

# Philosophy C108: Hobbes

## Lecture Notes

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### Introduction and Background Apr 12 2023

We focus on Thomas Hobbes (1588-1671) and Sir Kenelm Digby (1603-1665). Hobbes sees himself as an encyclopedia philosopher more than just politics. We will also be focusing on his *Elements of Philosophy* and its *on body* and *On the human*.

Hobbes believes everything could be reduced to matter in motion, where Descartes thinks we can't, Digby is somewhat in the middle.

Hobbes was born on the edge of the Spanish invasion, in his words "born with fear." His father left when he was 5 and later was supported by his uncle. He went to Oxford and was in Madeline Hall, and seemed to do okay. He got a B.A. at 21 and was a tutor to one of the Cavendishs. The 30-year war began then.

Following these, the king and parliament became a war. Neutral France became the place everybody goes, so did Hobbes and Digby. Descartes was in Holland, but asked Marin Mersenne (the person who puts people in connection) for someone to critique his work, so Hobbes did it.

Two way of thinking about Thomas Hobbes:

1. The Unity Thesis: General account → physics → physiology → human nature → politics
2. The Autonomy Thesis: Hobbes' political philosophy stands alone

The default assumption is The Unity Thesis, so we need a general account for philosophy! Hobbes claims that philosophy is causal relations going both ways. There is a list of causes or First Principles that makes effects, and philosophy studies that.

What does he mean by causes? Back to Aristotle, we have the four causes. following Aquinas, we characterize the four causes into two categories: the intrinsic causes: matter and form, and external causes: efficient and final.

Aristotle claims body and matter could be different, and it's not crystal clear how we get from matter to body, and remains the problem.

Another tradition is Epicureanism in later Antiquity, following Democritus, claiming there are two basic principles in the world: tiny atoms and emptiness, which Aristotelians will reject since they think there is no empty space. Physics then eliminates the four causes into matter and efficient causes, which tell the particles how to behave. Hobbes ends up in all the world consists in is matter in motion.

The Necessity of Origins Thesis: if anyone comes from different sperm and egg, it has to be a different person albeit they can look the same.

## Hobbesian Ontology Apr 14 2023

There are indefinitely many bodies and, aside from the incomprehensible God there is nothing else. Bodies can be classified in many ways (hard, cubical, etc), where these ways are concrete terms that pick out bodies. Hobbes distinguishes between concrete and abstract terms.

1. Concrete Terms: cubical
2. Abstract Term: cube

Hardness or cube or ... are accidents. "Hardness", "Cube", etc are abstract terms picking out the cause of bodies being hard or cubical or ...

This all follows the Aristotelian train of thought of substances and accidents. In the list of genuine things, there are substances, but substances, say Prof. Normore, has certain mass, we think these things are different from the kind of thing Prof. Normore is. We call these **accidents** (size, mass, location, etc). What are those accidents?

The Roman Catholic Church supports the idea of **transubstantiation**, where an ordained priest makes Jesus' body into a piece of bread. Suppose the bread is white, the idea is that the bread has been annihilated, but the whiteness is still there. The bread no longer exists but the features are still there, hence the **Doctrine of Real Accidents**. Historically, the three ways characterizing: for Joe Biden who is pale, we can say

1. A mode of JB is pale
2. There is a real accident of JB that's pale
3. JB has the property of being pale

For Hobbes, hardness is what makes bodies hard. Aligns with his thought of cause and effects, to understand hardness means to know what it causes.

Hobbes, again, only accepts only bodies and motion. All other terms pick out bodies and/or motions (perhaps bodies with certain types of motion). The identity conditions for terms indicate how we suppose them to work.

Hobbes thinks the outside motion press on our sense organ and creates fantasies inside our mind, which is a mental state. We then use marks to distinguish between these states. The **mark** is something in itself I can sense - connect of one sensible thing and effects of another sensible thing.

The **name** is a word taken at pleasure to serve for a mark which may raise in our mind a thought like to some thought we had before, and which being, pronounced to others, may be to them a sign of what thought the speaker had or had not before in his mind.

Hobbes then divide names into abstract and concrete names. Concrete names can be "pale", "human", etc. Abstract terms can be "paleness" or "humanity". Concrete names name things but abstract names name the causes or reasons for which the concrete names are applied to the things. Suppose I am called pale because of the colour of my skin, then "paleness" is a name of skin colour.

Colour is an experience in me typically of a motion in a thing outside me so 'paleness' names experiences (which turn out to be motions in the brain/heart). One might well ask how this works for 'humanity' and perhaps it doesn't and 'humanity' just picks out the same things 'human' does. Or perhaps it picks out the kind of vital motion all humans have (if that is the cause of their being human).

Now we have terms defined, the next one in line will be to combine terms into propositions: a proposition is a speech consisting of two names copulated (A is B), by which he that speaketh signifies he conceives the latter name to be the name of the same thing whereof the former is the name; or (which is all one) that the former name is comprehended by the latter. In English the joining is often indicated by the word 'is'. The term for this joining word is 'copula' and the terms are said to be copulated. (One should note that in Arabic, for example, one often does not have an explicit copula but indicates the joining of two names simply by placing them next to one another in a proposition)

The fundamental connection is that one name, the subject is indicated by the copula to be a name of things the other name, the predicate also names.

Hobbes accepts a Two-name theory of predication that a basic sentence consists of two names which are indicated somehow to be joined together.

In terms of causes Hobbes accepts efficient and material causes the aggregate of accidents in the agent or agents, requisite for the production of the effect, the effect being produced, is called the efficient cause thereof; and the aggregate of accidents in the patient, the effect being produced, is usually called the material cause ..... But the efficient and material causes are both but partial causes, or parts of that cause, which in the next precedent article I called an entire cause. [Hobbes EP Part II . 9 Molesworth EW I, 122]

## Hobbes on Philosophy Apr 19 2023

We review Hobbesian metaphysics: philosophy is such knowledge of effects of appearance as we acquire by true ratiocination from the knowledge we have first of their causes of generation.

Therefore the two ways of doing philosophy is either from generation of things to their possible effects or from their effects or appearances to some possible generation of the same.

But what is ratiocination? It is computation, equivalent to addition and subtraction. Ex. human

= rational + sensing + living + body, which are the elements out of which the concept of human is compounded. We add all the concepts involved in human-being. There is nothing overarching to these concepts. Therefore, true demonstrations are always causal from the first principles. If we cannot get to the first principles, we rely on hypothesis. Ex. we don't get to decide what humans are, we can only find humans in the world and reason back.

Summary of the Hobbesian Metaphysics:

1. Hobbes thinks that all that exists are bodies in motion
2. rejects form/matter distinction of Scholastic metaphysics as well as the Aristotelian doctrine of four causes (formal and final especially) as none of these is intelligible.
3. There are just efficient and material causes
4. Power is the same as the cause, except power pertains to a future effect and cause to an actual effect. The material cause is the passive power of the patient to undergo change through the active power (cause) exercised by the agent. Together, these make up the **entire cause** of the effect.
5. Bodies are extended, extension is an accident. Compared to Descartes: extension is what bodies are.

Hobbes also provides the Argument against formal causation

P1) A thing acts for the sake of an end when it acts from desire or aversion

P2) Desires and aversions are efficient causes of action.

∴ Acting for the sake of an end (final cause) just is another form of efficient cause.

## Hobbes on motion

Hobbes basically commit to Newton's laws. Motion and relative stationary state has to be caused. When stopping something, we would need an equal and opposite force. In the SHM case, the object moves in one direction, and in Hobbesian case, it should move forever in his motion only picture. But SHM causes difficulties for Hobbesian theory. Descartes could be right to add the tendency of movement.

## Hobbes and the Human Animal Apr 26 2023

Again, we are bodies in motion and our vital motion is our life. Ex. pulse, bloodstream, etc. [Leviathan Ch.6] Meanwhile, we are also capable of voluntary motion. Ex. speak, move limbs, etc.

Vital motion we don't need to think about, and this is how vital and voluntary motion differ, as voluntary motion is induced by thought. Animals don't typically control their thinking, but human can develop techniques to develop our thinking. We invent language to control the sequence of our thoughts. Entails that an infant and dog are not so much different.

How does motion in body work? When we encounter things in the world, they are typically in motion. These motions come to us and enter our senses and affect our vital motion. The interaction of both motions produce a new motion (colours, shapes, etc), which we experience as images. These images deceive us in thinking they are not bodies in motion, but they all are. This follows that consciousness is also just motions...

External motions also cause decay of sense. New motion becomes weaker and passed into memory (motions collected in a reduced way) If we call these motion from memory, then we have imagination. So that the sense, imagination, and memory are the same. So that imagination can only be images from the past. Moreover, much memory, or memory of many things, is called experience.

What about thoughts? Still motions: regulated and unregulated. Unregulated are sleep, day-dreaming, etc. Regulated can be made by some desire or design in two ways: effect to cause, and cause to effect.

In all, the discourse of the mind governed by design is nothing but seeking and hunting out the causes and effects in the world. In contrast, non-human animals can think but cannot regulate their thinking, so they cannot do philosophy.

Three things that distinguishes humans and animals: complex thinking mentioned above, curiosity - knowing causes is the highest pleasure, and speech - which requires methods.

## Truth

"Truth consisteth in the right ordering of names in our affirmations."

## Hobbes & Descartes Apr 28 2023

In Nov 1640, Descartes in Holland sent Marsenne his *Meditations* to ask people for critique. Descartes asked him to not circulate it outside Paris, but it was too late for Marsenne. Hobbes was in Paris and wrote the critiques, Descartes also later responded to Hobbes' objection. Here we look at this discourse, before that, we need soem background first.

## The Debate & Aristotelian Conception of Change

We leave creation aside for this discussion.

1. Generation & Corruption (substantial change)  
Aquinas: Prime matter (nothing in and out of itself) taking on a substantial form.  
OR a mixture of elements
2. Alternation (change in a substance)  
Ex. leaf turning red. You got a leaf throughout. It turns from an accidental form of green to an accidental form of red.
3. Local Motion (change of place)  
something moving in space

These are in terms of **matter & form**, but for Hobbes, all change is due to local motion. He does not believe in substantial or accidental forms.

For Descartes, he has a mind. If the mind changes in anyway, Descartes needs to treat it either like a generation or alternation, just cannot be local motion.

The other key thing in the debate is the relationship between matter and body.

For Aquinas, 3 things are required for generation. Generation = being in potency + non-existence in act which is privation + that through which something comes to be in act which is form.

Hobbes thinks that there could just be bodies. For Descartes, mind would be the alteration (no matter required by Descartes, but matter required for Hobbes). So for Hobbes, mind and whatever that undergoes alteration must be a body.

## Hobbes on Mind to Politics

Recall that we recognize fancies that are made by the interaction of outside motion with our own vital motion. We typically don't recognize them as motions, but as shape, size, etc. Based on that, we develop a mark for a fancy to stay in memory to be called on.

Are these fancies all about particular objects? We combine these marks that we create and amount to sentences and words (pick out marks and make others associate with the same mark)

Ex. we resolve a square into its elements: lines bounded by right angles. These are associated with the marks.

Good and Evil: because of these internal motions, we have desire (motion that inclines us to seek something) and aversions (motion that inclines us to get away from something). What we come to good or bad comes from what we think to be desired or to be avoided.

Whereas Aristotle says we recognize something as good so we seek it, Hobbes says that we seek something then say it's good. People therefore share the words and desire. Hobbes then concludes that **happiness** is the continuous success in getting the desire, or **continuous prospering**.

In seeking, we use will. Everything in us is a matter of moving and the interaction with outside motion. Everything that is moving stays so until disturbed. If we decide something, it is also a motion and it has to be produced by something. (Necessitarianism: everything happens for a reason) Hobbes calls deliberation from a Desire 1 + Desire 2, these two desires will interact. The interaction will be deliberation and consideration of two desires. Deliberation's root comes from the word for de-from, liber-freedom. These don't balance perfectly, so the will is last appetite in deliberation in proceeding into the act, say I'm gonna do my desire 1.

Similarly, the last opinion along with the last appetite of deliberation is called the judgement. As the whole chain of appetites alternate in the question of good or bad is called deliberation, so the whole chain of opinions alternate in the question of true or false is called doubt.

Into politics: The sovereign enforces certain actions, which affect desire and opinions.

The passion for power is the desire for power or riches, etc. The power of a man is his present means to obtain some future apparent good, and it is either original or instrumental.

The unity of the power of most men, united by consent, in one person, is the power of a commonwealth.

## Hobbes and the Laws of Nature May 3 2023

Starts from ch.13 with the basic biological facts about individuals in a imagined situation where there is no government, the state of nature. He argues that it is better for us to have a government than no government.

Two of Hobbes' claims:

1. Men are by nature equal in body and mind in this respect. The weakest has the ability to kill the strongest. We aren't so different mentally or physically.
2. From this equality of ability, one comes an equal hope in attaining one's ends/ Each one thinks that he/she has a good chance to get the end just as everyone else.

If there is scarce of goods, there will be **competition**. Each person has (and thinks they have) the ability and can potentially suffer from someone else taking the good. Each person will be attempted to strike others for their own security - **diffidence**. Moreover, some people like to subdue others due to **glory**. Thus the three reason for fight are **competition**, **diffidence** (lack of confidence for own safety), and **glory** as reputation as being powerful.

The state of continuous preparedness to fight is **war**. In contrast, peace is when there is no condition to start a war, or when it is sure others won't attack you (only if this is against the other's perceived self-interest, and only will happen where the other believe that they will be punished by a greater power on planet earth). War is bad because no science or industry or culture could develop. In this situation there is also no law and therefore injustice. This is the typical situation between states, so we don't have international effort to produce science or international morality.

Into Chapter 14. Hobbes claims, in the state of nature, the rightful thing to do anything at all that will preserve or own life. Staying alive is the basic need, connected to his physics of preserving vital motion. There is nothing wrong with wanting to stay alive at all cost - since nothing is right or wrong in a physical world.

It is to everyone's interest to get out of this state of war, our reason (where does reason come from in the motion picture? possibly arise from language and forming propositions, therefore can calculate) suggests some rules that should be agreeable to everyone to help them get out of the state of war. These rules Hobbes calls **the Laws of Nature**.

Before that, we have a couple words for rights. Two senses:

1. We have right when it is not wrong to do so
2. obligations on the parts of others to respect them.

Why would reason tell us there are rules? A **Law of Nature** is a general rule, found out by reason (independent of religion) by which a man is forbidden to do anything destructive to his own life, or takes a way the means to preserve his own life. We have them:

- LN1) Humans ought to seek peace, if there's hope of obtaining it. If they can't get peace, they may use the advantage of war to defend themselves (also include first strikes)
- LN2) When others are willing too, one should lay down the right to all things and be content with as much liberty as they would grant others against them, in order to seek peace. A mutual giving up of rights.

Come back to right, when one gives up their right, they are obliged not to act on the right (in exchange for others doing the same thing), and one has a duty not to void his own voluntary acts. Moreover, the object of a voluntary act is some (perceived) good to oneself. Therefore, some rights, like the right to protect one self from death or injury, cannot be given up; they are inalienable.

Hobbes on suicide: it is the stopping of vital motion. I use a speech for it to convince myself it is the thing to do. The only reason one should act is to protect myself, so we cannot suicide reasonably, can only be done by trick by convincing suicidal can save your life.

Back to the laws of nature discussion. How do we simultaneously lay down rights? We can agree to do so - a **covenant**, which is an agreement where one or both parties agree to fulfill the terms of the agreement at a later time. Hobbes thinks that once we have an agreement, it is reasonable to do my part with the expectation that others will do theirs later. However, there is also no reason to believe that the other party will fulfill the agreement - we need a higher power to punish the unfulfilling side to provide a reason to honour the agreement.

Covenants entered into by fear, in the state of nature, are obligatory. The fear does not void the agreement, in contrast, it is probably the basic condition.

But this brings a real problem via the third law:

- LN3) So we are obliged by reason to transfer our rights that hinder the peace if mankind if we retain them, and the transfer is by covenant - that men perform their covenants.

The rest of the laws of nature summarized in the negative form of the golden rule.

Why should we carry out the agreement, or keep it? It cannot be the covenant itself. This is the disarmament paradox/deterrence problem. When both parties' disarmament condition is for the other party to give up first, then it is hard to say whether they are both going to disarm or not.

Self-interest seems to advocate for it: it is irrational not to keep our promises because our long-term self-interest will suffer greatly by not keeping them, we will jeopardize our self-preservation. It is always the unknowns of being caught. Hobbes on the Deterrence Problem: any reason not to keep the covenant is a reason to not make a covenant in the first place - rational agents can't make threats they cannot rationally carry out.

Hobbes' conclusion is that justice appears in keeping the covenant in a state of nature.



## Hobbes on persons May 10 2023

For Hobbes, there is no difference between natural and artificial beings - we can make human beings! Descartes agrees to this too - the only thing stopping us is technological. This raises problem about persons (just make the same motion) when we can make an artificial human.

Hobbes takes from Boethius: the sameness of motion is necessary and sufficient for sameness of human being but not for sameness of person. **A person signifies an intelligent substance, that acteth any thing in his own or another's name, or by his own or another's authority.** We note the need for authority - no authority, no person.

(Here Hobbes is actually quoting one of the two traditions on person. The first being Boethius and Aquinas, thinking that persons are of rational nature. The alternative tradition being Cicero, is persona - propopon/mask wore by actors. This tradition says that a person is a role, representing an author (self or other), and authorized by a social setting. )

Therefore, persons have three components:

1. Persons are **artifacts** that exists only in certain kinds of social situations
2. Personhood requires personation - the act of carrying or representing the words, actions, interests of oneself or another
3. To become a person is to confer unity on a multitude, which has bearing on the issue of personal identity

and Hobbes' full definition merges both traditions **A person is he whose words or actions are considered either as his own, or as representing the words or actions of another man, or of any other thing to whom they are attributed, whether truly or by fiction.** Extending to the role of ruler, it will be to represent those governed by the state and to procure public affairs.

No persons out of the state, since there is no social roles and no one can enter a covenant.

Extends to the idea of **unity**: "a multitude of men, are made One Person, when they are by one man, or one Person, Represented; 'it' is the unity of the representer, not the unity of the represented, that maketh the person one. " Therefore the represented don't have to be intelligent - only the representer matters, and an intelligent representer could unity the represented as a person and simultaneously making them a intelligent substance. Ex. if Canada and the US enter a treaty, Trudeau and Biden aren't bounded by the treaty, but it is the Canada and US that are bounded. We are also bounded if we are what constitutes Canada - the countries are now intelligent beings.

Hence the **Derivative Persons**: the transfer of right, power, and authority to the sovereign transforms individuals in the state of nature into a person. Ex. once we all transfer rights to an authority/representer, we all become one person.

## **Digby's Ontology May 31 2023**

In 17th century, mathematics took over ontology as the true science. Geometry became the only science with proof - we therefore need a better view of quantity. Digby thinks that quantity is no more than the extension of a thing, and parts are only potential - they are only in virtue being parts of a whole. Like length in a line, there are an infinity of points.

## **Hobbes on Mathematics Jun 7 2023**

Hobbes thinks geometry as the only science yet developed, as he sees geometry as a science on the strictest sense - not physics or metaphysics or other stuff. It is something we can make (just like the commonwealth - we don't discover it, we make it) therefore we should have a science of politics. The question then became: if geometry is the real science, then it should serve as the model for other sciences.

Back to Digby on a second: quantity means size, and it has some number of some units of something in it. Quantity is also a distinct feature. Both Hobbes and Digby think that the parts are only potential, they can also be divided but cannot be into things with no size. If parts are not potential - then we would divide to points, infinite of them. However, it should then be infinitely big - but how do something without size add up to something with size? Digby thinks there could be things with no size.

Hobbes again: He thinks quantity is a dimension determined, or a dimension with limit set out either by place, or by some comparison.

Hobbes' two methods of philosophy: one from cause to effects, and the other from their effects or appearances to some possible generation of the same.