstrable knowledge of history’s final outcome, and thus all claims about the final meaning of history are purely speculative. “The attempt at constructing an eidos of history will lead into the fallacious immanentization of the Christian eschaton.”[[27]](#endnote-27)

To Voegelin this point is so obvious that those who have repeatedly committed themselves to this fallacious activity must be blinded by a “drive in their souls” which led them to search for a “certainty about the meaning of history, and about their own place in it, which otherwise they would not have had.”[[28]](#endnote-28) This is a fundamental critique of modern rationalism here understood, paradoxically, as the goal to “redivinize” the world. It is worth quoting Voegelin’s description of the situation at some length:

The feeling of security in a ‘world full of gods’ is lost with the gods themselves; when the world is de-divinized, communication with the world-transcendent God is reduced to the tenuous bond of faith in the sense of Heb. 11:1, as the substance of things hoped for and the proof of things unseen. Ontologically, the substance of things hoped for is nowhere to be found but in faith itself; and, epistemologically, there is no proof for things unseen but again this very faith. The bond is tenuous indeed, and it may snap easily. The life of the soul in openness toward God, the waiting, the periods of aridity and dullness, guilt and despondency, contrition and repentance, forsakenness and hope against hope, the silent stirrings of love and grace, trembling on the verge of a certainty which if gained is loss – the very lightness of this fabric may prove too heavy a burden for men who lust for massively possessive experience. The danger of a breakdown of faith to a socially relevant degree, now, will increase in the measure in which Christianity is a worldly success, that is, it will grow when Christianity penetrates a civilizational area thoroughly, supported by institutional pressure, and when, at the same time, it undergoes an internal process of spiritualization, of a more complete realization of its essence. The more people are drawn or pressured into the Christian orbit, the greater will be the number among them who do not have the spiritual stamina for the heroic adventure of the soul that is Christianity; and the likeliness of a fall from faith will increase when civilizational progress of education, literacy, and intellectual debate will bring the full seriousness of Christianity to the understanding of ever more individuals.”[[29]](#endnote-29)

The result of attempting “immanentization of the Christian eschaton” has been the stupendous release of human energies for the building of material civilization as the human creation of salvation in history. “The widespread belief that modern civilization is Civilization in a pre-eminent sense is experientially justified; the endowment with the meaning of salvation has made the rise of the west, indeed, an apocalypse of civilization.”[[30]](#endnote-30)

But this revelation of unprecedented possibilities is the harbinger of the death of the spirit:

The more fervently all human energies are thrown into the great enterprise of salvation through world-immanent action, the farther the human beings who engage in this enterprise move away from the life of the spirit. And since the life of the spirit is the source of order in man and society, the very success of a Gnostic civilization is the cause of its decline. A civilization can, indeed, advance and decline at the same time – but not forever. There is a limit toward which this ambiguous process moves; the limit is reached when an activist sect which represents the Gnostic truth organizes the civilization into an empire under its rule. Totalitarianism, defined as the existential rule of Gnostic activists, is the end form of progressive civilization.[[31]](#endnote-31)

This bleak picture, analogous to Strauss’s description of the “crisis of the West,” Voegelin illustrates in his description of Puritanism in the English Reformation as a movement producing a prototype of the modern intellectual: The man with a “cause” who repeatedly criticizes the social ills and the upper classes, thus appearing to be particularly full of integrity, zeal and holiness because he is so deeply offended by evil, and who provides reasons to believe that it is government action or inaction, rather than human frailty, which is the culprit.

In Voegelin’s view, the Anglican Richard Hooker provided the perfect analysis of this new intellectual phenomenon, and Hobbes clarified the political problem – the tension between one’s historical situation and representation of what is transcendently true -- in devising a solution to resolve the tension. Voegelin summarizes Hobbes’s argument:

The Hobbesian theory of representation cuts straight to the core of the predicament. On the one hand, there is a political society that wants to maintain its established order in historical existence; on the other hand, there are private individuals within the society who want to change the public order, if necessary by force, in the name of a new truth. Hobbes solved the conflict by deciding that there was no public truth except the law of peace and concord in a society; any opinion or doctrine conducive to discord was thereby proved untrue.[[32]](#endnote-32)

Reason makes man understand the necessity of peace and thus the necessity of civil government to achieve that peace and to enjoy worldly happiness; the obligatory force of this reasonable dictate, however, must be believed to be a divine command (*Leviathan*, chs. 15 & 31); once this dictate of reason is taken as a law from God, it remains to put the law into practice by actually combining into a civil society under a public representative: “Only when they have covenanted to submit to a common sovereign, has the law of nature actually become the law of a society in historical existence.”[[33]](#endnote-33) Hobbes’s aim is to theorize political representation in such a way as to conflate the historical actuality of a society with the realization of the dictates of reason understood as the commands of God: “the covenanting members actualize the divine order of being in the human sphere.”[[34]](#endnote-34)

The result so far is the creation of an empty vessel which is nevertheless an actualization of the divine. The vessel is filled by a reinterpreted Christianity which cannot be in conflict with the civil order (as Hobbes argues in *Leviathan*, Parts III and IV). Voegelin now raises the question: “How can the Christian *theologia supranaturalis* be established as a *theologia civilis*?”[[35]](#endnote-35)

Voegelin answers this question by reference to a polarity that is deeply embedded within the Christian tradition. St. Augustine “understood Christianity as a truth of the soul superior to polytheism but did not recognize that the Roman gods symbolized the truth of Roman society…that an existential victory of Christianity was not a conversion of individual human beings to a higher truth but the forceful imposition of a new *theologia civilis* on a society. In the case of Hobbes the situation is reversed. When he treats Christianity under the aspect of its substantial identity with the dictate of reason and derives its authority from governmental sanction, he shows himself as oddly insensitive to its meaning as a truth of the soul as were the Patres to the meaning of the Roman gods as a truth of society.”[[36]](#endnote-36) The conflict Saint Augustine sought to resolve has not been resolved; it has been reinterpreted.

Thus, Voegelin shows that the opposition or polarity – between the “truth of society” and “openness to the transcendent” – became a permanent feature of the human situation in the West at least from the time of Plato but elaborated with a peculiar insensitivity in Christian thought with the result that the Church found herself in constant oscillation between its spiritual aims and its earthly realities culminating in the religious wars.[[37]](#endnote-37)

Hobbes sought to construct a civil theology beyond debate because he recognized that public order required it; “it is the great and permanent achievement of the *Leviathan* to have clarified this point.”[[38]](#endnote-38) But, at the same time, Hobbes’s solution to the fundamental political problem involved the claim to have discovered a way of ending the tension between the “truth of the soul” and the “truth of the society.” He saw himself as a new Plato with a “new truth” to inculcate into the people. By proper education there could be hope for an everlasting constitution.

Voegelin both praises and blames Hobbes for his accomplishments. On the one hand, he praises Hobbes for identifying the need of the “truth of society” against the apocalyptic tendencies in Christianity. On the other hand, he criticizes Hobbes for attempting to solve the problem of the “truth of society” by uniting it with the “truth of the soul.” In this respect, Hobbes reveals the influence of habits of thought which seek to discover the transcendent only immanently. The attempt to end the intense differentiation in human experience by bringing the tension to a close shows, as far as Voegelin is concerned, that Hobbes, in part at least, succumbed to the most dangerous tendency of modern political thought. He concludes:

The idea of solving the troubles of history through the invention of the everlasting constitution made sense only under the condition that the source of these troubles, that is, the truth of the soul, would cease to agitate man. Hobbes, indeed, simplified the structure of politics by throwing out anthropological and soteriological truth. This is an understandable desire in a man who wants his peace; things, to be sure, would be so much simpler without philosophy and Christianity. But how can one dispose of them without abolishing the experiences of transcendence which belong to the nature of man?[[39]](#endnote-39)

Hobbes reawakened an essential aspect of the political philosophy of Plato and Aristotle in his attention to the problem of civil theology. Unfortunately, he sought to end the tension between the divine and the human, the eternal and the temporal, thus preparing the way for modern thinkers who have repeatedly sought to supersede the insights of classical and Christian philosophy essential to the proper theorization of the human condition.

For Voegelin, modern liberalism, descending from Hobbes, has found its civil theology in millennialist doctrines of progress, more or less activist or virulent, centering on perfecting the human condition. From this standpoint, the history of the modern West is the story of incessant projects to make good on the claim that the “truth of society” can be an adequate actualization of whatever ancient claims have been made about the destiny of the human soul, what has come to be known as the “religion of humanity” (making man divine).

This is the paradoxical result of Hobbes’s theoretical accomplishments. Hobbes accepted that any order might do if it secured the existence of society. He promoted a new idea of human nature as the quest for fulfillment in existence itself; a purpose for human beings transcending existence itself was ruled out. Hobbes countered the Gnostic immanentization of the eschaton which endangered existence by a radical immanence of existence which denied the eschaton.

To put this somewhat differently, Hobbes attempted to show the possibility of discovering the divine in the civil order, thus ending the tension between the eternal and the temporal, but in so doing he equally was compelled to eliminate the experience of the beyond as a “destiny” or “destination” so that the “everlasting constitution” would be “ever-present.” He analyzed the psychology of religious zeal, arriving at the general conclusion that a theory ranking the objects of passion was foreclosed (although he did criticize the pursuit of “wealth, command or sensual delight”). In this respect, his reliance on the idea of the contractual origin of civil society is to be understood as a useful symbol through which to depict a “psychological transformation” in the individual who grasps Hobbes’s teaching and is thus on the threshold of the “real unity” achieved under the “mortal god.” The *Leviathan* aims to teach us to think of ourselves in this radically new way.

The paradoxical legacy of Hobbes’s teaching arises because there is inevitably a discrepancy between the theoretically imagined coincidence between the divine and an historically existent social order, and the actual experience of their difference. This led to repeated attempts to rearrange human affairs so as to end the embarrassment of a continually reappearing disjunction in our experience. In short, the tension of human existence, theorized fully by classical and Christian philosophy, comes back to haunt those committed to the idea that such tension need no longer be integral to their experience, that it is undignified to be forced to admit there is an essential element of human experience which points beyond human beings and limits their self-constituting aspirations.

For Voegelin, Hobbes preserved aspects of the traditional conception of the common sense experience of life, but only up to a point. The point is reached when the tension between the divine and human is theoretically overcome, Hobbes’s choice to respond to the theological and religious controversies of his time, not by restoring the traditional (Platonic/Augustinian) understanding, but by seeking to supersede it and thus to refound thought about the human condition in such a way as to preclude the dangers inherent in the Christian heritage as revealed in the Reformation.

In fact, Hobbes did not succeed in this enterprise. Subsequent developments show that the experience of this tension has not and cannot disappear. The depoliticization of the human condition with respect to ultimate meaning, has been at best intermittently, momentarily successful, and is ever hostage to repeated experiences of disillusionment with secular projects.

Oakeshott on Hobbes

In his famous 1946 “Introduction” to the *Leviathan*, Oakeshott asserts: “The *Leviathan* is the greatest, perhaps the sole, masterpiece of political philosophy written in the English language. And the history of our civilization can provide only a few works of similar scope and achievement to set beside it. Consequently, it must be judged by none but the highest standards and must be considered only in the widest context. The masterpiece supplies a standard and a context for the second-rate, which indeed is but a gloss; but the context of the masterpiece itself, the setting in which its meaning is revealed, can in the nature of things be nothing narrower than the history of political philosophy.”[[40]](#endnote-40)

Oakeshott proceeds then to elucidating political philosophy as an inquiry whose hallmark is “always the revelation of the universal predicament in the local and transitory mischief.”[[41]](#endnote-41) For Oakeshott, there is a persistent task for political philosophy which is evident throughout the history of European civilization from the time of Plato, punctuated by what Oakeshott identified as “three great traditions of thought,” which constitute intelligible turning points in civilization’s history. Plato, Hobbes and Hegel exemplify these moments, but what comes later does not simply supersede what comes earlier. “The first of these traditions is… coeval with our civilization; it has an unbroken history into the modern world; and it has survived by a matchless power of adaptability all the changes of the European consciousness.”[[42]](#endnote-42)

Oakeshott portrays the history of political philosophy as the unfolding of elements to discuss in continuous dialogue among philosophical voices which discover each other in the course of their ascent from the particularities of their time and place to the apprehension of fundamental questions of human existence. In the midst of this dialogue the masterpiece, when and if it appears, “springs from a new vision of the predicament; each is the glimpse of a deliverance or the suggestion of a remedy.”

Oakeshott means what he says in referring to a “glimpse”: the masterpiece is “the still center of a whirlpool of ideas which has drawn into itself numberless currents of thought, contemporary and historic, and by its centripetal force has shaped and compressed them into a momentary significance before they are flung off again into the future.”[[43]](#endnote-43) Such achievements are more than polemical even though they engender fierce debate. The political philosopher surveys the historical scene in order to look beyond it. Oakeshott discusses the moral life in the writings of Hobbes in this way.

Hobbes set out to explore the “morality of individuality” given that the “emergent human character of Western Europe in the seventeenth century was one in which a feeling for individuality was becoming preeminent.”[[44]](#endnote-44) What distinguished Hobbes from his contemporaries “is not the idiom of the moral life he chose to explore, but the precise manner in which he interpreted this current sentiment…”[[45]](#endnote-45)

In “The Moral Life in the Writings of Thomas Hobbes” (1960) Oakeshott developed the distinction to which he was to return in detail in *On Human Conduct* (1975): “In the morality of individuality…human beings are recognized (because they have come to recognize themselves in this character) as separate and sovereign individuals, associated with one another, not in the pursuit of a single common enterprise but in an enterprise of give and take, and accommodating themselves to one another as best they can: it is the morality of self and other selves.”[[46]](#endnote-46)

In the morality of the “common good,” by contrast,

Human beings are recognized as independent centres of activity, but approval attaches itself to conduct in which this individuality is suppressed whenever it conflicts, not with the individuality of others, but with the interests of a ‘society’ understood to be composed of such human beings. Self-management is subdued under a theory of collective enterprise. All are engaged in a single, common enterprise. Here the lion and the ox are distinguished from one another, but there is not only one law for both, there is a single approved condition of circumstance for both: the lion shall eat straw like the ox. This single approved condition of human circumstance is called ‘the social good’, the ‘good of all’, and morality is the art in which this condition is achieved and maintained.[[47]](#endnote-47)

One notes Oakeshott’s antipathy to the morality of the “common good,” nor can one miss the symbolic meaning here of “lion” and “ox.” Oakeshott’s three great moments in the history of political philosophy – represented in Plato’s *Republic*, Hobbes’s *Leviathan* and Hegel’s *Philosophy of Right* – do not ground what he describes as the “morality of the common good.”

The latter is not a proper deduction from Plato’s *Republic* if one reads the *Republic*, as Oakeshott does, as the exploration of the limitations in this world of the Socratic quest for wisdom, classical rationalism aware of its limits. The philosopher who ascends out of the shadows of the cave and, upon returning from his travels, brushes aside the “cave-understood conditionality of ‘the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth’…[insisting] that matters should be delayed while the question What is truth?...[is] explored….the cave-dwellers would begin to suspect that….he was not an interesting theorist but a fuddled and pretentious ‘theoretician’….the cave-dwellers resent not the theorist, the philosopher … but the ‘theoretician’, the *philosophe*, the ‘intellectual’; and they resent him, not because they are corrupt or ignorant but because they know just enough to recognize an impostor when they meet one.[[48]](#endnote-48) Oakeshott’s skeptical version of the Cave Allegory endorses the quest for wisdom but also admits the limits to that quest’s ability to transform the human condition.

Oakeshott’s response to Hegel’s political philosophy suggests that it is a commentary on the exploration begun by Hobbes of the morality of individuality. Hegel’s modern state is, conceptually, the instrument for reconciling subjective desire (Hegel’s world in which “all are free”) with rational will in voluntary decisions that do not deny the reality of individuality, or suppress the fact that human relations are initiated in the sphere of individual desires for satisfaction and for recognition in ways more or less compatible with each individual’s self-understanding.

The morality of the “common good” Oakeshott sees as offering arbitrary attempts to bring the morality of individuality to completion in collective identity. Revulsion at the spectacle of subjective individuality is generated among those who wish to “escape from freedom” dissatisfied with the Hobbesian civil order which is a “negative gift, merely making not impossible that which is desirable.” Oakeshott emphasizes the proceduralism of Hegel’s *Philosophy of Right*, against the Marxist/collectivist interpretation.

Oakeshott said in his 1933 work *Experience and Its Modes*, the world of practice is a world *sub specie voluntatis*, a world of the “wished-for” which is “not yet”; “practice is activity, the activity inseparable from the conduct of life and from the necessity of which no living man can relieve himself.”[[49]](#endnote-49) In practical experience the “to be” which is “not yet” turns into the “ought to be” intimating fulfillment and greater coherence. The intimation of coherency brings forward the “to be” as what “ought to be” since if it did not it would be inexplicable that the current condition is unsatisfactory. It is a world of incompleteness constantly intimating, but never achieving, completion. The world of practice’s distinctiveness consists in its mutability, its transiency, its constant exhibition of the desirability of what is “not yet,” its insistence that the world is a world only *sub specie voluntatis*, while it is, nonetheless, driven by the hope of completion that would release volition into a world where the “not yet” loses its seductiveness.

Today’s coherency “is merely preliminary to its transformation”[[50]](#endnote-50) suddenly appearing as the not now acceptable consequence of yesterday’s “not yet” which sought “to be.” The world of practice is a world of endless change, tempted by the belief that there must be some transformation which would be once and for all. For Oakeshott, this temptation is always a mistake, and no one has given a more compelling account of its dangers than Hobbes. Oakeshott emphasized Hobbes’s attack on pride, which connected Hobbes in his own way to the Augustinianism of pre-Reformation Christianity.

In a deeper sense, therefore, whereas Oakeshott spoke of three great moments in the history of political philosophy, there are, for him, really two: The ancient inauguration of political philosophy as such in the quest for right order, and the achievement of the insight into the reality of individuality achieved as much by Hobbes as by any thinker (following Hobbes, Hegel identified Plato’s difficulty in accounting for subjective freedom). It is with Hobbes that the path towards clarifying the ideal of “civil association,” which Oakeshott later developed in *On Human Conduct*, is explored and advanced. Yet Oakeshott saw this not merely as an abstract ideal. The concept emerges from the deep European experience of the last five centuries. Oakeshott showed in *On Human Conduct* that theorizing civil association in clear terms is one of the greatest intellectual achievements of modern Europeans in their effort to understand themselves.

The ideal has, however, also been an ordeal – the ordeal of self-consciousness. It has generated as its opposition the ideal of the “common good” which Oakeshott characterized as the “universitas” or joint enterprise governed by “corporate purpose” under governors who are more like “managers” governing citizens who are more like “corporate workers” or “role-players.” This is a rationalist goal in the modern sense of rationalism.

Against the alleged supersession of Hobbes’s account of morality as individuality, Oakeshott defends it not only as an historical reality in what he called the “politics of skepticism,” but also as a true insight in dialectical opposition to the “politics of faith” or rationalist/millennialist politics. In this formulation Oakeshott, like Strauss and Voegelin, has attempted his own delineation of the elements of the human condition. For him, as for the others, to expound the original, most powerful conception of the modern tradition against subsequent revisions of it requires us to understand its foundation. Oakeshott’s critique of modern rationalism is not a critique of reason; it is a critique of the misuse of reason through neglect of the limits as well as the possibilities of rational inquiry.

In each of these thinkers there is respect, while critical, towards a prodigious philosophical aspiration. They see that the once buoyant liberal tradition now is in need of sober friends who diagnose the dangers of liberalism misunderstanding itself. An adequate critique of the current situation will eventually, inevitably, have to rethink the relation of liberalism to modern rationalism and progressivism. Such a task is tantamount to making strong arguments weaker, thus reviving the ancient task of using reason against its misuses. Oakeshott, Strauss and Voegelin, in setting out to do this each in his own way, attest to Hobbes’s significance by engaging him at the level of philosophic dialogue he invites.

1. Freeden, Michael. 2015. *Liberalism, A Very Short Introduction* (Oxford), discovers five “layers” of liberalism which, arising historically, nevertheless continue to interact and affect each other. [↑](#endnote-ref-1)
2. Hans Georg Gadamer describes the “mounting expectation that science is ultimately capable of banishing all unpredictability from the life most proper to society by subjecting all spheres of human living to scientific control.” “On the Natural Inclination Toward Philosophy,” in *Reason in the Age of Science*, MIT Press, p. 147. [↑](#endnote-ref-2)
3. Cardinal Ratzinger, Joseph (Pope Benedict XVI) and Habermas, Jurgen. 2006. *Dialectics of Secularization, On Reason and Religion*, Ignatius Press p. 21. Also “The encounter with theology can remind a self-forgetful, secular reason of its distant origins in the revolution in worldviews of the Axial Age.” In Habermas, Jurgen, 2010, et al., *An Awareness of What Is Missing, Faith and Reason in a Post-Secular Age*, Polity Press, p. 82. [↑](#endnote-ref-3)
4. Hobbes, *Leviathan*, ed. by Oakeshott, Michael. 1946. (Blackwell ed., Oxford), p. 64, (hereafter cited as *L*). [↑](#endnote-ref-4)
5. *L*, p. 43 [↑](#endnote-ref-5)
6. *L*, p. 44 [↑](#endnote-ref-6)
7. *L*, p. 39 [↑](#endnote-ref-7)
8. *L*, p. 42 [↑](#endnote-ref-8)
9. *The Concept of the* Political *by Carl Schmitt, With Comments on Schmitt’s Essay by Leo Strauss*, transl., intro., and notes by Schwab, George. 1976. (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press), p. 105. [↑](#endnote-ref-9)
10. We must construct a political order as a “conscious construction.” “The world of our constructs is wholly unenigmatic because we are its sole cause and hence we have perfect knowledge of its cause…The world of our constructs is therefore the desired island that is exempt from the flux of blind and aimless causation.” Strauss, Leo. 1953. *Natural Right and History*, Chicago & London: University of Chicago Press; Sixth Impression, 1968, P.171 (hereafter cited as *NRH*). [↑](#endnote-ref-10)
11. Cropsey, Joseph. 1977. *Political Philosophy and the Issues of Politics*, (Chicago & London:The University of Chicago Press), p. 307. [↑](#endnote-ref-11)
12. *NRH*, P.167 [↑](#endnote-ref-12)
13. *NRH*, P.167 [↑](#endnote-ref-13)
14. *NRH*, P.168 [↑](#endnote-ref-14)
15. *NRH*, P.5 [↑](#endnote-ref-15)
16. “Progress or Return?” in *The Rebirth of Classical Political Rationalism, An Introduction to the Thought of Leo Strauss*, selected and introduced by Pangle, Thomas L. 1989. University of Chicago Press, Pp. 229-30. [↑](#endnote-ref-16)
17. *NRH*, Introduction. [↑](#endnote-ref-17)
18. *NRH*,Pp. 167-170. [↑](#endnote-ref-18)
19. Strauss, Leo. 1978. *The City and Man*, (Chicago & London: The University of Chicago Press, Phoenix Edition), Introduction. [↑](#endnote-ref-19)
20. Voegelin, Eric. 1952. *The New Science of Politics, An Introduction*,(Chicago & London: The University of Chicago Press), (hereafter cited as *NSP*). [↑](#endnote-ref-20)
21. *NSP*, Pp. 61-3 [↑](#endnote-ref-21)
22. *NSP*, Pp. 77-9 [↑](#endnote-ref-22)
23. *NSP*, p. 107 [↑](#endnote-ref-23)
24. Ibid. [↑](#endnote-ref-24)
25. *NSP*, p. 109 [↑](#endnote-ref-25)
26. *NSP*, Pp. 119-120 [↑](#endnote-ref-26)
27. *NSP*, p. 121 [↑](#endnote-ref-27)
28. *NSP*, Pp. 121-122 [↑](#endnote-ref-28)
29. *NSP*, Pp. 122-123 [↑](#endnote-ref-29)
30. Ibid. [↑](#endnote-ref-30)
31. *NSP*, Pp. 131-132 [↑](#endnote-ref-31)
32. *NSP*, p. 153 [↑](#endnote-ref-32)
33. *NSP*, Pp. 153-4 [↑](#endnote-ref-33)
34. *NSP*, p. 154 [↑](#endnote-ref-34)
35. *NSP*, p. 155 [↑](#endnote-ref-35)
36. *NSP*, p.156 [↑](#endnote-ref-36)
37. *NSP*, Pp. 156-7 [↑](#endnote-ref-37)
38. *NSP*, p. 158 [↑](#endnote-ref-38)
39. *NSP*, p. 161 [↑](#endnote-ref-39)
40. *L,* Introduction, p. viii [↑](#endnote-ref-40)
41. *L*, Introduction, p. xi [↑](#endnote-ref-41)
42. *L*, Introduction, p. xii [↑](#endnote-ref-42)
43. *L*, Introduction, p. xi [↑](#endnote-ref-43)
44. Oakeshott, Michael. 1975. *On Human Conduct*, (Oxford: Clarendon Press), p. vii, (hereafter cited as *OHC*). [↑](#endnote-ref-44)
45. *OHC*, Ibid. [↑](#endnote-ref-45)
46. Oakeshott, Michael. 1991. “The Moral Life in the Writings of Thomas Hobbes,” in *Rationalism in Politics and Other Essays*, New expanded edition, (Liberty Fund Press), p. 298, (hereafter cited as *RIP*). [↑](#endnote-ref-46)
47. Ibid. [↑](#endnote-ref-47)
48. *RIP*, p. 297 [↑](#endnote-ref-48)
49. *OHC,* p. 27 [↑](#endnote-ref-49)
50. See the essay on the practical mode, in Oakeshott, Michael. 1933 *Experience and its Modes*, (Cambridge University Press), passim. See also *The Politics of Faith and the Politics of Scepticism* (Yale University Press, 1996), and *Morality and Politics in Modern Europe: The Harvard Lectures* (Yale University Press, 1993). [↑](#endnote-ref-50)