Hobbes's concept of the natural condition of mankind became an inescapable point of reference for subsequent political thought, shaping the theories of emulators and critics alike, and has had a profound impact on our understanding of human nature, anarchy, and international relations. Yet, despite Hobbes's insistence on precision, the state of nature is an elusive concept. Has it ever existed and, if so, for whom? Hobbes offered several answers to these questions, which taken together reveal a consistent strategy aimed at providing his readers with a possible, probable, and memorable account of the consequences of disobedience. This book examines the development of this powerful image throughout Hobbes's works and traces its origins in his sources of inspiration. The resulting trajectory of the state of nature illuminates the ways in which Hobbes employed a rhetoric of science and a science of rhetoric in his relentless pursuit of peace.

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VAIN GLORY … is exemplified in the fable of the fly sitting on the axletree, and saying to himself, What a dust do I raise!

– Hobbes, *The Elements of Law*

*To Chrysoula*
Images of Anarchy

The Rhetoric and Science in Hobbes’s State of Nature

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Tufts University
Cambridge University Press
32 Avenue of the Americas, New York, NY 10013-2473, USA

Cambridge University Press is part of the University of Cambridge. It furtheres the University’s mission by disseminating knowledge in the pursuit of education, learning, and research at the highest international levels of excellence.

www.cambridge.org

Information on this title: www.cambridge.org/9780521513722

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First published 2014
Printed in the United States of America

A catalog record for this publication is available from the British Library.

Library of Congress Cataloging in Publication data

Evrigenis, Ioannis D., 1971–

pages cm
Includes bibliographical references and index.
JC153.H66687 2014
320.1–dc23 2014002044

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Acknowledgments

During the composition of this book, I have had the good fortune to have been surrounded by individuals and institutions that have encouraged and supported me in more ways than I can list. I am humbled by their attention and grateful for the opportunity to acknowledge their help and thank them.

Research of this kind relies heavily on libraries and archives, so it is my pleasure to acknowledge the assistance I have received over the years from the staff at the Tisch Library at Tufts – in particular, Martha Kellehan and Chris Barbour – and the staff of the Huntington Library; the staff of the rare books reading room at the British Library; the staff of the King's College Library, Cambridge; and the staff of the Houghton Library at Harvard University. Susan Halpert at Houghton, John Minichielo and Leslie Tobias-Olsen at the John Carter Brown Library at Brown, Anna Cook at the King's College Library, and Adrian James at the Society of Antiquaries of London helped me obtain some of the images contained herein and the permissions to use them. I am very grateful to His Grace the Duke of Devonshire and the Chatsworth House Trust for granting me access to the Hobbes manuscripts in their archives, and to James Towe for his valuable help there.

A Franklin Research Grant from the American Philosophical Society and a summer stipend from the National Endowment for the Humanities facilitated the initial research for this book. A Colcord grant from the Department of Political Science at Tufts University, arranged by Rob Devigne, funded a workshop that allowed me to complete it. At that workshop, Kinch Hoekstra, Cary Nederman, Mark Somos, and Tom Sorell provided invaluable feedback that helped me improve the argument beyond measure. In between, I was privileged to spend the 2008–09 academic year as a Laurance S. Rockefeller Visiting Fellow at Princeton’s University Center for Human Values. I am grateful to Stephen Macedo and the center’s faculty and staff for their hospitality, and to the many individuals who discussed Hobbes’s method and the state of nature with me during my stay. I was also fortunate to be part of a
National Endowment for the Humanities Summer Institute entitled “English Encounters with the Americas, 1550–1610,” superbly orchestrated by Mary Fuller at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, in 2011. During the 2011–12 academic year, I used the time provided by a fellowship from the Faculty Research Awards Committee and the Dean of Arts and Sciences at Tufts University to put together the main body of the book.

I presented parts of the argument at Princeton University; the New School for Social Research political theory seminar; the Saint Andrews Reformation Studies Institute seminar; as well as the New England and Southern Political Science Association meetings; the “Wrestling with Machiavelli” conference held in Cambridge, Massachusetts; a conference on absolutism, monarchism, and despotism organized by Cesare Cuttica at the University of Sussex; the European Association for Biblical Studies meeting; a conference on the passions and subjectivity in Early Modern culture organized by Freya Sierhuis at the Center for Advanced Studies of the Ludwig-Maximilians-Universität München; and the European Early American Studies Association conference in Bayreuth. The questions and comments I received on every one of those occasions pushed me to think about ways to improve the argument, so I am grateful to those who raised them.


Beyond the confines of conferences and seminars, David Art, Marie-Claire Beaulieu, Hans Blom, Janet Coleman, Alan Cromartie, Kevin Dunn, Eric Eben, Mary Fuller, Angus Gowland, Anthony Grafton, Felicity Green, Kelly Greenhill, Michael Hawley, Bruce Hitchner, Seth Holm, the late Istvan Hont, Victoria Kahn, Marketa Klicova, Petter Korkman, Gerald V. Lalonde, Scott Lyons, Daniel Margócsy, John McCormick, Russ Muirhead, Cary Nederman, Amit Paz, Daniel Pellerin, Philip Pettit, Edward Phillips, Paul Rahe, Rahul Sagar, Paul E. Sigmund, Johann Sommerville, Tom Sorell, Vickie Sullivan, Vasileios Syros, Richard Tuck, Catherine Wilson, and the late Robert Wokler assisted me by discussing the argument with me, reading drafts, answering my questions, or pointing me to useful sources. I am grateful to them, as well as to my editor, Lew Bateman, and to Shaun Vigil at Cambridge University Press, for their eagerness to help me and their patience. I must single out Kinch Hoekstra, who fielded countless questions with exemplary good humor and saved me from several blunders. Once again, Mark Somos read and commented on successive drafts, discussed every conceivable aspect of the argument with me, and made suggestions.
Acknowledgments

that have improved the book vastly. I am indebted to him for his help and grateful for his friendship.

In a variety of ways, Socrates Antsos, Vangelis Himonides, Theodoros N. Ikonomou, Dimitris Kastritsis, Yianos Kontopoulos, Antonis Kouidis, Alex Vratskides, and Steryios Yannoulis have proven to be the kinds of friends of whom one dare only dream. I owe the most to Tra Evrigenis. Skillfully assisted by Georgia, Olive, Daphne, and Thomas, she has remained an unceasing source of inspiration, encouragement, and support.

Over the years, I have accumulated an incalculable debt to Chrysoula Evrigenis. I dedicate this book to her as a very small token of my gratitude.
The narration itself doth secretly instruct the reader, and more effectually than can possibly be done by precept.

– Hobbes, “Of the Life and History of Thucydides”
Abbreviations

Unless otherwise indicated, references to Hobbes’s works are to the following editions:

- **The Correspondence of Thomas Hobbes**

- **De Cive**

- **The Elements of Law**

- **EW**

- **Leviathan**

- **OL**