

Introduction

It is not to revive the corpse of past erudition that I have any desire, but rather to make more vivid the life of today, and to help us envisage its problems with a more accurate perspective. Otherwise my task would be as ungrateful as it is difficult . . . We [must] see our own day as from a watch tower. We are trying to know more closely the road we have been travelling.

J. N. Figgis, *Studies of Political Thought From Gerson to
 Grocius 1414–1625*

It would be difficult to find a time in history more tumultuous than the period of the English Revolution and Puritan protectorate from approximately 1640 to 1660. In the midst of the tumult, many people offered prescriptions for curing the nation's disorders and achieving its long-lasting health. Hobbes's argument for the institution of an absolute sovereign in his masterpiece *Leviathan* is the most famous and celebrated of those prescriptions, and in this book I will be undertaking an extensive examination of Hobbes's political theory based primarily on his statement of it in *Leviathan* and supported by many of his political and philosophical writings.

However, my concerns go beyond mere analysis of the Hobbesian political position. In recent years, philosophers and historians have displayed considerable interest in social contract theories. But there has been confusion and controversy over the structure and justificational force of social contract arguments, as well as a good deal of perplexity over the nature of the argument used by Hobbes to establish the institution of the sovereign. In this book I want to tackle both problems at once, hoping to shed light on the general structure of all social contract arguments by analyzing and explaining Hobbes's contractarian argument.

Hobbes's argument is well suited for this philosophical purpose, not only because it is probably the finest of the traditional social contract arguments but also because Hobbes worked hard to make its architecture clear in order to persuade his readers of his political conclusions. In all of his political writings he maintains that it was *bad reasoning* that had plunged England and other European political societies into chaos during the seventeenth century, so that the only effective cure for this disorder was to give members of these societies a sound, rational argument for the correct political structure of a state as rigorous as any of Euclid's geometric proofs: "Geometry therefore is demonstrable, for the lines and figures from which we reason are drawn and described by ourselves; and civil philosophy is demonstrable, because we make the commonwealth ourselves." ("Six Lessons to the Professors of the Mathematics," *EW* vii, ep. ded., 184; see also *DC*, *EW* ii, pref., xiii–xiv) Hence I will be taking Hobbes's geometric analogy seriously, isolating the major premisses and examining

Cambridge University Press

978-0-521-36827-8 - Hobbes and the Social Contract Tradition

Jean Hampton

Excerpt

[More information](#)

INTRODUCTION

the inferences of his argument. And if I find that a step is inadequately justified by Hobbes, I will try to justify it by other means. I hope to accomplish more than a description or explication of Hobbes's political philosophy; I am attempting a rethinking of his position. Rather than being merely a commentator or critic, I will attempt to be Hobbes's interlocutor. Only if one tries, in this way, to get the best possible statement of Hobbes's argument for absolute sovereignty will one be able to understand where and why that argument fails, and an understanding of that failure will help us to understand what structure a social contract argument must have if it is to succeed.

My commitment to presenting *Leviathan* as a book that attempts to put forward a unified "geometric" argument places me squarely within the traditional "systematic" camp of Hobbes interpreters, whose approach has been recently attacked by a group of "antisystematic" interpreters emphasizing natural law in their reconstructions of Hobbes's position. Led by A. E. Taylor and Howard Warrender, these critics argue that one cannot get Hobbes's political conclusions to follow from his natural philosophy or his human psychology, and that the political argument in *Leviathan* should be reconstructed to show that the justification for absolute sovereignty must rest on the foundation of natural law developed in medieval Christian philosophy. This attack on the systematic approach has generated interesting debates about how the pieces of Hobbes's argument go together, and it has focused attention on a perennially difficult problem for the systematic interpreters—the role of Hobbes's laws of nature in his argument.

However, this book is an attempt to present a single argument for absolute sovereignty resting on Hobbesian premisses about the nature of human beings, their psychology, and their "moral" relationships, each step of which is either explicit in *Leviathan* or consistent with the positions Hobbes takes on psychology, ethics, and natural philosophy. The only way to put to rest the worry that there is no coherent "geometric deduction" for absolute sovereignty in *Leviathan* is to present one. That is what I propose to do.

I will not, however, contend that Hobbes's geometric deduction succeeds. On the contrary, it is invalid, and I will be concerned to determine both where and why it fails. Warrender and others are not, therefore, wrong to suspect that Hobbes's conclusion does not follow from his materialist premisses, but they are wrong to deny that Hobbes's primary intention in *Leviathan* was to derive that conclusion from those premisses. Moreover, I shall contend that at every vulnerable point in his argument Hobbes wavers, putting forward views to shore up his shaky argument that are importantly at odds with the political conclusion he wants to justify. The passages in which these views are expressed are favorites of the antitraditionalist school, and when I bring these discordant ideas together in Chapter 8, I will show that they form the seeds of a Lockean-style social contract argument. Indeed, if Locke needed a source book of ideas for his own political theory, he needed to look no farther than *Leviathan*. So the antitraditionalist interpreters' claim that there are Lockean views in *Leviathan* is right, but I shall argue that they are wrong to see these ideas as constitutive of the main and "official" Hobbesian argument.

Giving such a rational reconstruction of Hobbes's argument does not preclude taking a historical approach to his work; on the contrary, the historical background is a highly

Cambridge University Press

978-0-521-36827-8 - Hobbes and the Social Contract Tradition

Jean Hampton

Excerpt

[More information](#)*Introduction*

useful supplement to the philosophical analysis of his argument. Placing Hobbes's argument in historical context reveals and clarifies many of the assumptions and theoretical underpinnings of that argument and makes explicit what problems his theory of the state was designed to solve. Indeed, this historical discussion is useful in bringing to light the reasons any philosopher would have for espousing an "alienation" social contract theory. Nonetheless, my commitment to history does not imply slavish adherence to Hobbes's statement of his own argument. I am not loath to use contemporary philosophical and mathematical tools (such as the tools of game theory) to reconstruct his argument. Hobbes meant his work to be appreciated as a philosophical argument for absolute sovereignty, not as an exhibit in a museum of seventeenth-century political beliefs. Hence, the use of any tools of logic or any modern conceptual distinctions that will help to advance, clarify, or improve Hobbes's argument for his political theory is fully in accordance with his purposes and true to the spirit of his work.

Of course, in one sense, most of us in the twentieth century are already confident that the argument fails in some way, for we believe that there is no successful argument for a polity as distasteful to us as absolute sovereignty. An investigation of Hobbes's argument and an appreciation of its failure can help us to explain our rejection of this type of government and thus make more sophisticated our own political beliefs. However, the principal reason for studying Hobbes's work is that doing so will improve our understanding of social contract theories generally. For example, we can learn from an analysis of Hobbes's political theory that it is an example of one *kind* of social contract argument that began to develop as early as the twelfth century, when a debate arose among Roman law theorists concerning a passage in Justinian's *Digest* known as the *lex regia*:

What pleases the prince has the force of law, because by the *lex regia*, which was made concerning his authority, the people confers to him and upon him all its own authority and power. [Morrall 1971, 46; from the *Digest* of Justinian, I, 4, 1]

The commentators on the *Digest* were prepared to accept this statement as good evidence that the ruler's power was derived from the people, but they could not agree on how that transfer of power had occurred. When the people "conferred" their power on the ruler, did they surrender their power to him? Or did they merely lend him that power, reserving the right to take it from him if they saw fit? This was more than just an academic dispute about the interpretation of a text; at issue was the fundamental relationship between the ruler and the ruled, and theorists who gave different answers to this question advocated very different polities. If power was merely loaned to the ruler, rebellion against him could be condoned if he violated the conditions attached to that loan. But if the people's grant of power was a surrender, there were no such conditions, and the people could never be justified in taking back that power via revolution.

As English society in the seventeenth century warred over the issue of the nation's political structure, Hobbes put forward the finest statement ever of the position that the ruler is instituted when the people surrender their power to him — what I call an "alienation" social contract theory. Later in the same century, Locke became the most famous spokesman for the position that the ruler's power is only loaned to him — what I call the "agency" social contract theory. My analysis of Hobbes's argument is

INTRODUCTION

designed to clarify the structure and strategy of all alienation arguments and to illuminate, by contrast, the different features of an agency social contract argument.

However, one of the most important ways in which a study of Hobbes's social contract theory illuminates other theories in this tradition is by making clear how any social contract argument works as a justification of the state. The belief that such arguments are without justificational force has been widespread since the seventeenth century. David Hume assumed that proponents of this argument used the social contract as a historical explanation of the state's creation, and he brilliantly ridiculed any historical claims these theories might have had (Hume 1965; 1978, III, ii, viii). Defenders of the argument countered that social contracts were only "hypothetical," but more recent philosophers have wondered how a merely hypothetical contract can justify anything. As Dworkin says, "A hypothetical contract is not simply a pale form of an actual contract; it is no contract at all." (1976, 17–18) One of the tasks of this book is to explain the sense in which an agreement instituting a ruler is supposed to be hypothetical and yet justificational and, in particular, how it introduces the notion of consent into the argument for the state's legitimacy. However, using Hobbes's theory, I will make this explanation in a way that will strike many readers as iconoclastic: I will argue that *there is no literal contract* in any successful social contract theory! Only when the nature of the agreements in these arguments is correctly understood can their justificatory and explanatory structure be appreciated. And although I will be explicitly concerned in this book to use this analysis to clarify the strategies of traditional contractarian arguments, such as those put forward by Hobbes, Locke, and Kant, I will at least suggest how this study is relevant to an understanding of the strategies of modern contractarian arguments designed to justify certain conceptions of justice or morality put forward by such contemporary political theorists as John Rawls. I will also argue that this study can educate us about the intellectual roots of the modern state and in this respect lead us to appreciate more fully the theoretical foundations of twentieth-century political philosophy.

Therefore, I hope that by the end of the book the reader will endorse the sentiments of Figgis cited at the outset of this Introduction (1916, 3–4), agreeing that this study of history has enabled us to ascend a watchtower, from which to gain perspective on contemporary political philosophy.

CHAPTER I

“Of Man”: The Foundation of Hobbes’s Political Argument

He that is to govern a whole nation, must read in himself, not this or that particular man, but Man-kind.

Hobbes, *Leviathan*

1.1 THE PREMISES OF HOBBS’S ARGUMENT

Every political philosopher is influenced by the economic, social, and political events of the time, and Hobbes’s work was particularly responsive to the political turmoil of his day. He was born in 1588, just before Philip II of Spain sent the Armada to attack England during Spain’s war with The Netherlands. During his childhood, a civil war raged within France between Protestant Huguenots and the Catholic crown. The Thirty Years’ War ravaged Europe during all of his early adult years, from 1618 to 1648. And England itself was plunged into civil war and disorder from 1642 to 1649. Cromwell waged war against Ireland, Scotland, and Holland during his protectorship, and two other wars between England and The Netherlands erupted in 1665 and 1672. During the 1670s, Holland was also engaged in a war against France, along with Austria, Spain, and the German principalities. And in 1679, the year of Hobbes’s death, political turmoil in England was increasing as, once again, opponents of a Stuart king prepared to overthrow him.

Given this kind of violent political turmoil, it is not surprising that a philosopher should come to hold a view of human beings as creatures who will, if unchecked, inevitably behave violently toward one another. And Hobbes uses this conception of human beings to argue that we are creatures who can live in peace only if we subject ourselves to an absolute sovereign. The first presentation of Hobbes’s argument for absolute sovereignty was in the *Elements of Law*, which circulated in manuscript form in 1640, arousing enough ire among Parliament members and sympathizers to force Hobbes to flee to Paris. The second presentation was made in *De Cive*, published in Latin in 1642, the second (1646) edition of which was translated and published in English under the title *Philosophical Rudiments Concerning Government and Society* in 1651. However, Hobbes’s final and most sophisticated presentation of the argument was in *Leviathan*, published in English in 1651 and translated (with some changes) into Latin by Hobbes himself and published (in Amsterdam) in 1668. It is the presentation of Hobbes’s argument in *Leviathan* on which we will concentrate.

THE FOUNDATION OF HOBBS'S POLITICAL ARGUMENT

In this chapter, I want to discuss certain critical premisses of the Hobbesian argument. Because Hobbes's political and philosophical beliefs were designed to form a unified, integrated system, I would have liked to have included a complete discussion of how Hobbes's fundamental metaphysical and epistemological beliefs ground his political conclusions. But such a project would have forced me to write another book in addition to this one, and there are already good discussions of the connections among Hobbes's metaphysical, epistemological, and political positions.¹ Hence, in this chapter, I intend to do something more limited: I will analyze and discuss certain philosophical beliefs about the nature of human beings and the "moral laws" obligating them that act as premisses in Hobbes's argument for absolute sovereignty.

Curtailling the discussion in this way is something that Hobbes himself would accept. While he insisted that the human being is both a "natural body" and a part of the "Body Politic" (*DH*, ep. ded., 35; *De Corp*, *EW* i, 1, 6, 6, 72; *Lev*, intro., 4, 2), he nonetheless believed that natural and political philosophy

do not so adhere to one another, but that they may be severed. For the causes of the motions of the mind are known, not only by ratiocination [science], but also by the *experience* of every man that takes the pains to observe those motions within himself. [*De Corp*, *EW* i, 1, 6, 6, 73; emphasis added]

So without getting too deeply involved in the principles of natural philosophy, which Hobbes, as a materialist, believes explain all human behavior, I want to discuss aspects of Hobbes's conception of the person that are supposed to be *empirically confirmed* and that underlie premisses in his argument for absolute sovereignty.

Some readers will think that by using the phrase "conception of the person" I am referring to Hobbes's psychology of human beings. This is not so. The psychological analyses of human behavior given by Hobbes in his writings already presuppose a certain view of what a person is—one might call it a "metaphysical" view. It is what Martin Hollis (1977) has called a "model of man." Moreover, his conception of the person involves a certain meta-ethical position (best expressed in *Leviathan* and *De Homine*) that we must understand if we are to appreciate both the structure of his argument and the prescriptive conclusions he reaches.

1.2 HOBBS'S RADICAL INDIVIDUALISM

In his article "The Social Contract as Ideology," David Gauthier (1977) argues that Hobbes is a "radical contractarian" who holds

that individual human beings not only can, but must, be understood apart from society. The fundamental characteristics of men are not products of their social existence . . . man is social because he is human, not human because he is social. In particular, self-consciousness and language must be taken as conditions, not products, of society. [1977, 138]

Gauthier is right to find in Hobbes's theory a very strong brand of individualism, one that regards individual human beings as conceptually prior not only to political society but also to *all* social interactions. In fact, his method of argument both relies on and reveals his view that human beings are individuals first and social creatures

1 See, for example, J. W. N. Watkins (1965a), and M. M. Goldsmith (1966).

Hobbes's Radical Individualism

second. J. W. N. Watkins argues (1965a, 52–65; 1965b, 242–8; see also Randall 1940; 1961) that in his social contract argument Hobbes is implicitly making a certain kind of use of the “resolutive-compositive” method expounded by the Paduan scientists of his day. Harvey, Galileo, and other exponents of this method taught that the best way to understand a system, process, or event is to resolve it into its components, analyze these components, and then recompose them via a theory that explains their interrelationships and interactions. Hobbes’s admiration for Harvey and Galileo is well known. And his acceptance of their method is evident in all three of his political writings. In *De Cive*, he writes:

Concerning my method, I thought it not sufficient to use a plain and evident style in what I have to deliver, except I took my beginning from the very matter of civil government, and thence proceeded to its generation and form, and the first beginning of justice. For everything is best understood by its constitutive causes. For as in a watch, or some such small engine, the matter, figure, and motion of the wheels cannot well be known, except it be taken insunder and viewed in parts; so to make a more curious search into the rights of states and duties of subjects, it is necessary, I say, not to take them insunder, but yet that they be so considered as if they were dissolved; that is, that we rightly understand what the quality of human nature is, in what matters it is, in what not, fit to make up a civil government, and how men must be agreed amongst themselves that intend to grow up into a well-grounded state. [DC, EW ii, pref., xiv]

Likewise, in *Leviathan*, Hobbes sets out to describe the nature of the state, the “artificial man,” and does so first by considering “the *Matter* thereof, and the *Artificer*; both [of] which is *Man*” (*Lev*, intro., 2, 2). He concludes by seeing how these parts coalesce and unify themselves through the actions of agreement and authorization.²

However, when looking for “constitutive causes,” Hobbes expects to find parts that are, in effect, “wholes” themselves. Just as he believes that dissection of a watch, or even of a human body, produces components that are separately defined but interacting parts of a unified mechanism [“For what is the *Heart*, but a *Spring*; and the *Nerves*, but so many *Strings*; and the *Joynts*, but so many *Wheeles*, giving motion to the whole Body . . . ?” (*Lev*, intro., 1, 1)], so, too, does he think that dissection of the state results in the discovery of separately defined human individuals who, after instituting the sovereign, are interacting parts of this “artificial man.” This is why he thinks it makes sense to speak of a presocietal “state of nature” in which men are “even now sprung out of the earth, and suddenly, like mushrooms, come to full maturity, without all kind of engagement to each other.” (DC, EW ii, 8, 1, 109) In his view, when we theoretically sunder society and put men into this natural state, human individuals are not destroyed when they are stripped of their social connections; rather, they are best revealed by that sundering. Although he admits that people certainly develop interests and ideas as a result of living in a society and cooperating with one another,³ he contends that people’s basic features and defining characteristics arise “from nature, that is, from their first birth, as they are merely sensible creatures, they have this disposition. . . .” (DC, EW ii, pref., xvi) And he believes that human beings have natural desires and motivations that, if unchecked, will lead them into extreme and continual conflict with one another.

2 In *De Corpore* there is a fairly extensive discussion of how philosophy follows a method that is both resolutive and compositive in nature; see Part I, Chapter 6, “Of Method.”

3 For example, see *Leviathan* (13, 9, 62) on the advantages of culture and industry obtained in civil society and lost in a state of war.

THE FOUNDATION OF HOBBS'S POLITICAL ARGUMENT

It is important to note that Hobbes's use of the resolute-compositive method does not generate this individualist position. Aristotle also accepts a resolute-compositive method of analysis in political matters (1941a, 1252a, 20–30), but for him the constituents of the state are not isolated asocial individuals, but individuals in certain fundamental social relationships with others; namely, master and slave, husband and wife, father and children. (See the *Politics*, 1253b, 4–6.) Moreover, Aristotle argues that society is conceptually prior to the individual person, a position that Hobbes is directly contradicting in his own political writings. So, although it might be easy from our post-Hobbesian perspective to see the resolute-compositive method as presupposing radical individualism, in fact it only *reveals* rather than creates Hobbes's view of human beings and their connections to one another in society.

In order to understand the exact nature of Hobbesian individualism, I want to explore the way in which this method shows how human beings are parts of a larger social whole; this, in turn, requires us to classify certain properties that any part of a larger whole might have. This classification is not an attempt to exhaust the types of properties that one can isolate in any system of parts, but for our purposes the following three kinds of properties are most important:

1. *Intrinsic properties.* These are properties an object has not in virtue of being a part of a larger whole but simply in virtue of being that object. For example, an airplane wing has the property of being made of metal; this is an intrinsic property, because the wing will have it whether or not it is affixed to the body of the plane. Likewise, an intrinsic property of a human being is having a heart; it is a feature we have in virtue of being such a creature.
2. *Functional properties.* These are properties that an object has in virtue of being part of a whole; specifically, they are properties that relate to or derive from the object's performance of certain roles basic to the purpose or nature of the whole itself. For example, in the human body, the stomach has the functional property of digesting proteins. And in a car, the transmission has the functional property of transmitting power from the engine to the drive shaft. Moreover, being a professor or a janitor or a pilot is an example of a functional property, insofar as it arises out of a person's performance of a role in the social group of which the person is a member.
3. *Interactive properties.* Not all objects that are parts of wholes have these properties, because they are properties that an object *develops over time* as it interacts with other parts of a whole, and not all such objects are able to change so that these new properties can be created. Moreover, these properties result from interaction between some or all of the parts of the whole and either the intrinsic properties of the object or its previously developed interactive properties. We see the development of an interactive property when the teeth of two cogs in a watch, as they come together, wear each other down. Each cog's property "being worn down" is interactive, because each develops as a result of the cogs' interaction. We might also say that a dog's ability to do tricks is an interactive property of the dog, because it is the result of the animal's association with human beings. Finally, we attrib-

Cambridge University Press

978-0-521-36827-8 - Hobbes and the Social Contract Tradition

Jean Hampton

Excerpt

[More information](#)*Hobbes's Radical Individualism*

ute interactive properties to human beings when they have interacted with other human beings or with other features of their natural environment. Examples of this sort of property in human beings include the following: having a taste for certain foods, such as ice cream or curry; certain sorts of physical abilities, such as the ability to ski; speaking a certain language, such as English or Hindi.

Using this terminology, we can now be clearer about what Hobbes is assuming when he characterizes his “state of nature.” For Hobbes, not only our reflexes and animal abilities but also our basic human characteristics, capacities, and desires are *intrinsic* properties. He is not denying that we have functional or interactive properties; one’s occupation in the community or one’s ability to speak a particular language are clearly examples of such properties. Rather, he is maintaining that these properties are not fundamental to our nature as persons and that we possess intrinsically all motivations and abilities that are characteristically human.

There is overwhelming evidence in all of Hobbes’s writings that he is an ardent supporter of this “radically individualist” perspective on human beings. I have already quoted the passage in *De Cive* explaining that in his argument he treats human beings as if they were “even now sprung out of the earth, and suddenly, like mushrooms, come to full maturity, without all kind of engagement to each other.” (*DC, EW* ii, 8, 1, 109) Of course, none of us arrives at adulthood so quickly and so asocially. But Hobbes maintains that the social interaction necessary for our physical survival in our childhood years does not in any way play a role in forming us *as human beings*. Indeed, he argues that if we enter into cooperative interactions with other people, it is only because we perceive these interactions to be in our interest in some way: “We do not therefore by nature seek society for its own sake, but that we may receive some honour or profit from it; these we desire primarily, that secondarily.” (*DC, EW* ii, 1, 2, 3) That is, we desire society only insofar as it has *instrumental value* for us, which means that our individuality grounds our sociality, not the reverse.

Watkins (1965a, 101ff.) and Michael Oakshott (1947, liv) have also discussed Hobbes’s “privacy thesis,” which is importantly connected with the radical individualism I am attributing to him. Hobbes’s privacy thesis is the view that our thoughts, beliefs, and emotions are “cut off” from others and confined to the “cell walls” of our person. Throughout *Leviathan*, Hobbes’s discussion of human beings assumes that minds never meet, that ideas are never really shared among human beings, and that each of us is always and finally isolated from every other individual. Such a thesis is a natural part of a philosophical perspective that regards human beings as social because they are human, rather than the reverse. It also fits nicely with Hobbes’s materialist metaphysics. By saying that “conceptions or apparitions are nothing really, but motion in some internal substance of the head” (*EL*, I, vii, 1, 28; see also *Lev*, 1), Hobbes imprisons those conceptions and apparitions within the person in whom those bodily motions are occurring.

Even our ability to speak a natural language, something that, more than anything else, appears to be evidence for understanding human beings as inherently social creatures, is regarded by Hobbes as an ability in no way dependent for its creation or development on social interaction of any kind. In Chapter 4 of *Leviathan*, Hobbes’s

THE FOUNDATION OF HOBBS'S POLITICAL ARGUMENT

account of human speech makes the individual the source of language, and he regards language as of instrumental value only: Words are needed only as "marks" to help us remember our thoughts (*Lev*, 4, 3, 12–13) or as "signes" to help us communicate with other human beings in order to better pursue the satisfaction of our desires (*Lev*, 4, 3, 31). Thus, Hobbes makes language a remarkably private and individual affair.

Many of Hobbes's critics in the seventeenth century disliked his radical individualism intensely. Ralph Cudworth maintained, in the spirit of Aristotle, that

a man cannot apprehend himself as a being standing by itself, cut off, separated, and disjointed from all other beings . . . but looks upon himself as a member lovingly united to the whole system of all intellectual beings. [cited by Passmore 1951, 72; and Watkins 1965a, 101]

And Hobbes's critics were particularly fond of attacking his individualist analysis of the family. In *Leviathan*, Chapter 20, and in *De Cive*, Chapter 9, Hobbes maintains, true to his radical individualism, that family bonds are not natural to individuals but only artificially forged and coerced contracts between an inferior (e.g., the child, the wife) and a superior (e.g., the parent, the husband), the latter providing protection for the former in exchange for obedience. Bishop Bramhall made it clear that he regarded this view as plainly crazy:

[Hobbes] might as well tell us in plain termes, that all the obligation which a child hath to his parent, is because he did not take him by the heeles and knock out his braines against the walls, so soon as he was born. [1658, 534; see also Lawson 1657, 48; and Filmer 1652, 6]

Bramhall and other critics went on to insist that there are *natural* ties of affection binding one person to another that are constitutive of our humanity and that generate commonly shared ethical principles that all rulers must heed. Nonetheless, other thinkers in the seventeenth century found this individualist perspective attractive. As I shall discuss later, the fact that even some of Hobbes's critics attempted to deduce universal moral laws from individual self-interest shows how enticing people in that age found the idea that moral and political theories must start with a view of the "raw" individual, stripped of any social connections.

However, Hobbes's radical individualism is not attractive or compelling to many twentieth-century thinkers, who, in this post-Hegelian, post-Marxist century, believe that fundamental human abilities, such as the capacity to reason mathematically, to learn a language, and to act morally, develop only because each of us interacts with other human beings, and who think that our identities as persons depend on roles we play and have played in family, school, city, and nation-state. Indeed, some Hobbesian critics have argued that this view of human beings is itself a product of the historical period in which Hobbes's thought developed. For example, C. B. Macpherson has argued (1977, chap. II, esp. 23 and 61; 1968) that the behavior that Hobbes attributes to human beings is not "natural" at all but is in fact the behavior of men and women in a "bourgeois market society" (1968, 38). Macpherson even tries to make into an *explicit* premiss in Hobbes's argument the idea that people in the "state of nature" seem in fact to be bourgeois men and women. He argues that in order to comprehend "Hobbes's argument from the physiological to the social motion of man, a social assumption is needed besides the physiological postulates" (1968, 46), for otherwise we will not understand why Hobbes believed that an absolute sovereign was necessary for peace.

But to "fix" Hobbes's argument in this way is to seriously misunderstand the