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Nature, Civility and Eschatology: Thomas Hobbes's Progress in Three Acts

Abstract This paper argues that Thomas Hobbes's theory contains an account of progressive defragmentation and unification of power, accompanied by the progression in human reasoning capacities. If the consequence of human nature is abandonment of natural condition and subjection to a sovereign, then similar principles should apply to the sovereigns themselves, since Hobbes sees them as continuing to exist in the state of nature. In turn, the relations between sovereigns must also lead to defragmentation of political authority, either by conquest or through peaceful submission. Total defragmentation of power might also have eschatological consequences, as the unified power of one human being over the whole world would remove "external violence" as a cause of "the dissolution of a commonwealth" while the perfection of reason would progressively remove the "internal" causes. This is a hypothetical situation that could relate Hobbes's description of the Kingdom of God from *Leviathan* to his wider political theory by marking the single sovereign representative of now immortal all-encompassing *Leviathan* as the Antichrist and thus announcing the second coming of Christ.

Keywords: Hobbes, progress, determinism, sovereign, world government, antichrist.

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Introduction

In the mid 1650s, Thomas Hobbes engaged in a famous debate with bishop John Bramhall. Hobbes was a determinist and, among other things, denied against Bramhall that men have freedom of will. Men's will and actions are ultimately caused by God's will, as "every act of man's will, and every desire, and inclination proceedeth from some cause, and that from another cause, in a continuall chaine, (whose first link is in the hand of God the first of all causes,)" (Hobbes, 1651: 109) God is "the First Mover" and Hobbes (1651: 53, 4) argues that "[w]hen a body is once in motion, it moveth (unless something els hinder it) eternally". If this is the case, then in *Leviathan* Hobbes might be telling us a linear story of human progress that starts with the state of nature, follows the creation of the state and ends with its eventual demise. In this paper I will argue that Hobbes's account can be logically divided into three consecutive conditions that correspond to three stages of human development: 1) state of nature; 2) civil condition and 3) the kingdom of God. This causality is a part of Hobbes's wider mechanist philosophical framework that starts with his thoughts on human nature, extends into statehood and ends with eschatology.

There are a number of features of Hobbes's state of nature that compel people to establish "a common Power to keep them all in awe". (Hobbes, 1651: 62) Firstly, there is mechanist philosophical and theological background against which Hobbes's account of the state of nature is developed. If Hobbes identifies God with "the First Mover" and if an object that He sets in motion "moveth (unless something els hinder it) eternally", Hobbes's account has to be considered as profoundly determinist. (Hobbes, 1651: 53, 4) This is certainly true for the laws of physics, but Hobbes's mechanism also extends to the factors that govern human behaviour: reason and passions (among which fear is most prominent). As Hobbes (1651: 64) argues, a human being is placed in the state of nature, "though with a possibility to come out of it, consisting partly in the Passions, partly in his Reason". Both of these motivators are God-given. The laws of nature are the divine "dictates of Reason" (Hobbes, 1651: 80) and the importance of human reasoning as a motivator is unquestionable. On the other hand, people "can have no passion, nor appetite to any thing, of which appetite Gods will is not the cause". (Hobbes, 1651: 147) Since Hobbes mentions nothing that could hinder them, it is safe to assume that both aspects of human nature, if sufficiently developed, actually *guarantee* the emergence of the state. The creation of the state thus becomes more than an option, it becomes a natural necessity. This is also argued by Stanton (2008: 69-71) who compares the structure of Hobbes's and Aquinian arguments and demonstrates that "[o]n Hobbes's view, an agent's voluntary actions, whose object is 'some *Good to himselfe*', always proceed from a prior cause 'in a continuall chaine, (whose first link is in the hand of God the first of all causes)', that is, from necessity".

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Robert Kraynak (1983: 89) rightfully argues that Hobbes's "writings present a coherent and consistent theory of history, the subject of which is the evolution of man from barbarism to civilization." Although I agree with Kraynak on this point, I disagree with his claim that Hobbes's theory of history "lacks the idea of inevitable development toward an end or final stage, and [that] it is, for the most part, a story of retrogression rather than of progress." Hobbes is explicit about the kingdom of God as the final commonwealth on Earth, although he is not as clear about the ways in which the earthly civil society is to be transformed into its heavenly successor. Furthermore, Hobbes does not consider civilization "no better than savagery and in certain respects is a more miserable and degraded condition." (Kraynak, 1983: 94) Although it is obvious that Hobbes was more than aware of the deficiencies of political constitutions of his day, he also considers them a consequence of imperfect reasoning. Therefore we can create the "everlasting constitution" if we work hard at developing our rational faculties and scientific insight into the way societies function. This is a task of political science, which can only flourish within the safety of a commonwealth.

Hobbes's natural condition: passions dominate reason

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Hobbes's account of the progression of mankind begins with the state of nature and it can be traced back to *The Elements of Law*. He argues there that "the estate of men in this natural liberty is the estate of war" (Hobbes, 1889: 72). This account is fully expanded in *Leviathan* where Hobbes (1651: 60-63) dedicates the 13th chapter to examining "the NATURALL CONDITION of Mankind, as concerning their Felicity, and Misery". This condition is defined by the absence of the sovereign authority and it is based on Hobbes's views of human beings' psychological and physical properties. Both kinds of properties are marked by the relative natural equality of human beings. Hobbes (1651: 60) does not deny that there are differences between humans, but they are "not so considerable, as that one man can thereupon claim to himselfe any benefit, to which another may not pretend, as well as he." This applies both to physical and mental strengths. They are also equal in terms of their psychology. They have the same desires and the most important of these "ends" is "their owne conservation". (Hobbes, 1651: 61) The strongest of all desires, self-preservation is a consequence of another shared property of men and that is their mortality. Finally, all human beings are endowed by reason, through which they can intuitively comprehend the natural law. In fact, Hobbes (1651: 282) identifies the natural law with "the Precepts of Naturall Reason, written in every mans own heart".

These internal factors govern human behaviour in the state of nature. However, they are not equally significant. The single most important appetite is the desire for preservation or its counterpart aversion, the fear of death. Hobbes (1651: 25) defines fear as "Aversion, with opinion of *Hurt* from the object". This feeling defines the lives of people living in the state of nature and it should eventually remind them not to disturb the peace established by the sovereign's absolute rule. In Hobbes's (1651: 63) words, "[t]he Passions that encline men to Peace, are Feare of Death; Desire of such things as are necessary to commodious living; and a Hope by their Industry to obtain them." Blits (1989: 417) summarises this argument and notes that fear serves a double purpose for Hobbes: "At once the principal cause of war and the principal means to peace, fear is the basis both of man's most urgent plight and of his only possible escape."

Before proceeding any further, we should briefly discuss Hobbes's notion of fear. As Blits (1989: 418) argues, "Hobbesian fear is best understood as primal, indeterminate fear of the unknown". Therefore, a human being in the state of nature lives in constant fear of other people. This feeling is motivated by her or his inability to predict the actions of others and it can be described as an aversion, since "[a]version wee have for things, not onely which we know have hurt us; but also that we do not know whether they will hurt us, or not." (Hobbes, 1651: 24) Endowed only with (as I

will discuss a bit later – imperfect) rationality and primarily motivated by their urge for self-preservation, agents in the state of nature are strongly inclined to take on a distrustful and conservative attitude towards their fellows. Since they lack external guarantees that others will behave cooperatively they simply cannot know when or whether to trust others. This is the state of radical doubt that places people in mutual relationships that Hampton (1997: 42-48) describes as single-play prisoner's dilemmas. As she argues, in such a setup cooperation is rational only if "others in that state are also disposed to perform them". (Hampton, 1997: 47) Furthermore, being creatures motivated by a range of passions (that do not conflict with the primary urge for self-preservation although they might very well conflict with self-preservation of others), agents in the state of nature cannot count on others to act rationally, either. (*ibid.*: 46) Moreover, even if there was strong mutual commitment to acting rationally, people's rational capacities can and do differ significantly. Therefore, one cannot trust even the least passionate of his fellows to act in a (sufficiently) rational manner. The only solution, then, is to endow a single person or a group of people with sovereign authority, thus establishing an external arbiter that will bring relative certainty to people's lives and enable their mutual cooperation. The sovereign, thus, becomes the universal object of fear that effectively replaces the web of particular fears that his subjects feel towards each other. This lesser evil establishes civil order since for Hobbes, as Blits's (1989: 426) suggests, "[t]he common good requires a common fear".

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On the other hand, Hobbesian natural human is without external guidance in the radically unknown and, thus, uncertain world. This individual is self-centred¹ and aware of his own existence, his passions, his urge to live and his rational faculties. On the other hand, although he is able to perceive the world he inhabits, he is profoundly ignorant of its initial cause. The lack of this knowledge makes predicting future very hard, if not impossible, resulting in constant "[a]nxiety for the future time" (Hobbes, 1651: 51), a strong feeling that is only second to his deep distrust towards his peers. Therefore, he can get no external guidance, whether from God as "some cause, whereof there is no former cause", (*ibid.*) or from his fellows, with whom he is roughly equal in his nescience. The only guidance he can receive comes through introspection, by realising that the only rational thing to do is to participate in the creation of a Hobbesian commonwealth. Since it was God who made him fundamentally fearful and endowed him with reason, no action that follows from those natural facts can be in opposition to God's will. This is especially true for the creation of the state, as this is the main consequence of human nature.

1 Individuals in the state of nature are also proud, as "every man looketh that his companion should value him, at the same rate he sets upon himself". (Hobbes, 1651: 61)

Hobbes's civil condition: (the right) reason rules over passions

Hobbes considers reason to be the same for all human beings and believes that people generally do have (some) rational capacity. However, it would be wrong to assert that everybody is equally endowed in this regard. For Hobbes (1651: 18) reasoning is a kind of arithmetic, "Adding and Subtracting [...] of the Consequences of generall names agreed upon, for the *marking* and *signifying* of our thoughts". The same as we use arithmetic as a tool for understanding the laws of physics, we use reasoning to discover the laws of nature. Consequently, not everybody is capable of fully grasping these laws:

"as in Arithmetique, unpractised men must, and Professors themselves may often erre, and cast up false; so also in any other subject of Reasoning, the ablest, most attentive, and most practised men, may deceive themselves, and inferre false Conclusions; Not but that Reason it selfe is always Right Reason, as well as Arithmetique is a certain and infallible Art" (*ibid.*)

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However, since "no one mans Reason, nor the Reason of any one number of men, makes the certaintie; no more than an account is therefore well cast up, because a great many men have unanimously approved it", it is in the interest of peace and safety to appoint the sovereign who will be the arbiter in potential disputes that could come up as a consequence of the inequality between individual rational faculties. (*ibid.*) Hobbes's account of rationality presupposes progressive development of rational capacities, since he believed that some people, like "the savage people in many places of *America*", were still living in the state of nature. (Hobbes, 1651: 63) This is not to say that such people have no rational faculties. Instead, Hobbes suggests that their ability to reason is not developed to the degree in which it is found in his English and European readers. For example, Hobbes argues that his account of natural law is not damaged by the fact that the "Savage people of *America*" exist in the state of nature. By treating reason as universal (and, thus, non-identical to its realisation in particular human beings), Hobbes can effectively distinguish between reason and the imperfect ability to reason.

This effectively leaves room for the idea that reason progresses, both on micro and macro levels. On the micro level, the level of the individual, reason is "attayned by Industry" since it is not "as Sense, and Memory, borne with us; nor gotten by Experience onely, as Prudence is". (Hobbes, 1651: 21) On a larger scale, this is reflected in "imposing of Names; and secondly by getting a good and orderly Method in proceeding from" them to assertions and connections "till we come to a knowledge of all the Consequences of names appertaining to the subject in hand; and that is it, men call SCIENCE." (*ibid.*) As our hard work pays off and we continue to accumulate knowledge about ourselves and our societies, we may utilise it to improve our constitutions. The process that leads to the creation of the

state and helps the development of its constitution thus parallels scientific development. Both creation and improvement of a well-ordered society is a consequence of the industrious development of our reason and science. Hobbes compares this process to masonry:

“And as the art of well building, is derived from Principles of Reason, observed by industrious men, that had long studied the nature of materials, and the divers effects of figure, and proportion, long after mankind began (though poorly) to build: So, long time after men have begun to constitute Commonwealths, imperfect, and apt to relapse into disorder, there may, Principles of Reason be found out, by industrious meditation, to make their constitution (excepting by externall violence) everlasting And such are those which I have in this discourse set forth: Which whether they come not into the fight of those that have Power to make use of them, or be neglected by them, or not, concerneth my particular interest, at this day, very little.” (Hobbes, 1651: 176)

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The optimal result of masonry and constitution-building is seen in the longevity of states and buildings. Long existence shows that both were built in accordance with the principles of reason, to which their creators came “by industrious meditation”. One’s ability to reason can, therefore, not only be “attained by Industry” but also perfected through “industrious meditation”. This, however, has to be understood as a historical process since a Hobbesian state cannot be created through a mutual contract that would mutually bind just a fragment of people. Instead, large numbers of people in the state of nature must first realise that they need a state and then expend effort in giving it the best constitution they can muster. This does not mean that their constitution will be the best possible. In fact, Hobbes’s argument is based on his view of dangerous shortcomings of contemporary and historical forms of government that can and often do lead to their “dissolution”. At the same time, Hobbes’s attempts at remedying these problems are indicative of his belief that people living in 17th century Western Europe are (or at some point will be) generally able to reason sufficiently well to institute a Hobbesian commonwealth, while, for example, the native Americans lacked the rational ability to create a state in the first place.² This is indicative of Hobbes’s account of progressive development of human rational capacities.

Men’s progress towards unveiling the principles of (universal) reason is primarily reflected in the development of the state governed by an absolute

2 It is more than likely that Hobbes had significant insight in the life of Native Americans, as he was involved in Virginia Company. This is why Malcolm (2003a: 75-76) argues that “he must have been aware, if he had read accounts such as that of Purchas, that some Indian tribes did conform to his model of a commonwealth”. According to Malcolm (ibid.) Hobbes chose to exclude this from his account since “[t]his must have been embarrassing for his subsidiary theory that all the benefits of civilization sprang directly from the leisure provided by secure government”.

sovereign. As Hoekstra (2007: 115-116) notes, Hobbes “says in *De Cive* that the natural condition is the domain of passion, whereas civil society is the domain of reason; and in *Leviathan* he claims that he has shown in chapter xiii that ‘that miserable condition of war . . . is necessarily consequent . . . to the natural passions of men’ without sovereignty”. This, of course, does not mean that passions cease to influence people’s lives in the state of civility. They still do and this is one of the reasons why the sovereign should be obeyed unconditionally. Otherwise, as Hoekstra (2007: 116) shows, “even with natural reason, and even if many or most humans have moderate aims, war will ensue nonetheless.” This is why the laws are needed to limit liberty and, in Hobbes’s (1651: 107) mechanical terms, serve as “externall Impediments of motion” that set external boundaries to human agency that is to large extent motivated by passions. If they are stable and strong, these “Impediments” make subjects’ passions politically irrelevant in a well-functioning sovereign state. The political irrelevance of subjects’ passions thus goes hand in hand with the progressive development of their reasoning faculties. In a brief passage of *De cive* Hobbes (1978b: 91) paints quite an optimistic picture of the progression of mankind, provided that the motivators of human behaviour are known and that the passions are kept under control:

“were the nature of humane actions as distinctly known as the nature of *quantity* in geometrical Figures, the strength of *avarice* and *ambition*, which is sustained by the erroneous opinions of the Vulgar, as touching the nature of *right* and *wrong*, would presently faint and languish; and mankind should enjoy such an immortal peace, that unless it were for habitation, on supposition that the earth should grow too narrow for her Inhabitants, there would hardly be left any pretence for war.”

The state has a distinguished role in directing the progression of humanity away from the sway of passions and towards perfecting their reasoning faculties. Moreover, the very existence of the sovereign’s absolute power and authority is an obstacle to his subjects’ relapsing into the state of nature that is dominated by passions. The reason that eventually conquers everybody’s fears of violent death is the reason of the sovereign, or as Hobbes (1651: 20) calls it – the “right reason”. In comparison to the particular reasoning of his subjects, the sovereign’s reason is the “right Reason”, or “the Reason of [the] Arbitrator” which is decisive in any potential dispute between the subjects. (Hobbes, 1651: 20)³

Another important part of man’s rational development is belief in God. For Hobbes (1651: 51) realisation that God exists is a matter of reason, rather than strong faith, as “it is impossible to make any profound enquiry

3 This, however, is not a consequence of the sovereign’s natural superiority. Hobbes (1651: 18) makes it clear that human reasoning capacities are roughly equal in their fallibility, as “no one mans Reason [...] makes the certaintie”.

into naturall causes, without being enclined thereby to believe there is one God Eternall". Faith in God is thus a consequence of correct reasoning while superstition is a product of ignorant fear as "they that make little, or no enquiry into the naturall causes of things, yet from the feare that proceeds from the ignorance it selfe, of what it is that hath the power to do them much good or harm, are enclined to suppose, and feign unto themselves, severall kinds of Powers Invisible" (*ibid.*). Polytheism of "the Gentiles" thus was a consequence of them basing their faith on a passion, instead of deriving it from the principles of reason. Hobbes (1651: 53) argues that: "acknowledging of one God Eternall, Infinite, and Omnipotent, may more easily be derived, from the desire men have to know the causes of naturall bodies, and their severall vertues, and operations; than from the feare of what was to be fall them in time to come." Hobbes therefore centres his account of superstition on fear as the strongest of passions, which was previously discussed as the second constant of human existence. The progressive development of reasoning faculties happens in parallel to the transition from natural to civil condition as well as with the shift from fearful superstition to rational religious belief. Progress is, therefore, an important feature of both faith and reason. The difference is only in the fact that the progress of reason is a necessary prerequisite for the progress of faith – in the same way it is necessary for the progress of science. Indeed, structurally speaking, for Hobbes the progress in faith parallels the progress in science: both developments encompass the development of reason and both rely on reason as a tool for verifying veracity of religious learning and scientific conclusions alike.

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The unbearable lightness of being a sovereign

Sovereigns are only human. Although the sovereign wields augmented power of his subjects, he remains a fallible and frail human being. While the subjects' psychological burden is alleviated by conjuring the commonwealth, the sovereigns remain in the state of nature. Their condition remains marked by potential conflict and mutual mistrust. Sovereigns face two chief dangers: internally, there is always a possibility of a revolt and civil war, and externally, there is a constant threat of foreign invasion. The sovereigns, "Kings, and Persons of Sovereigne authority", exist in a (naturally) hostile world, finding themselves in:

"continuall jealousies, and in the state and posture of Gladiators; having their weapons pointing, and their eyes fixed on one another; that is, their Forts, Garrisons, and Guns upon the Frontiers of their Kingdomes; and continuall Spyes upon their neighbours; which is a posture of War. But because they uphold thereby, the Industry of their Subjects; there does not follow from it, that misery, which accompanies the Liberty of particular men." (Hobbes, 1651: 63).

As I have argued elsewhere, (Simendić, 2012) Hobbes's sphere of international relations is not dominated by the states' *raison d'État* but by sovereigns' own reason, passions, interests and fears. As any other human being, no sovereign is motivated only by reason: they are jealous, distrustful and afraid of others who share their predicament and threaten them by their "Forts, Garrisons, and Guns". When compared to a person in the state of nature, a sovereign is generally motivated by the exact same set of passions, has the same level of control over his passions and has no superior rational faculty. Therefore, the sovereign's behaviour is determined by the very same set of natural motivating factors. The difference is only in the context. Individuals in the state of nature are surrounded by other natural persons, while a sovereign is surrounded by other sovereigns and their states. And although a sovereign is much more powerful than his subjects, his power is commensurable with the strength of other sovereigns. Finally, Hobbes (1651: 63) argues that "because [the sovereigns] uphold thereby, the Industry of their Subjects; there does not follow from it, that misery, which accompanies the Liberty of particular men." Indeed, Hobbes's argument is that the subjects are much better off living under a sovereign than in the state of nature. However, the sovereigns are a result of the social contract and not a part of it, so even with the might of their entire commonwealths at their disposal, they remain in the state of nature. The emergence of the state absolves the subjects from fear and uncertainty, which are the two consequences of Hobbes's anthropology in the state of nature. However, by remaining in the state of nature, the sovereign does not experience such catharsis and he is not relieved of his natural existential burden. The sovereign is not relieved of the psychological pressures that drove his very subjects to renounce their natural rights. He is confronted with other agents in the natural condition (most notably other sovereigns) and, although he has no obligations towards his subjects, he can never be absolutely certain of their loyalty, either. Furthermore, although the sovereign and his subjects share the urge for self-preservation, there is one noteworthy difference between them. Because the sovereign continues to live in the state of nature his passions continue to be politically salient. The civil condition, on the other hand, is the state where (sovereign-mediated) reason is supposed to dominate and where the passions of the subjects are held in check by sovereign coercion. Their liberty being unrestrained by external coercion, and unlike their subjects who live in "the domain of reason", the sovereigns are still a part of "the domain of passion". (Hoekstra 2007: 116)

Even though Hobbes does not explicitly suggest any, there are at least two potential consequences of the sovereign being "left behind" in the natural state of radical insecurity and discontent. Firstly, the situation can be resolved through a long series of conflicts that would lead to the rule of a single sovereign. Secondly, as they are not contractually bound to be or to

remain sovereigns, the sovereigns can choose to enter a social contract of their own and pass on the hot potato of sovereignty to a single sovereign. In fact, Hobbes (1651: 102) acknowledges consensual transfer of power when he suggests that a sovereign's "Power cannot, *without his consent*, be Transferred to another". (my italics) Furthermore, in both of these cases the transfer of authority between the sovereigns would not face any resistance from their (now former) subjects because Hobbes (1651: 101-107) clearly states that being a part of a "*Common-wealth by Acquisition*" grants no special rights to rebellion to the subjects, as "the Rights, and Consequences of Sovereignty, are the same in both".

If we now turn back to Hobbes's mechanistic and progressivist view of nature and psychology, we will see that the evolution of authority starts in the prepolitical state of nature in which sovereignty is particularised within every individual human being and that it gradually encompasses more and more people (first within families, then cities and states). This historical process is marked by constant extension and defragmentation of power and sovereignty. Indeed, Hobbes (1651: 85) describes this when he discusses the historical enlargement of "dominions" as a transition from smaller to larger sovereign entities: "And as small Families did then; so now do Cities and Kingdomes which are but greater Families (for their own security) enlarge their Dominions". The process starts with initial defragmentation of individuals' natural "right to every thing" (Hobbes, 1651: 65) that gets gradually added up to a total of sovereign power (*summa potestas*). This progressive adding of power might come to its natural end in a very interesting way and merge with Hobbes's views on Christian eschatology. The sovereign who ends up governing the world would thus be the Biblical antichrist, as he would govern the entire Earth instead of Christ.

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It is important to underline that such a sovereign is somebody who is the essence of a commonwealth that is a "*Mortall God*". The distinction between mortal Leviathan and the immortal God is not in the ungodly nature of the former, but in its "mortality". (Hobbes, 1651: 88) This mortality comes from internal and external causes of the "*Dissolution of a Common-wealth*". Therefore, if Hobbes's comparison and equation of the state with God is more than a simple metaphor,⁴ the single unified Leviathan is the equivalent of the single God while its sovereign representative, is a pretender on the throne of Christ who is God's representative on Earth. Such a person is, by definition, the Antichrist as he "usurpeth a Kingdome in this world, which Christ took not on him [and] he doth it *as Christ*" and, not unlike

4 And there are good reasons in favour of believing that such an important claim has to be more than a metaphor, not at least because Hobbes (1651: 14) considered metaphors as something that "deceive[s] others" and that "in reckoning, and seeking of truth, such speeches are not to be admitted". (Hobbes, 1651: 21)

Pope, “give[s] Laws to all Christian Kings, and Nations”. (Hobbes, 1651: 305) This potential sovereign of the world would find himself in a situation that is radically different from any other human being’s. His powers would be unprecedented and his will would be the will of the Leviathan who truly has nobody and nothing to fear on Earth. Moreover, the unification of all earthly authority would eliminate all the external threats to the world government. The internal causes of its “dissolution” would also be eliminated with the progression of reason as “may, Principles of Reason be found out, by industrious meditation, to make their constitution (excepting by externall violence) everlasting” (Hobbes, 1651: 176). Without the threat of “externall violence” and by establishing the “everlasting” constitution, the “*Mortall God*” rises up to the immortal one, and its sovereign representative becomes the equivalent of Christ, God’s representative on Earth.

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The uncertain path to the Kingdom of God

The arrival of the Antichrist would be the event that immediately precedes the Second Coming of Christ and consequent institution of the Kingdom of God on Earth: “Which second coming not yet being, the Kingdome of God is not yet come, and wee are not now under any other Kings by Pact, but our Civill Sovereigns”. (Hobbes, 1651: 335) It is very important to note, however, that Hobbes never actually mentions the Antichrist in this context. This is not to say that he does not mention the Antichrist at all. In *Leviathan* he discusses at length whether the Pope can be considered an antichrist. Hobbes (1651: 303) discusses both meanings of the word: “one that falsely pretendeth to be *His* Lieutenant, or Vicar generall, but to be *Hee*” and “this speciall Antichrist, [...] (Mat. 24. 15.) [...] that abominable Destroyer, spoken of by Daniel”. In both cases, contrary to the common Protestant view, Hobbes’s answer is negative. It is clear that Hobbes has given significant thought to this issue and this makes the fact that he failed to offer a more elaborate account of Christian eschatology even more striking. What is clearly missing is the discussion about the progression of “human condition” from his day until the Second coming. There are at least two possible reasons behind this omission.

The first reason is both political and methodological. In *De cive* Hobbes argues that “we may not, as in a Circle, begin the handling of a Science from what point we please. There is a certain Clue of Reason, whose beginning is in the dark, but by the benefit of whose Conduct, wee are led as ‘twere by the hand into the clearest light”. (Hobbes, 1978b: 92) He then goes on to describe how he had addressed the issue of natural justice by analysing every concept that belongs to an array of causes and consequences that begins with human nature and ends with natural justice. Eschatology, on the other hand, is descriptive of absolutely certain events that take place in future

and this is not a matter of scientific enquiry as “[n]o man can know by Discourse, that this, or that, is, has been, or *will be*; which is to know absolutely” (Hobbes, 1651: 30; the emphasis is mine). This is why Hobbes can rightfully consider Biblical writings descriptive of the past as truly historical (and thus related to the process of scientific discovery) while discussing eschatological predictions on their own terms, as unrelated to any particular happening of his time. John Pocock (1989: 198) is right to emphasise Hobbes’s distinction between “timeless” eschatology and temporal history and his attack on those who confuse the two and make a case for “spiritual jurisdiction”. Therefore, as we have seen, Hobbes denies that the Pope is the antichrist.

The lack of connection between Hobbes’s discussion of current affairs and his eschatology was uncommon for his time. Not only that the coming of the year 1666 gave rise to a number of millenarian accounts, but also it was quite common in the 17th century England for one to label his opponents as “antichrists”. The latter is especially true for the middle of the 17th century, when it was a common practice for the Parliamentary pamphleteers to label the King and their ecclesial opponents as antichristian, if not antichrist(s).⁵ The danger of such arguments went beyond simple name-calling and terminological “confusion” as they presupposed the superiority of divine over civil right. Hobbes responded by arguing that there is nothing anti-Christian in absolute civil authority and he “had written at length about apocalyptic because this was a necessary means of destroying the spiritual usurpations that England seemed to be overcoming at the end of the Civil Wars”. (*ibid.*) Hobbes’s account differed from such “confused” discussions in one additional aspect. Contrary to the widespread belief in his day, Hobbes did not believe that the Armageddon is at hand. Not only that he does not mention the Second coming of Christ as an imminent event, but he also explicitly states that “that tribulation is not yet come; for it is to be followed immediately (ver. 29.) by a darkening of the Sun and Moon, a falling of the Stars, a concussion of the Heavens, and the glorious coming again of our Saviour in the clouds. And therefore The *Antichrist* is not yet come.” (Hobbes, 1651: 303). The fact that, to use Pocock’s terms, Hobbes distinguished between (historical) “time” and (divine) “timeless” does not mean that the two are mutually inoperable. To an extent they have to be commensurable, not at least because Hobbes believed the Earth to be stage for both history and eschatology. Hobbes does not argue that the two are incommensurable; he just argues that the time for the timeless has not yet come.

5 I am indebted to Christopher Hill for this analysis. Hill (1971: 79) notes that the “[u]se of the phrase ‘Antichrist’s party’ to describe the King’s armed supporters at once opened up propagandist possibilities similar to those which Elizabeth’s government had seen in the equation of Pope and Antichrist”. King himself was referred to as the Beast in a number of pamphlets published after 1643. (Hill, 1971: 86-87)

This leads us to the second reason why Hobbes might have chosen not to take his deterministic account of the state and human nature to its logical conclusion. It seems that Hobbes was very much aware of the (theological problem of) dual nature of political power and authority. On one hand, the sovereign power is a God-given consequence of human nature while, on the other, its continual defragmentation necessarily leads to the (anti-christian) rule by a single sovereign. For Hobbes, emphasising the latter over the former would entail supporting the horrors of anarchy and writing in favour of slowing down the progression of mankind. That alone would be sufficient for any vocal opponent of division of power not to take this route and to choose to leave this aspect out. That being said, the state remains a peculiar beast, not unlike the Biblical leviathan. And leviathan, as Malcolm (2007: 23) suggests, was a common allegory for the Devil, “Antichrist, or [...] other diabolical forces on earth.” Not unlike the state in my interpretation of Hobbes’s eschatology, “leviathan” is characterised as “a mighty creation of God, in the powers of which God seemed to take some pride; however, some of the other passages (notably Isaiah 27:1) suggested a monstrous being with which God must eventually engage in apocalyptic combat” (Malcolm, 2007: 25). Indeed, Hobbes (1651: 168) says that: “there is that in heaven, (*though not on earth*) that [leviathan] should stand in fear of” (my italics). It might be that, comparably to “anti-christ”, Hobbes speaks of *a* leviathan and *the* leviathan where a leviathan is a commonwealth and the leviathan is the entity that has nothing (no other leviathans) to fear on earth. Therefore, there are at least some reasons to believe that Hobbes’s omission of detailed descriptions of progression of mankind towards unified authority that ends in the Apocalypse was deliberate. Hobbes, as someone who vigorously supported absolute authority, never fully explained the reasons behind labelling the state as a demonic beast nor described how the transition into the Kingdom of God might take place. On the other hand, Hobbes is explicit about Christ’s rule happening on Earth and it being exclusive of human sovereignty, as “the Kingdom of God is a Civil Common-wealth, where God himself is Sovereign” and “the Kingdom of God is to be on Earth” (Hobbes, 1651: 241; 219-220).

These developments seem to be fuelled by the progress in reasoning faculties that, in turn, leads to better ability to grasp the universal and God-given natural laws. As I have discussed earlier, at one of the steps of this progression, a rational human being becomes aware of the fact that creation of the world can only be explained through a single cause and that leads him to monotheism. As this realisation alone is not sufficient for him becoming a part of the Kingdom of God, he has to accept the fundamental article of faith, the one that stipulates that “Jesus is the Christ”. Teaching and informing people of this article is exactly what the church is supposed to do: “The work of Christs Ministers, is Evangelization; that is, a Proclamation of

Christ, and a preparation for his second coming; as the Evangelization of John Baptist, was a preparation to his first coming.” (Hobbes, 1651: 270) The final result of this process is the division of mankind into Christians and those who do not believe that “Jesus is the Christ”. From the fragmentation of power that comes as a consequence of Hobbes’s interpretation of Christian eschatology, temporarily arises the new bipolar order after the Judgement that lasts until the Second (Everlasting) Death of the last of the infidels. (Hobbes, 1651: 246) The dividing lines are drawn on Earth, between the Christian subjects of the Kingdom of God and those who are not a part of this realm and are, therefore, the enemies of God, “[f]or without the Kingdom of Christ, all other Kingdoms after Judgment, are comprehended in the Kingdome of Satan.” (Hobbes, 1651: 277) After the Resurrection Christians would become the subjects of God’s Kingdom whose rule would be mediated through Christ, as it was the case with Moses and the Israelites: “he shall be King, not onely as God, in which sense he is King already, and ever shall be, of all the Earth, in vertue of his omnipotence; but also peculiarly of his own Elect, by vertue of the pact they make with him in their Baptisme.” (Hobbes, 1651: 264) They would enjoy “[t]he joyes of Life Eternall”. (Hobbes, 1651: 245) On the other hand, “the Reprobates” would live in the Kingdom of Satan, “The Enemy, [whose] Kingdome must be on Earth also. For so also was it, in the time before the Jews had deposed God. For Gods Kingdome was in Palestine; and the Nations round about, were the Kingdoms of the Enemy; and consequently by *Satan*, is meant any Earthly Enemy of the Church.” (Hobbes, 1651: 244) It is noteworthy that Hobbes’s definition of Satan as “any Earthly Enemy of the Church” corresponds with “another usuall signification of the word Antichrist” as “an *Adversary of Iesus the true Christ*”. (Hobbes, 1651: 304) Therefore, in a general sense, the Kingdom of Satan is identified with the kingdom of Antichrist.

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Conclusion

Regardless of earthly authority being unified before or through the Second Coming of Christ, the antecedent process remains the same. The natural progression that starts from a number of atomised individuals in the state of nature ends with their unity within the state as a single entity. This is accompanied by the transformation from the rule of passions and particularised reason to the rule of universal Reason and followed by the developments in religious belief. Internal motives drive every person in the state of nature to relinquish his fragmented piece of sovereignty (his “right to every thing”) in favour of a single person who becomes their sovereign. For natural persons in the prepolitical state of nature, the only possible (and rationally preferred) outcome is their cathartic conferral of power to a single sovereign that leads to the creation of the state. As I have demonstrated, the

sovereigns remain in natural condition, have no direct duty towards their subjects⁶ and their position is no different than the position of other natural persons. This entails that they share the same psychological burden as their prepolitical counterparts and that they are as strongly inclined to pass the hot potato of sovereignty to others until the single sovereign emerges who has no other sovereigns to fear and whose only concern is to rule in accordance with the natural reason. These transformations occur in parallel with gradual advancement of human reasoning capacities and abilities to grasp God-given universal reason, accept its laws and understand the fundamental article of faith. And this is the point where Hobbes's dynamic anthropological framework might transgress the sphere of international relations and step into the final stages of Christian eschatology. If Hobbes indeed believed that the defragmentation of power leads to establishing a single world sovereign who could be considered as the antichrist, his account of eschatological theocracy that would exist on Earth would not appear at all disjointed from the rest of his political philosophy. This would also give a fuller meaning to his underlying claim about the progression of reason and human knowledge by which "Reason is the *pace*; Increase of Science, the *way*; and the Benefit of man-kind, the *end*". (Hobbes, 1651: 22)

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6 The sovereigns' duties to their subjects (such as working towards keeping them safe) can be described as indirect because they are a result of sovereigns' efforts aimed at ensuring their own self-preservation.

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Marko Simendić

Priroda, građansko stanje i eshatologija:
Hobsova ideja napretka u tri čina

Apstrakt

Argument ovog rada je da teorija Tomasa Hobsa sadrži ideju progresivnog ukрупnjavanja i ujedinjenja moći koju prati napredovanje ljudskog razuma. Ukoliko je napuštanje prirodnog stanja i potčinjavanje suverenu posledica ljudske prirode, slično bi trebalo da važi i za same suverene, pošto Hobs smatra da oni i dalje žive u prirodnom stanju. Prema tome, odnosi među suverenima trebalo bi takođe da vode do ukрупnjavanja političke vlasti, kako osvajanjem, tako i miroljubivom predajom vlasti. Eventualna potpuna defragmentacija moći može takođe imati i eshatološke posledice, pošto bi objedinjena moć jednog čoveka nad celim svetom uklonila nasilje koje je pretilo od drugih suverena kao razlog raspadanja države, dok bi napredak razuma postepeno uklonio njene unutrašnje nesavršenosti. Ova bi hipotetička situacija mogla povezati Hobsov opis carstva Božjeg iz Levijatana sa njegovom širom političkom teorijom: jedinstveni suvereni predstavnik (sada) besmrtnog i sveobuhvatnog levijatana bi se mogao smatrati Antihristom, što bi najavilo drugi Hristov dolazak.

Ključne reči: Hobs, napredak, determinizam, suveren, svetska vlada, antihrist