

THOMAS HOBBS (1588 - 1679)

First Philosophy

Geometry is the model of true science. All scientific reasoning is deductive. All basic facts of science are the result of defining terms so that they are equivalent in what they stand for. For example, since

"equilateral triangle" and
"equiangular triangle"

stands for exactly the same things, it is a necessary truth that

all equilateral triangles have equal interior angles

All reasoning is computation. One can compute whether a proposition is true by either determining that it is true by definition or that it logically follows as a consequence of some definitions. This may be compared to the process proving that two quantities are equal or unequal by performing identical operations on both sides of the equation. This is what the human mind actually does when it reasons about any subject. Even reasoning is a mechanical process. Which terms people use to form definitions is arbitrary and conventional. This does not matter as long as people agree to use the same terms for the same objects consistently and to confirm the consequences of definitions by observation of what actually exists.

What actually exists outside of our thoughts is located in Space and these are all individual Bodies. Bodies change only by moving. So, the Science of motion is the only science.

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Geometry is just the most abstract and general level of the science of bodies. The figures studied in Geometry can be defined in terms of bodies. "Point" means "Center of a spherical body". "straight line" means "shortest distance travellable by a body from one point to another", "Circle" means " motion of a point at a fixed distance from another point". And so on for the rest of the basic concepts of Geometry.

Physics - study of the effects of moving bodies on one another

Moral Philosophy- study of specific motions in the brain (passions).

Civil Philosophy - study of the motions of men in a commonwealth

Bodies cause people to form conceptions of them by pressing, directly or through a medium, on our sense organs. Every accidental feature of a body is reducible to some configuration of moving bodies or parts of bodies.

Phantasms

Only extension, size shape, density, motion are real (primary) qualities. Color, odor, sound, frangrance, exist only "in" the perceiver. They are secondary qualities.

A phantasm is an appearance of something. It is that which is directly and immediately in the soul when perception occurs.

Phantasms exist only in perceivers. Only moving bodies exist. So, phantasms are motions in the bodies of perceivers.

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Phantasms are not the objects one perceives by the senses, because phantasms are motions in our brains and we do not perceive our brains.

Properly speaking, what one perceives by the senses are bodies, such as the sun or a bell. One does not see color or hear sound. One sees illuminated objects (like the Sun) and one hears objects colliding with one another (the clapper colliding with the rim of the bell).

A phantasm may be defined as an act of sensing which occurs when external objects affect our sense-organs. We could not perceive external objects unless phantasms occurred in our brains. But it is not phantasms that we perceive. Imagination is simply "decaying sense", an example of the general principle of inertia.

Unfortunately, Hobbes also says things like this about phantasms: They are "...apparitions unto us of the motion which the object worketh in the brain".

MAN

Hobbes defines "life" as "a motion of the limbs beginning from an inner principle"

Living things may thus be classified as Automata

So, it follows, for Hobbes that if someone were to make an automaton, he/she would have created artificial life.

Natural life-forms, like plants and animals are God's automata.

The scholastic concepts of "animal soul" or "plant soul" are worthless nonsense. They are empty words that explain nothing.

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But Descartes' theory that human beings are exceptions to the rest of nature by having nonmaterial minds is also false. The human mind is simply the human brain together with the central nervous system. So, other animals have minds no less than humans do, but the minds of animals are simply not capable of rational thought.

But can human beings act freely if they are completely physical and subject to all the same mechanical laws as everything else in nature?

Hobbes thought that this dispute, like most others, could be ended if only we would define our terms properly. "Free action" simply means "doing what one wills without constraint". Further, we should acknowledge that "action" means "the effect of the last appetite in deliberation" and that "deliberation" means "imagining the consequences of a proposed action, which causes either desire or fear". So, *whenever* we are not prevented from doing something or forced to do something, we are acting freely. It would be nonsense to ask whether we will our actions freely. That would be asking whether we will our willing.

So there is no conflict between the fact that all events have causes and the claim that we sometimes act freely. The cause of our free actions is the act of willing from which they proceed.

That is why rewards, punishment and advice are not pointless. They can contribute to the determination of the will

"Passions" - the interior beginnings of volutary motions.

Two types: Appetite (Desire, Love) and Aversion (Hatred)

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In his ethical theory, Hobbes was a hedonist. (Compare Epicurus)
Whatever is called "good" is the object of some desire.
Whatever is called "Evil" is the object of one's aversion.

Happiness is not in the attaining of some final goal but in the continual progress in the attaining of objects of desire, one after another.

The general inclination of all mankind is the perpetual and restless desire of power. What people desire is always some good for themselves. In some cases, this good may include the good of others.

Political Philosophy

Like the ancient sophists, Hobbes held that the basic facts of science depend on (well-tested) human conventions about how words are to be used. Everything else in the sciences, logically follows from those basic conventions. It is the same with Civil Philosophy.

Unlike the sophists, Hobbes thought that living under the rule of law administered by an established government was not contrary to human nature, but is a rational goal to which human beings ought to aspire.

Apart from the conventions of society, all people are equal.
No one has a natural right to govern another or to make claims of superiority over another.

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Because they are roughly equal, people naturally compete for scarce goods. A pure "State of Nature" would be an endless "war of all against all". Individual freedom would be unlimited in a state of nature but benefits would also be at a minimum.

Any benefits requiring great force, cooperation, pooling of talents would be impossible.

We need not suppose that a state of nature has ever existed but it is something we ought to think of as a perpetual possibility, sometimes nearly realized in the anarchy that breaks out after wars. In such a state of nature, there could be nothing just or unjust; nothing right or wrong; nothing legal or illegal. Life would be "solitary, poor, nasty, brutish and short"

Human beings are at least partly rational. They fear death. They desire peace. Insofar as we are rational, we realize the following facts:

- 1) In a state of nature everyone would have the right to do anything necessary to preserve their own lives.
- 2) No one is secure so long as everyone has and exercises this right.

Therefore,

- 3) Everyone ought to seek peace insofar as one may hope to obtain it.

These are the fundamental laws of Nature and of Civil Society.

The Social Contract

It is rational to seek peace. It is therefore rational to promise to be peaceable toward others but only insofar as others are willing

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to do likewise and the mutual agreement and the promise is enforceable.

Enforceability of a covenant requires authorizing some person or group to enforce the law and it requires providing them with the means for enforcing it.

The state, in the person of a sovereign ruler, must be the earthly equivalent of God. All social, legal and moral authority rests in the power of the sovereign.

But a sovereign is legitimate just to the extent that he/they keep the peace within society and defend it from external threats. As long as this is done, there can be no justification for rebellion or any sort of resistance to the law.

Only an absolute monarch can be effective as a sovereign ruler.