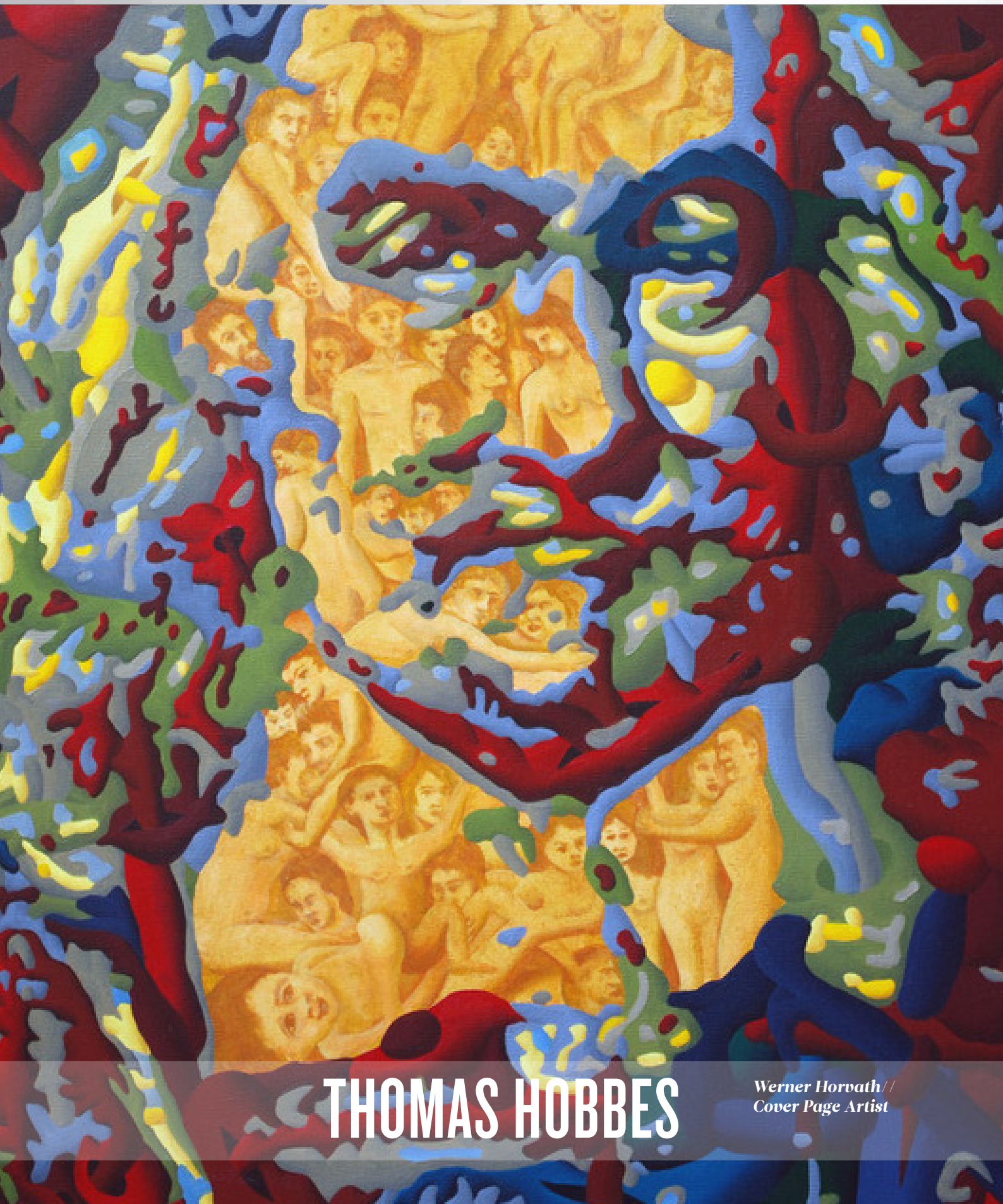


Café Philosophy



THOMAS HOBBS

Werner Horvath //
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by THOMAS MCGUIRE

POLITICS – IT’S A DIRTY JOB

According to opinion polls, politicians are one of the least trusted professions. However, this does not stop New Zealand Members of Parliament from being paid around \$140,000 per annum (which is three and a half times the average income) plus a salubrious package of perks. The most alluring perk of all is power. Although many enter the field believing that they can make the world a better place, power has always been the predominant *raison d’etre* of politicians throughout the ages.

However disliked they may be, though, no one is in a hurry to get rid of politicians. Hobbes, whose views are discussed in this issue of *Café Philosophy* among other political philosophers, seemed to think that any government is better than no government at all. The state often does things we don’t like or may actively oppose, but very few people seriously advocate a stateless society. In fact, the very word anarchy, which denotes the absence of a central authority, is widely associated with the thought of chaos and bloodshed. Most people see government as necessary, even if it is a necessary evil. Hobbes saw the greatest evil as a struggle of all against all that he thought would ensue without a strong, even tyrannical, state to keep these forces in check. Times have changed, but the Hobbesian perspective remains very influential. You can recognise it when you hear comments like ‘that Putin, he rules with an iron fist but the Russians would be in disarray without him’ or ‘look what a can of worms got opened when they overthrew Mubarak. He may have been ruthless, but at least he kept Egypt stable’.

Here in peaceful New Zealand, we have neither Leviathan State nor street battles to keep us running scared. Like other Western democracies our system is influenced by the radical idea that government comes “from the consent of the governed”, as the US Declaration of Independence puts it. This idea of consent, unlike Hobbes’ social contract which you are bound by whether you like it or not, implies that governments can lose their mandate to govern and must fear the people, not the other way around. In a democracy those vying for political power must persuade rather than dictate. But here lies a problem: a population which lacks awareness or interest regarding the important facts and issues facing their society, can be persuaded to make decisions (or delegate crucial decision-making power) to the detriment of their own welfare.

A local example illustrates one aspect of the problem. The commentary on David Shearer’s resignation as leader of the New Zealand Labour Party is both fascinating and frightening in what it reveals about modern politics. It shows that what matters is not the attributes of the person,

but their skill as a media performer. Regardless of one’s political views, there are well-known contrasts between Shearer and his opponent John Key. One is a former Wall Street banker and millionaire, the other an international diplomat and humanitarian worker. One has been repeatedly described as a “man of integrity”, the other as a “smiling assassin”. One is brilliant in front of a camera, the other is not. This latter contrast was the downfall for Mr Shearer who failed to shine in the limelight, or have the right slogan for every occasion. For in today’s world electioneering is about soundbites, slick delivery, and branding over substance. Truth? Promises? Integrity? Lost beneath the roar of the media circus.

In a system where the people choose, getting into power means controlling the perceptions of the people. No institution does this as successfully as the media. In order to make the decisions that are most beneficial, the public must be properly informed. The media cannot necessarily be relied upon for this task because it likes a good show – or ‘horse race’ as they commonly put it. Politics is becoming another form of entertainment for the masses, like WWF wrestling. More complex issues requiring sustained reflection, discussion or research are avoided as they get in the way of the sensationalism that sells papers, gets ratings or generates hits.

With elections looming on both sides of the Tasman, now is a good time to get informed on issues that matter. Western democracies are experiencing the phenomenon of voter apathy, the unwillingness of large sections of the electorate to bother supporting any of the competing factions at all during an election. However, failure to vote does not mean that one is removed from the consequences of political decision-making. Both the supporter, opponent and non-participant are equally bound by the laws originated from the ruling party.

Voting is only one of many ways that a citizen can actively participate in democracy. Speaking or writing to your local Member of Parliament, coordinating protests or public information campaigns, and submissions to the Parliamentary Select Committee which reviews legislation before it is passed, are all ways to get involved. There are many others. Democracy means ‘the people rule’ – taken seriously, this imposes a heavy burden on citizens requiring far more input than simply casting a ballot once every three or four years. By refusing to be informed and engaged with important issues that affect them, the people (that means you and I) are abdicating the duties of citizenship. Unfortunately, such a people will eventually end up with the government they deserve.

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by PAUL ROWLANDSON

HOBBS, STIRNER & AUTHORITY

More than three centuries after the death of Thomas Hobbes, the issue of state power versus individual rights remains as contentious as ever. Paul Rowlandson on the case for strong government.

In 1967 Commander George Lincoln Rockwell, founder of the American Nazi Party, launched his campaign for the Presidency. (He was assassinated later the same year by one of his own lieutenants). At one of his televised press conferences he was asked about his policy towards Red China, then undergoing the Cultural Revolution. “Fifteen minutes after I’m President” he replied, “there won’t be any Red China.”

Rockwell was a believer in the virtue of Force. In his magnum opus *White Power*, published shortly before his death, he wrote as follows:

“The central fact which is being forgotten in today’s insane world is Force!

Liberalism and intellectualism have so blinded Western Man that the majority of us have forgotten the absolute and total primacy of force. Every grain of sand on every beach in the world is where it is because of a force which put it there. When superior force meets weaker force, superior force always conquers and annihilates the weaker. The liberals and mushheads wish it were otherwise, and today’s artificial world of machinery makes it appear possible to them that force can be replaced by ‘reason’.

But this is as irrational and superstitious a bit of jungle ‘thought’ as that of any witch doctor waving a lizard’s tail over a cannibal with a broken leg. If good men abandon and denigrate force, then bad men will take it up and beat us to death with it. When good men lay down their club, bad men will smash them with that club sooner or later.

If I get over only one single point in this book let it be this fact: that civilization, peace and order depend on ‘good will’, but force, policemen, armies, and weapons.

Hitler put it more succinctly and more poetically than I could hope to: ‘The gentle Goddess of Peace can walk Safely only at the side of the Fierce God of War.’

Rockwell was one of those extraordinary people, like Freud’s Dr Schreber, who channel their obsessions into one particular area, leaving the rest of the mind clear. His book is, like Hitler’s *Mein Kampf*, an arresting mixture of genius and madness.

Robert Heinlein, the science fiction writer, made a similar argument to Rockwell’s in his novel *Starship Troopers* (1959), on which the 1997 movie was (loosely) based. Heinlein uses the character of a Mr Dubois, a teacher of History and Moral Philosophy in the Starship Academy, as a mouthpiece for his views on violence:

“One girl told him bluntly: ‘My mother says that violence never settles anything.’

‘So?’ Mr Dubois looked at her bleakly. ‘I’m sure the city fathers of Carthage would be glad to know that ... Wouldn’t you say that violence had settled their destinies rather thoroughly? ... Anyone who clings to the historically untrue – and thoroughly immoral – doctrine that ‘violence never settles anything’ I would advise to conjure up the ghosts of Napoleon Bonaparte and of the Duke of Wellington and let them debate it. The ghost of Hitler could referee, and the jury might well be the Dodo, the Great Auk and the Passenger Pigeon. Violence, naked force, has settled more issues in history than has any other factor, and the contrary opinion is wishful thinking at its worst. Breeds that forget this basic truth have always paid for it with their lives and freedoms.”

The use of force, and the limits of coercion have always been central concerns in the philosophy of morals and politics.

Thomas Hobbes (1858-1679) and Max Stirner (1806-56) were two egoist philosophers who came to very different conclusions about Force and Authority.

In *The Leviathan* Hobbes argued the case for a powerful State. Stirner opposed the State in his book *The Ego and His Own: The Case of The Individual Against Authority*

Hobbes has been described as the first English philosopher, that is, he was the first to cover the whole range of philosophical investigation – physics, metaphysics, ethics, politics, and theology. He was, like Stirner, a sceptic, an individualist, and an egoist. Unlike Stirner he concerned himself at length with the nature of civil society.

Hobbes was concerned with the problem of how to arrange society in such a way that the individual self-interest of its members was allowed maximum freedom to operate without encroaching on the ‘rights’ of others.

He argued that everyone desires what he called ‘felicity’, by which he meant their self-interest. The means of obtaining felicity is by the exercise of power. Each man enjoys (or suffers) a perpetual and restless desire for power, because power is the essential requirement for felicity.

All men are egoists, said Hobbes. It is self-evident that self-interest can be the only motive for action.

The original condition of man was that of a creative living in a ‘state of nature’, in which he was in constant conflict with his fellows. He lived in a perpetual state of fear. There was no law, property, justice or ‘right’ (apart from Might).

In a state of nature it is very difficult, if not impossible, to escape from other people, who constantly get in the way of the individual’s pursuit of his self-interest and security. People compete for possession of the same objects and thereby become enemies. The most successful competitors acquire the most enemies and are consequently in the most danger.

Michael Oakeshott, in his introduction to Hobbes’ *The Leviathan*, described the problem as follows:

“To have built a house and cultivated a garden is to have issued an invitation to all others to take it by force, for it is against the common view of felicity to weary oneself with making what can be acquired by less arduous means.”

Further, felicity is not an absolute but comparative. A large part of one’s felicity comes from a feeling of superiority, or having more or better than others.

Competition is therefore essential, not accidental.

Hobbes described it as “A perpetual contention for Honour, Riches and Authority.” The greatest hindrance to the achievement of felicity is also the most hateful, death.

Men can take care to avoid occasions where death is a likely possibility, but in a state of nature there are many such occasions. In all its forms, said Hobbes, death is something to be feared as well as hated. The most fearful death is that which no foresight can guard against – sudden death.

Each man is nearly the equal of every other man in power. Superiority in strength is either an illusion or if real, is temporary. The natural state is therefore one of the competition of equals for felicity, which is necessarily scarce because of the desire of superiority.

Equality of power brings equality of hope and equality of fear. Every man tries to outwit his neighbor. The result is open conflict, a war of all against all. For each man, surrounded by his enemies, death is more likely than felicity. Life is, in Hobbes famous phrase, “solitary, poor, nasty, brutish and short.”

Hobbes concluded that it is not possible to attain felicity unless each man acts so as not to do to another what he would not have done to himself.

Oakeshott summarizes Hobbes’ requirement for a civilized society under [three conditions](#).

- [1] Felicity is impossible unless each man is willing, in agreement with each other man, to surrender his natural right to pursue his own felicity as if he were alone in the world, the surrender being equal for all men.
- [2] Felicity is impossible unless each man performs his promises under the agreement he makes with each other man.
- [3] Felicity is impossible unless it is understood that, notwithstanding any agreement entered into, no man shall be held to have promised to act in such a way as to preclude further pursuit of felicity.

The ‘rights’ surrendered by each individual (to pursue their own self-interest as if they were alone in the world) are transferred in the form of a contract or covenant: “I transfer to X my natural right to the free exercise of my will and authorize him to act on my behalf on condition that you make a similar transfer and give a similar authority.”

The transfer is to what Hobbes called a ‘Representative Person’, by which he meant an office, which may be held by one man, such as a Monarch or Protector (as Oliver Cromwell was styled), or an assembly: “He that carrieth this person is called sovereign and hath sovereign power; and everyone besides, his subject.”

By the transfer of rights the Representative acquires Authority – to deliberate, will and act in place of the deliberation, will and action of each separate man.

Obviously the covenant would be worthless if it were not enforced. Some would retract. Others would dissemble So, in addition to the contract there must be the power to enforce it. Supreme power must go to the supreme authority” “Covenants, without the sword, are but words”, said Hobbes. Oakeshott comments: “this is the generation of the great Leviathan... And its authority and power are designed not only to create and maintain the internal peace of a number of men living together and seeking felicity in proximity to one another, but also to protect this society as a whole against the attacks of natural man and other societies.”

The sovereign’s right to rule derives from his ability to fulfill the conditions and to realise the purposes which led men to vest their powers in him. C.E.M. Joad expressed the relationship between might and right in *The Leviathan* as follows: “His right resides in his might, and his might is the measure of his right. Thus the sovereign possesses a moral right to rule his subjects in so far as, and only in so far as, he has power to rule them.” (Joad, *Guide to the Philosophy of Morals and Politics* 1940).

How would the dissident, the rebel, the man who refuses to accept the Authority of the sovereign, fare in Hobbes’ Commonwealth?

Hobbes: “Because the major part hath by consenting voices declared a sovereign; he that dissented must now consent with the rest; that is, be contented to avow all the actions he shall do or else justly be destroyed by the rest.”

To which Oakeshott adds this comment: “To be a dissident, that is, to refuse the peace established among one’s neighbors by continuing to exercise one’s natural right intact, is to choose the worst of both worlds – to depend on one’s individual power against the concentrated power of all others, which is the action of a lunatic. And only a similar lunacy would lead a man, who thought he had not been a party to the covenant, to stand out for his natural rights.”

So the fate of the rebel is clear. He would be an obvious lunatic who might justly be destroyed by the Commonwealth forces.

While Hobbes saw the setting of limits to his liberty as a fair price to pay for security and order, Max Stirner took a different view.

Both agreed that man is sociable by nature. Joad describes Hobbes as thinking that “Man is lonely, and his loneliness drives him to congregate with his fellows.” Stirner held a similar view: “Not isolation of being alone, but society, is man’s original state. Our existence begins with the most intimate conjunction, as we are already living with our mother before we breathe; when we see the light of the world, we at once lie on a human being’s breast again, her love cradles us in the lap, leads us in the go-cart, and chains us to her person with a thousand ties. Society is our state of nature.”

Both Hobbes and Stirner agree, substantially, on the ethics and motives of the conscious egoist. Both attempt to answer the question of how the conscious egoist is best to survive and prosper.

Stirner’s objections to the sort of society Hobbes advocated are directed precisely against what Hobbes considered its chief virtue – the Authority of the sovereign, in Stirner’s words, “a power of itself, a power above me.”

Stirner was opposed to every higher power: “It would be foolish to assert that there is no power above mine. Only the attitude that I take toward it will be quite another than that of the religious age: I shall be the enemy of every higher power, while religion teaches us to make it our friend and be humble toward it.”

He does not object in principle to a ‘society’ depriving him of some liberties, providing it is voluntary: “A society which I join does indeed take from me many liberties, but in return it affords me other liberties, neither does it matter if I myself deprive myself of this and that liberty (such as by any contract).”

Stirner draws another distinction between the State and this union: the State “is sacred...but the union is my own creation.” One imagines that ownership of this creation might be a topic of contention with the other members of the ‘union of egoists’!

Clearly Hobbes and Stirner arrived at very different attitudes toward the State and the idea of a Sovereign Authority, while starting from similar egoist philosophies.

Part of the explanation for their divergence may be explained by the backgrounds in which each man lived.

Hobbes lived through the English Civil War, the execution of the King, the restoration of the monarchy, and the religious struggles of the 17th Century between Anglicans, Presbyterian and ‘Independents’ (later know as Congregationalists).

(Hobbes was a sceptic, with a strong dislike of religious enthusiasm. He favored the Independent because he thought that Independent churches would have less political influence than a national church. The sovereign should settle religious disputes by decree in order to prevent them becoming troublesome to the peace and order of the State. Religious disputes, he thought, were the worst sort, because they tended to fanaticism and excess.)

Stirner was born in Germany in 1806, the last year of the Holy Roman Empire, over a hundred years after Hobbes’ death.

Stirner’s life was spent in the nation-state building years of the German Confederation, created by the Congress of Vienna in 1815. Prussia achieved the unification of Germany in 1866, ten years after Stirner’s death at the age of 50.

The state building period in most newly created states is accompanied by a glorification of the National Idea or Myth and the forging or elevation

of a national identity. During this period the State has a tendency to become omnipresent, and, to the sensitive individual, oppressive.

Hobbes lived in a weakened, factional, but old State, with no real identity problem. *Stirner lived in* a new, growing state with an identity problem. It was inevitable that they would view Authority and the State differently.

The new German nation-state was absolutist. Its chief philosopher was Hegel (1770-1831), a German nationalist who provided the philosophical underpinnings for the new German State. Stirner’s main work *The Ego and His Own* (1845) was described by Victor Basch as “the Anti-Hegel.” (*in L’Individualism Anarchiste Max Stirner* 1904, cited by James J. Martin in his intro to the 1963 edition of Stirner’s book).

Ludwig von Mises, in his book *Bureaucracy*, gave some examples of the arrogance of the new German Statists: “On January^{25th} 1838 the Prussian Minister of the Interior, G.A.R. von Rochow declared in reply to a petition of citizens of a Prussian city: ‘It is not seemly for a subject to apply the yardstick of his wretched intellect to the acts of the Chief of the State and to arrogate to himself in haughty insolence, a public judgment about their fairness.’”

This attitude lingered. Half a century later, in 1897, the Rector of the Imperial University of Strasbourg characterized the German system of government as follows: “Our officials will never tolerate any-body’s wresting the power from their hands, certainly not parliamentary majorities whom we know how to deal with in a masterly way. No kind of rule is endured so easily or accepted so gratefully as that of high minded and highly educated civil servants. The German State is a State of the supremacy of officialdom – let us hope that it will remain so.”

Stirner naturally reacted against the authoritarianism of the new German State – the only one of which he had any experience. *Hobbes had different experiences of States*. He experienced the collapse of monarchy, and the dissensions and weaknesses of the era following the Restoration. He had lived for ten years under a French monarch, and had traveled widely in Europe.

Today, a Swiss chafing under the bureaucracy and regulation of Switzerland, would have a different estimate of the virtues of State Authority than a citizen of Northern Ireland who has seen the State’s failure to maintain civil order and protect its citizens.

The main problem with Stirner’s union of egoists is his failure to consider the role of Force. What would happen if the union failed to enforce its contract with its members? If it failed to use force it would dissolve; it would be an unenforceable union and therefore valueless. If it used Force it would cease to be voluntary and would become – horror of horrors – “a power of itself – a power above me”. It would exist “only by subjection.”



Without the exercise of force, how would the union restrain those of its members who wished to occupy my house and garden? In the absence of a police force my house would be, as Oakeshott put it, an invitation to others to acquire it by force.

My felicity, as Hobbes suggested is a perpetual search for “honour, riches and authority”. I want power and authority in order to satisfy my desires. Authority is a means to an end. My interest, on this account, would appear to be best served by acquiring a position of power and authority in the State.

Unfortunately, many other people have the same desire for ‘felicity’ and similar ideas about how to obtain their felicity. Consequently, my interest lies in trying to ensure that my pursuit of felicity is protected, as far as possible, from the exercise of arbitrary power by other people. That is, my interests require a civil authority with enough power to enforce the rules of civil society.

If success in acquiring the protection and benevolence of the higher power requires me to “make it my friend and be humble toward it” then that is what I will do. It is in my interests to do so, in the same way that it was in Hobbes’ interest to present himself as a Royalist to the Royalists, and a Roundhead to the Roundheads. In this way he lived to the grand old age of 91 in a reasonable degree of comfort.

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by HELEN MCCABE

DISTRIBUTIVE JUSTICE

This article first appeared in issue 92 of *Philosophy Now*

Justice, John Rawls claimed, is the first virtue of institutions. Certainly it seems to be the first concern of contemporary political theorists, and has been since A Theory of Justice was published in 1971. A great deal has been written about it and, given the on-going nature of the investigation, it is difficult to see the wood for the trees, in particular because justice is, to borrow Michael

Freeden's phrase, an essentially contested concept:

Philosophers disagree about what 'goes into' justice, what weighting the different components of justice should have, and where justice sits in relation to other concepts.

This makes justice a very difficult topic to get a handle on. In this article I wish not to try and solve the problem of distributive justice (which has already taken several people's life-work), but to try to lay out where the problems arise between some famous and competing understandings in order to make getting an overview of the problem a little easier.

What we are concerned about with distributive justice is the distribution of what Rawls calls 'the social surplus' – that is, all the things we get by co-operating in a co-operative system such as society. This is important, because it means that we can't resist quite a few claims of justice that libertarians and even some liberals would like to resist. For instance, the rich capitalist cannot refuse the claims of the starving child in his own country because he, the capitalist, worked for his money and

earned it through his own endeavors, whereas the child has never known him, had contact with him, or worked in one of his companies. Rawls would argue that by obeying the law, and thus participating in some way in the co-operative endeavor which we call society, this child is owed duties of justice by the rich banker. (He seems to think this doesn't work for the whole world, despite globalization, though some modern Rawlsians wan to apply his principles globally.) What we are distributing, then, is not merely 'stuff' but rights and liberties and even opportunities.

Rawls believes that justice can be created through just institutions – if what he calls the 'basic structure' (things like the constitution) is just, then society will be just. Rawls suggests that in order to determine what is just, we need to discover what rational agents, free from prejudice and partiality, would agree to. Rawls'



mechanism for determining what rational agents would agree to is the OP, a position behind what he calls the 'veil of ignorance', where agents, stripped of their identifying features (such as age, race, religion, talents, abilities preferences etc (and, as Susan Okin points out, presumably preferably their gender)), and with, therefore, no knowledge of what their position will be in the future society determine what principles of justice ought to govern the basic institutions of that society when it comes to how we structure it, and how we divide the 'social surplus' – that is, all the benefits of co-operating in a society. The outcome of the OP, Rawls thinks, would be the following principles: firstly, each person is to have an equal right to the most extensive total system of equal basic liberties compatible with a similar system of liberty for all; and, secondly, social and economic inequalities are to be arranged so that they are both,

- a) to the greatest benefit of the least advantaged,
- &
- b) attached to offices and positions open to all

under conditions of fair equality of opportunity. The first principle always has priority over the second – that is we may not trade off rights and liberties for greater equalities.

There are many potential problems with Rawls' mechanism for determining justice. One is that people don't seem to actually 'maximin' (or 'maximise the minimum') as Rawls suggests they will. Rather, they seem to prefer (when people do research about these matters) guaranteed meeting of a fairly high threshold of needs, and then very little interference. So perhaps Rawls is wrong, and his principles are not those that rational agents would agree to.

Another problem is that posed by the communitarians – does the idea of a 'rational agent' as Rawls poses it even make sense? Don't our talents, abilities, preferences, religions, moral codes, ethnicities and cultures *make us who we are*? What would this individual even be if all of this had been abstracted? There are two versions of this attack. One is to say that these agents wouldn't be human – perhaps this would work for Vulcans, but we are interested in justice for humans. Another is to say that the whole idea is metaphysically impossible and flawed – there would just not be *anything* behind the veil of ignorance if all of these things had been 'abstracted' from the individual.

There are further communitarian objections, some of which are shared by ideologies with a communitarian aspect like One Nation conservatism, and socialism. One is that Rawls' understanding of justice is based on seeing society as a set of isolated individuals who are, it is true, co-operating, but only out of necessity. Rawls rules out the idea of society as being intrinsically good, rather than merely a necessary means to individual advantage, and assumes we are fundamentally separate, rather than naturally social. Moreover, he understands justice as arising out of competing claims between individuals who are uninterested in each other's welfare, and must be *forced* to be just by just institutions. \All of these points can be challenged on ideological grounds.

Another kind of attack is to disagree with Rawls' understanding of justice. Nozick, for instance, disagrees that rights are those things which respect or create justice: for him, it is the other way around. G.A. Cohen, too, at least suggested in lectures that one might not think that justice is the first virtue of institutions, as Rawls claimed – is it more important to be just, or to be stable, for instance? Leaving aside Rawls' methodology, we might also disagree with his principles. Cohen, for instance, though sympathetic to the Rawlsian project, thinks it does not work. Rawls believes that talents are arbitrary and we ought not, really, to be rewarded for them as they are

already an inequality which is to *our* advantage (and not the advantage of the least well off). However, he builds into his principles of justice an incentivisation, by which the talented can accrue unequal shares of the social surplus so long as they can show they are benefiting the least well off. Thus, the brain surgeon who would rather surf all day can ask for greater wealth in order to get off his surf board and into surgery, and, as people would die if he did not operate on them, and as ill people generally count as being 'the least well off', this inequality is to their advantage. Cohen objects that, basically, this is just the brain surgeon blackmailing dying people. And as blackmail is exploitative and unjust, Rawls' principles cannot be just.

Some contemporary Rawlsians think that Rawls could just say "Well spotted, Jerry – and that's why we wouldn't allow that kind of inequality if we had properly just basic institutions. Although the state could not *force* the surfer to get off the beach and go and work in a hospital, because that would infringe my first principle of justice (about rights and liberties), there is absolutely no need to pay him more if he does go and use his talents as he ought – to save dying people". Rawls doesn't say this in any of his books, but it is not impossible that he might agree. (Of course, you might think we can force people if they have life-saving talents. But you would have to square this with claims of liberty and autonomy, unless you don't care about either of those concepts).

Cohen says the only way for Rawls to get out of this problem is through what Rawls calls 'an ethos of justice' as well as just institutions – that is, people in society would *believe* in these principles and want to see them instituted. But if *that* is true, says Cohen, then they couldn't blackmail people – that is, they wouldn't *need* incentives to act in a just way (for the benefit of the least well off), if they actually believed they *ought* to act in their interest in the first place. So as long as we have just people, we don't need Rawls' incentivising principles. Thus, **Rawls' principles of justice**

- a) aren't really just (as they allow blackmail) and
- b) aren't really *necessary* as just people wouldn't exploit each other. This ties in with what Cohen would say in lectures, which was that Rawls' principles of justice might be many things (more expeditious, more efficient, better for producing greater wealth, etc.), but they were not *just*.

Nozick has a different response to all of these claims about justice. Like Rawls, he thinks that justice comes from a just *process*. Nozick dislikes what he calls 'patterned' distributions of justice which are about end-results, as, he thinks, Rawls' two principles are. Nozick thinks justice is the proper respect of rights, and rights stem from the fact that we are all self-owning individuals.

By self-ownership, Nozick means that we have the same rights of use, abuse, loan, sale, rent and, in the end, destruction over our own bodies as we do over anything else we might think of as property – land, pens, books, houses, money etc. If you withdraw £10 of your wages from a cash machine, you can do as you please with it – spend it, lend it, give it away, burn it, write a shopping list on the back of it, etc. etc. etc., and the same goes, Nozick says, for your body. The implication of this is that we all *deserve* to have this right respected, and it is a violation of justice if it is not. So long as there is what Nozick calls justice in acquisition and justice in transfer, then whatever *distribution* of resources there is, it is a just one. It does not matter if inequalities are to the advantage of the least well off, or if brute and option luck are respected differently, or even if people's needs are met – so long as the *route* was a just one, the outcome is also just.

Nozick uses his famous Wilt Chamberlain example to prove this. Let us, he says, suppose a just distribution as D1 – whatever you think of as a just distribution, take that. Now let us imagine that Wilt Chamberlain asks for 25 cents on top of the normal entry fee to a basketball game to be paid directly to him. Let us also imagine that all the basketball fans are happy to pay this – it is a tiny amount and Wilt Chamberlain is a very great player. Given the gates over a season, Chamberlain ends up with \$250,000 by the end of it. Now, says Nozick – how can this be unjust? Everyone consented, and no force or fraud was used to get the money out of them. To complain because this is an unequal distribution, and to try and redistribute it would be an injustice, and would, Nozick says, be to interfere unjustifiably in 'capitalist acts between consenting adults'.

Nozick is a really good writer, and lots of people have found his book convincing and, if they are an egalitarian, very troubling. Cohen was in this latter position, and spent a good deal of his life trying to show where Nozick goes wrong. [Here are some of the objections he raises.](#)

Firstly, it might seem *just* to us that Chamberlain gets the \$250,000, but we *don't* live in a society with a just initial distribution. Perhaps in *our* society, the Chamberlains (kids from the ghetto who make good with their own raw talent) are *exactly* the kind of inequalities we *don't* mind, given the general unfairness of the whole system. But we would not *be* in this kind of system anymore, and once we had all come together and rearranged society so that *there* was a just distribution, we might be much more wary of making it immediately unequal. Nozick, then, makes his example look convincing through rhetorical sleight of hand.

Secondly, we might not think that self-ownership can be the basis of justice. There are many reasons for thinking so, one of which is that self-ownership allows people to sell themselves into slavery, and we might think that could simply never be just.

Thirdly, this means, according to Nozick, that we can never tax rich people for anything from which they will not also benefit (so he thinks we might all have to contribute to a police force, for instance, though he would prefer an anarchist society in which even that was voluntary). So if we try and take money from millionaires and use it to buy food for starving children, we are making the millionaires the slaves of starving children, according to Nozick. This seems counter-intuitive.

Another problem with self-ownership is provided by Cohen's astronaut example. Imagine that an astronaut lands, by chance, on what happens to be an inhabited, but habitable planet. Given that they are the first person ever to arrive there, they claim it as their property and, according to Nozick, would be justified in doing so – that counts as just acquisition. Then imagine a second astronaut lands. There is nothing for them to eat, or sleep on/under, or drink, that does not belong to the first astronaut. So, unless the first astronaut charitably gives them a share of the resources of the planet as their own property, they have no choice but to become the first astronaut's slave. This looks unjust. The power of *this* example, Cohen says, is that this is precisely the situation that almost everyone on Earth finds themselves in – most of the planet's land, food, raw materials, and other means of production as well as articles of consumption are owned by someone, so when people are born, unless they are born to the property-owning minority, they are in the same position as the second astronaut. And this means that when they labour in return for the necessities of life (and sometimes not even that), they are, basically, slaves. As Nozick has said he thinks being made to be someone else's slave is unjust (whereas volunteering is *not* unjust), this means *any* system of private property such as Nozick suggests is as unjust as patterned distributions, and thus self-ownership and respect of rights can't help us with determining what is just. For Cohen, it also means that capitalism is unjust, and that the idea of self-ownership can't save it.

Nozick is going to respond by denying that the astronaut is anything other than a voluntary slave, but I think we can dismiss his attempts to get out of the fact that the second astronaut is having to choose between slavery and death, because it is clear that in a world which is entirely owned by someone else, that really is the only choice (or, rather, those are the only two *options*, and

when one can only pick between two options, one of which is death, we don't have a choice and therefore we *cannot* have been free).

Cohen also has an objection which is designed to show that we simply *don't have* self-ownership. This is his eyes example. If the state were to hold a lottery every time someone went blind, and, if your National Insurance number came up and you still had your sight, would take one of your eyes and give it to the blind person, this would be unjust. Nozick suggests this is the kind of thing the state could do in order to benefit the least well off. Cohen denies that it is, because of Rawls' first principle (if one is a Rawlsian), or as, Cohen puts it, because this would be a gross, and unwarrantable, interference into your life by the state. But this is not because we are self-owning, as Cohen's next example shows. Imagine that we live in a world where no one is born able to see, but the state has the patent on an invention of mechanical eyes which, if implanted shortly after birth and used continually from that point, work in adulthood even if they are *not* in the body of the person they were first transplanted to. Everyone has these eyes implanted at birth, and at death the State takes them back and uses them again. They remain the State's property, but it lets people borrow them for free. Now, let us imagine that if both these eyes break, the State has a lottery and if your eyes still work and your number comes up, they take back one of their eyes and give it to the person with two broken eyes. You might think *this* is also unjust – but if you do, then this shows it is *not* the idea of self-ownership which is at work (the state retains ownership), but some other idea about what the state can and cannot do.

So much, then, for Nozick. The last thing to look at is a slightly different way of looking at justice which is akin to Rawls, and which says it is not about the *outcomes*, per se, but about the *process*. If people have equality of opportunity, or, in a slightly different understanding, equal access to advantage, then this is what justice looks like. Obviously, the idea of equality of opportunity is built into Rawls' scheme. It is important to see, though, that it might well involve serious redistributions. What would we all need to have equal opportunities? Would it be fair if some people were born more talented than others – doesn't that create more opportunities for them? Would we all need similar educations? It certainly seems to have a sufficientarian threshold built in (we presumably don't have equality of opportunity if we are starving, or illiterate, or blind), but what would we do about option luck? If people have unequal opportunities to flourish because they gambled all their savings on a roulette wheel, do we have a duty to provide them with the opportunities they had before? With any opportunities?

Cohen wants a world in which the *only* inequalities are down to *choice*. This means he is less prone to compensate for bad option luck, though with a sufficientarian threshold because of duties of community etc. It also means he doesn't think we deserve rewards because of talents which are as arbitrary as hair colour, and we don't think *that* justifies inequalities. These last positions can seem like a welcome relief from the complexities of 'patterned' and 'unpatterned' distributions, but they are by no means the easy option.

To conclude

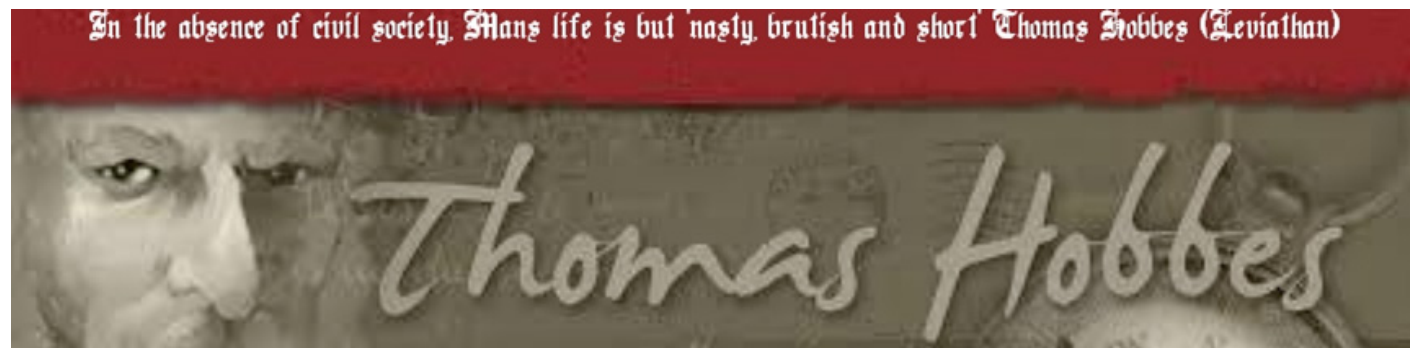
– justice is a prime example of an essentially contested concept, with people disagreeing about what has to be respected in order for society to be just; what can and cannot be distributed; what kind of outcomes look just; and whether or not we should be interested in outcomes at all. Perhaps the most famous attempt at defining, and decontesting, justice, and certainly one which reinvigorated political theory in the last century, is Rawls' principles of justice. There are several possible problems with Rawls' mechanisms and principles, though there are also serious problems with some of these counter-arguments. The purpose of this article was not to try and solve these problems or suggest which answer is right, but rather to aid an understanding of each position, what aspect of justice it respects, and whether or not it is compatible with other intuitive claims about justice, which is necessary if we are to come to some sort of understanding of what justice entails: a task which is itself vital given the fundamental importance of justice to political philosophy and, more importantly, to society.

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by OZAN ÖRMECI MAKALELER



Human beings open their eyes in a world that is full of rules, regulations and most of the time without having the chance to refuse or change them. The majority of the world population lives in territories where there are official, organized institutions called “states” which regulate and organize social life. The existence of the state has become an absolute condition for the well being of society starting from a long time ago. However, the state did not appear immediately with the beginning of human life. There was a long period of time in history during which human beings lived freely in nature without a central, binding power. Many philosophers have tried to explain the necessity of the existence of the state by imagining or studying this stateless period of time. Thomas Hobbes is one of these philosophers who tried to explain the transition from this stateless stage called “the state of nature” to an organized state by means of social contract theory in his masterpiece “Leviathan”. Hobbes’ theory can be considered as very pessimistic and dark but we cannot underestimate the role of political problems that he witnesses during his lifetime in shaping his theory. Hobbes saw Spanish Armada, 30 Years War, First & Second Bishops’ War, Scottish invasion of England, Irish Rebellion and English Civil War. In this assignment, I will try to explain Hobbes’ social contract theory shortly and then try to explain and criticize Hobbes’ argument that people ought to fulfill their contracts.

According to Thomas Hobbes, the state of nature does not refer to a peaceful, harmonious social life but instead it is a hellish life with chaos and violence. Hobbes believes that the state of nature in history was a “state of warre” during which all individuals struggled against all other individuals and finally ended this chaotic life by making a social contract. Hobbes believes that human beings are naturally selfish and they can do all kinds of bad acts when they can gain from these bad acts[1]. This understanding of the enormous selfishness of human beings directs Hobbes to a very dark theory, which does

not trust in human beings and thus favors a regime of absolute monarchy with severe rules and little space for freedoms. Hobbes considers human beings as rational egoists that always look for the maximization of their self-profits, and he tries to explain the transition from the state of nature to the organized state by human beings’ realization that it is more profitable to live in an organized state. Hobbes thinks that humans are somehow naturally equal and there is not too much difference between their mental and physical abilities[2]. According to him, this equality of ability increases the competition for limited resources between people, especially in a world without a central binding power in which even the weakest can beat the strongest by taking help from others or by using weapons, etc. So, in a stateless stage individuals have the motive to compete with others in a very hostile sense; in addition, they live with the fear of being killed or losing what they have. Hobbes calls this fear “diffidence” and explains it as the lack of confidence people have in the state of war due to their inevitably unsafe lives[3]. This fear forces individuals to look for power after power not only to gain more profit, but also to protect what they have in their hands. After competition and diffidence, the third motive that orients people in the state of war according to Hobbes’ theory is the desire to have glory. People want to have reputation and power but what they really want is to prevent potential threats by frightening or threatening other people who could attack and kill them in this unsafe world. Hobbes concludes his theory by the realization that rational egoist human beings will profit more in an organized state, and thus, to make a social contract among them and give their power to a sole person who would be like a mortal God called “Leviathan” who would provide peace and order in society by making laws deriving from laws of nature and by punishing guilty people[4].

After analyzing Hobbes’ theory we can move on to explain and criticize Hobbes’ argument that people ought to fulfill their contracts. First of all, according to Thomas

Hobbes, a contract is simply “the mutual transferring of right” (Hobbes, p. 192). In Hobbes’ view, a contract (he also calls as a covenant or a pact) must be mutual because otherwise it will not be very different from a gift or grace. Hobbes later explains the difference between inferred and expresses social contracts. In his idea, expresses contracts are “words spoken with understanding of what they signifies” such as “I give, I grant etc” (Hobbes, p. 193). In other words, expresses social contracts are contracts made by promises by using words and phrases. However, inferred social contracts can be made by many different ways[5]. When we look at Hobbes’ social contract, I think it is more convenient for the inferred type of social contract rather than express social contract. Although Hobbes presents the issue in such a way that humans come together in a square and select a Leviathan to end up the state of warre, this is not realistic and as far as I am concerned Hobbes uses this symbolically. Most people accept this social contract by not speaking and by continuing to live in that state. Social contract is not renewed by all newly born individuals but rather individuals, who accept to live in that state, are considered as people who signed this inferred contract. Thus, we can clearly say that Hobbesian social contract is an inferred one but not an express one.

Hobbes thinks that people should always fulfill their duties to the social contract. But he also admits that people may start to question why they have to continue with this covenant which they did not approve. “The greatest objection to this is Practice; when men ask, where and when such Power has by Subjects been acknowledged” (Hobbes, pp. 260-261). Hobbes thinks that these are unnecessary questions because the main problem is to prevent destructive civil and foreign wars which may lead to the collapse of the state. For Hobbes, what is important is the existence and the continuity of the state not the democracy or the subject’s rights. Thus, he does not want people to question the origin of this social contract and fulfill their duties determined in the previously made social contract. People by accepting the conditions of that state, are somehow make an inferred contract and thus, they should obey to the rules of that contract which gives whole power to the Leviathan. An express social contract would not work in Hobbes’ theory since people are egoist and they may not be content of Leviathan’s decisions. Thus, Hobbes’ ideal state is an absolute monarchy and people do not have chance to question or object to the deeds, decisions of the Leviathan.

Finally, Hobbes’ approach to the topic is very pessimistic and based on the false idea that people are selfish

and cruel creatures. He thinks that the only way to provide peace for humans is to arrange a contract and never allow people to break it. However, as years pass by conditions and capabilities change and new situations arise. Thus, Hobbes’ approach is not in conformity with the dynamism of modern societies.

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<http://ydemokrat.blogspot.co.nz/2011/01/thomas-hobbes-and-his-theory-of-social.html>

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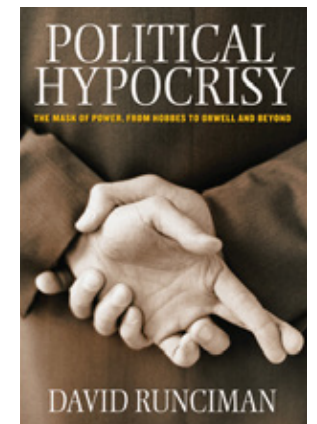
by TIM BLACK

DOES HYPOCRISY HAVE A PLACE IN POLITICS?

David Runciman’s new book is erudite and thought-provoking. But in lambasting the cynics who are obsessed with exposing political hypocrisy it risks defending the democratic facade to state power.

Deriving from the Greek word Hypokrisis, meaning ‘to play a part’, hypocrisy is very much the ancient art. Literally, as it happens, since the original Hypocrites were, in fact, classical stage actors.

Its theatrical origins shed some semantic light on this most frequent of accusations. For hypocrisy is not simply lying – that is, a non-coincidence with the truth. Hypocrisy is, rather, a question of character, or better still, a question of whether the



David Runciman



persona constructed, the role one plays, provides a false impression of one's actual beliefs and practices.

Despite the term's long history, however, one could be forgiven for feeling that public life is currently awash with hypocrisy. Whether it's a do-gooding narcissist, a moralizing adulterer, or an austerity-preaching hedonist, the virtuous posture rarely travels unaccompanied by a contradictory reality. Indeed, so often is the public mask now rent, that its existence seems merely a prelude to the sinful revelation, be it brothel excursions or an enormous carbon footprint.

No sphere is more thoroughly stained with double standards than the political. Barely a week passes without a story of an ostentatiously upright MP's extra-marital affair or a sleaze-buster caught channeling public funds into a private account. Private vice, it seems, is the permanently exposed underbelly of contemporary Western politics. In return, the pervasive whiff of hypocrisy provokes an understandably cynical response: politicians – you can't trust them.

Enter David Runciman with *Political Hypocrisy: The Mask of Power*, from Hobbes to Orwell and Beyond. Looking at the issue of political hypocrisy as worked out in the lives and thought of figures such as Thomas Hobbes, Thomas Jefferson, and Jeremy Bentham, Runciman does not so much defend hypocrisy per se as delineate its benign forms from its malign. In other words, at times a certain amount of dissembling on the part of our political representatives might actually be desirable; at other times less so.

Such tricky argumentation, involving what seem innumerable, torturous paragraphs on the hypocrisy of anti-hypocrisy or the self-deception of sincerity, does not make for an easy read. Contradictions spawn paradoxes and paradoxes spawn contradictions; at points Runciman is in danger of disappearing up his own circumlocution. After his chapter on the early eighteenth-century satirist Bernard Mandeville, he makes what seems a self-defeating admission: 'It is dangerous to take what he has to say too literally, or expect too much overall coherence from it.' Which does raise the question as to why Runciman has tried so hard to do precisely that.

But despite the temptations of recondite reasoning, insights abound. Indeed, the great strength of *Political Hypocrisy* lies with its governing impulse. That is, if hypocrisy currently appears so problematically ubiquitous, perhaps the problem lies not with hypocrisy itself but with the contemporary obsession with its exposure. As Runciman puts it in his preface, he wants to be able to think about hypocrisy in modern politics and avoid cynicism and despair.

It is for this reason that he selects the thinkers he does – that is, those from an ostensibly 'classic liberal tradition' rather than the usual suspects, such as Machiavelli's *The Prince* or Sun Tzu's *Art of War*. As opposed to these 'and other hackneyed manuals of managerial realpolitik', Hobbes, Bentham or Orwell are characterised by their refusal to bow to easy, politically dismissive cynicism, itself a species of frustrated virtue.

Instead of seeing in politicians' hypocrisy the essential iniquity of man, they sought to grasp hypocrisy as a necessary product of representative politics. In other words, the public persona which 'disguiseth the face, as a mask or Vizard', to quote Hobbes, marks the distinction between the individual as an everyman and his exceptional role as political representative. The danger then is not hypocrisy, but sincerity, the self-deluding identity of a particular individual with his position of political power. Such thinking allows Runciman to explore his central thesis that hypocrisy is not a necessary evil exactly, but that, in certain of its forms, it is simply necessary: 't does not matter whether or not our politicians are all wearing masks, if that is what is needed to make our form of politics work. What does matter is if people are hypocritical about that.'

In this sense, the private passions and beliefs of public figures ought to be the least of our concerns. By their very nature as private, they can be tolerated for as long as they are concealed. 'Hypocrisy is the tribute vice plays to virtue', wrote the seventeenth-century aphorist Francois Rochefocauld.

Elsewhere, Runciman quotes Mandeville: 'A man need not conquer his passions, it is sufficient that he conceals them. Virtue bids us subdue, but good breeding only requires that we should hide our Appetites.' The danger, as Runciman sees it, comes not from hypocrisy, a tolerance of the inconsistency between the private figure and his public persona (in other words, between a flawed everyman and the implied flawlessness of his political role), but from those who are hypocritical about the existence of hypocrisy. They deceive themselves as to the virtue of virtue.

Here Mandeville was thinking of the Earl of Shaftesbury with his anti-Hobbesian insistence on the fundamentally altruistic, moral aspect to human nature. Unconvinced, Mandeville sought to scandalise those who, like Shaftesbury, would sincerely advocate self-abnegation. His riposte in such works as *The Fable of the Bees* and *The Grumbling Hive*, was actively to celebrate hypocrisy. It was the only way of negotiating a balance between individual passions and the demands of society: 'It is impossible that Man, mere Fallen Man... should be sociable creatures without hypocrisy.'

Moreover, as he saw it, the conquest of our appetites would actually be catastrophic for a commercial society that relies upon their existence. Mandeville's thesis reads like this: 'Private vices, public benefits.' A tolerance of the dis-juncture between the socially necessary demands of public virtue and the reality of private passions prevents one from succumbing to the self-deception of the tyrannically virtuous.

This often excoriating, frequently confusing assault on the hypocrisy of anti-hypocrisy and its all too easy collapse into a autocratic sanctimony runs like a red thread through Runciman's analyses of the featured figures. And it provides a useful rejoinder to the ethical postures and soul-bearing routines of contemporary politicians, for whom the mask is taken for the man. Indeed, anti-hypocrisy entails something like the moralization of politics, a transformation of public roles, of political masks into displays of self-righteous sincerity. This becomes clear in one of the book's central themes, language; or rather, the act of dressing up the exercise of political power in ethical terms.

This first becomes clear in Runciman's discussion of Hobbes where he turns to look at paradiastole, or what the intellectual historian, Quentin Skinner, calls 'rhetorical redescription'. This denotes the act of not just describing an action, but, in doing so, commending or denouncing it. For Hobbes, this was what he called 'colouring', the act of giving an action a particular moral hue.

Hobbes' objection stemmed from his conception of the state of nature, of *bellum omnium contra omnes*: the war of all against all. In the absence of a sovereign power to arbitrarily, albeit necessarily, prescribe a moral code, there exists instead 'the endless attempt by individuals to re-describe what they happen to prefer as virtue, and what others happen to prefer as vice'.

The danger of 'coloring' is that the reality of political power, its sheer arbitrariness, is concealed as something morally justified. This makes an hypocrisy of the sovereign act: 'If the moral arbitrariness of the state of nature produces the need for sovereign power, then the need for that power is the one thing that no one should try to hide behind the colourful language of vice and virtue. For the one thing that colour terms might mask is the fact of moral arbitrariness itself, ie, the fact that there are no virtues and vices, except on the say-so of the sovereign.'

Hobbes' critique of the colouring of political power was not without its urgent context, of course. For it was precisely this that Hobbes held responsible for the hypocrisy of the insurrections of the 1640s – that is, the passing off of civil disobedience by Presbyterian firebrands as a commitment to a higher set of values.

In his discussion of the nineteenth-century utilitarian Jeremy Bentham, Runciman returns to this concern with the hypocritical presentation of political power as morally sanctioned. Like Hobbes, Bentham despised the concealment of basic social facts of existence with what Runciman calls mere 'babble'. This Bentham characterises as 'insignificant' language, be it 'the meaningless jabber of professional jargon', the contradictory use of meaningful discourse (for example, 'natural rights'), or 'cant': the sing-song consolation of pleasing, well-meaning words. The danger, as Bentham sees it, is that, for example, in the professional jargon of legal discourse, state injustice can be passed off as justice. As Runciman writes in his discussion of Orwell, 'obscurantist language is most dangerous when it attempts to conceal the truth about political power'.

But lest the argument that emerges from *Political Hypocrisy* appear nihilistic – that all rhetorical re-description of political actions, whether explicitly moralized or not, conceals the basic arbitrariness of that political action, and that hard-won political sovereignty ought therefore to recognize its fundamental illegitimacy – Runciman's concluding chapter on Orwell mounts a defense of the necessity of such concealment. Writing of the English alliance of democracy with imperialism, Orwell notes that the brute force implicit in the latter is blunted by the moral charade of the former – the notion that state power is subservient to the interests of its subjects, all of whom are apparently equal. It is 'a society ruled by the sword, no doubt, but a sword which must never be taken out of its scabbard'.

Imperialism without the mask of democracy – in other words, the anti-hypocritical exercise of power without compunction or concealment, in which power is utterly transparent to itself – would be fascism. This is the authoritarian universe of 1984, a world without private life; indeed, a world in which one's interior life was no more than a mirror of public slogans. Orwell was 'an anti-hypocrite for whom there were worse things than hypocrisy', remarks Runciman favorably. Democratic hypocrisy, the cozy facade of sheer power, was preferable to the truth of the total lie. Orwell had an image for this: 'If you want a picture of the future, imagine a boot stomping on a human face – forever.'

These are, for Runciman, democratic fictions, the masks necessary to protect citizens from the arbitrary exercise of power. To the authoritarianism of Hobbes' *Leviathan*, where the 'King is the people', others like Bentham or Orwell sought recourse in the democratic fiction, the 'people is the king'. Hence, for Bentham, while he deplored the mystifying use of language, he was forced to invoke the fictional 'public opinion' as a universalist bulwark against the arbitrary exercise of power by elected representatives.

It is a strange arc, from a Hobbesian denunciation of the hypocritical piety of those dressing up the political act as a moral mission, to an Orwellian defense of the democratic masquerade. But it makes sense in terms of Runciman’s circumscribed outlook. For as shabby a compromise as liberal democracy is, for Runciman, the alternatives, seen to be variants on a ‘totalitarian’ theme, are far worse.

Of course, the withering of the masks that sustain the status quo, that supply ruling elites with a veneer of legitimacy, be it the compromises of parliamentary democracy or the ersatz neutrality of law, is something towards which anyone interested in challenging the existing political system ought to strive. But Runciman, or so it seems, prefers the soft-focus mask to the boot stomping truth of state power. In this regard, his casual dismissal of Orwell’s espousal of socialism as merely ‘unconvincing’ speaks all too clearly.

Instead, Runciman’s position recalls Max Weber, a figure whose rejection of the promise of the Russian Revolution left him before a ‘rationalized’ social world lacking the *raison d’être* with which, in the form of the protestant ethic, it had once been invigorated. Stranded between the bald facts of social existence and the values that would animate it, Runciman’s ideal politician, like that detailed in *Politics as a Vocation*, is an individual who is able to involve himself in the charade of politics, of moral posturing, of visionary pretenses, whilst remaining detached enough to recognise it for the mask that it is. The self-conscious hypocrite here strikes a heroic, tragic pose; his is a reckoning with the disenchanting reality of the real world, where the arbitrary exercise of state power demands the adoption of the leader’s charismatic mask for its popular assent.

Despite Runciman’s erudition, his sparks of illumination, this is a book born, like Weber’s famous essay, in what is experienced, in lieu of alternatives, as an impasse: a historical moment in which the exercise of political power lacks ideological justification. In consequence, the personality of the leader, his convictions and beliefs, assumes ever greater importance. And with this, the risk, indeed, the necessity of hypocrisy grows ever greater. Hence his conclusion: ‘What matters is not whether liberals are worse than they would like to appear, but whether they can be honest with themselves about the gaps that are bound to exist between the masks of politics and what lies behind those masks.’

There are ‘no simple solutions’ he contends throughout his concluding remarks. But such a reckoning with the ‘complexity’ of political reality all too easily becomes reconciliation. Like the anti-hypocritical hypocrites he lambasts, Runciman risks succumbing to a brand of anti-cynical cynicism, a willful embrace of the ‘the democratic imperfections’ of the present, for fear of revisiting the authoritarian horrors of the past.

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www.spiked-online.com/newsite/article/5512
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by DAVID RUNCIMAN

WHERE’S HOBBS?

Why did Hobbes write Leviathan?

With some philosophical masterpieces this might seem a redundant question: they got written because their authors felt the truths in them had to be set down. But Thomas Hobbes broke off from writing what was meant to be his philosophical masterpiece in order to produce *Leviathan*. In the late 1640s, while in Paris to escape the extreme hazards of the English civil war, Hobbes had been laboring away on *De Corpore*, the foundational part of a projected Latin trilogy of natural and social philosophy. He was stuck, bogged down in intractable puzzles of metaphysics and mathematics. For years he had been promising friends it was nearly done; for years he had been missing his self-imposed deadlines. The third part of the trilogy – the political part – was already finished and had been published in 1642 and then more widely in 1647, under the title *De Cive*. Yet in the summer of 1649 Hobbes stopped work on *De Corpore* to churn out another treatise on politics that essentially rehashed the arguments he had circulated two years before (as Noel Malcolm says, the earlier book was almost certainly open on his desk as he wrote the later one). His progress on *Leviathan* was as fast as his work on *De Corpore* had been slow: he had a draft of the first thirty-seven chapters written in less than a year, and the whole thing (over 200,000 words) was done by early 1651. It is hard to avoid the conclusion that the greatest work of political philosophy in the English language was a giant displacement activity.

Yet no one writes with such concentrated energy simply to avoid writing something else. Hobbes had things he felt needed to be said that he had not been able to say

before. The fundamental claims about politics in *Leviathan* – that civil life is only possible under an absolute sovereign who has the power to take life-and-death decisions on behalf of everybody, which must include the power to decide what counts as a life-and-death decision – were ones from which Hobbes never really budged throughout his long writing life (from the late 1620s to the late 1670s). Nonetheless, the book has some highly distinctive features. The most important is in some ways the most obvious: it was written in English. Hobbes had written an earlier version of his political philosophy in English – the *Elements of Law* of 1640 – but this was a privately circulated manuscript. *De Cive* had gained Hobbes considerable attention and some notoriety around Europe, in the Netherlands as well as in France. But it had not been translated from the Latin. *Leviathan* was a book ultimately written to be published – Malcolm

The urgency was driven by the pace of events in England (and Scotland). The war was clearly reaching a climax of sorts by 1649, and Hobbes wanted a version of his political philosophy available to suit the times. But the times kept changing. One of Hobbes’s jobs while in Paris had been as an occasional maths tutor to the exiled heir to the throne, the future Charles II. It may be that *Leviathan* began its life as a very traditional kind of writing: advice to a prince. This would be consistent with the idea that Hobbes began thinking about the book and making notes for it from 1646–7 onwards. One of the striking differences between *De Cive* and *Leviathan* is that the later book devotes much more space to describing the mechanics of government and the sovereign’s role within it. Previously Hobbes had seen things primarily from the point of view of the ruled, not of the ruler. As many readers have noted, *De Cive* (“On the Citizen”) is a somewhat puzzling title for Hobbes’s political thought given that his conception of citizenship seems so attenuated: it is boiled down to a relationship of obedience and protection, in which all power resides with the protector. Nonetheless it points to the primary audience Hobbes had in mind in the early 1640s: he wanted to instruct citizens thinking of rebelling why they should think twice. By the second half of the decade, with the rebellion in full swing, he had another aim in mind: to instruct the future king, once he got his kingdom back, how to stop it all happening again.

However, when Hobbes came to write *Leviathan*, two things happened to upset this plan.

First, Hobbes lost his post at the court of Charles in Paris. Hobbes’s strict views about the civil source of all religious authority – essentially, he thought sovereigns should tell clergymen what to do, never the other way round – made him deeply suspect to the exiled Anglican clergy around Charles, many of whom had Catholic sympathies. Hobbes was the

last person they wanted dishing out political advice to their protector, since that advice threatened their hold over him. So Hobbes became persona non grata.

Second, it had become increasingly clear that the Stuarts would not be getting their kingdom back any time soon. The execution of Charles I in 1649, followed by the decisive military ascendancy of the new regime over recalcitrant royalists during the following year, pointed to a fundamental shift in power. Scotland remained in flux (and an ongoing source of royalist hopes), but England at least was now under parliamentary rule. Hobbes had always argued that rulers should be obeyed, whoever they were. So should royalists now endorse the new regime?

When he came to the end of writing *Leviathan* late in 1650, Hobbes reluctantly concluded that the answer was yes. He added a “Review and Conclusion” to the book which indicated that although the rebels had been wrong to rebel, now that they were sovereign they should be obeyed. This seeming volte-face was partly prompted by Hobbes’s desire to return home, which he eventually did at the end of 1651. As Malcolm points out, Hobbes’s reputation as a known royalist would have made his endorsement a particular prize for the new regime. But this was not just a piece of political pragmatism. Hobbes was trying to be consistent: he believed that obedience followed protection, and if Charles was no longer in a position to protect his subjects, he could no longer expect to be obeyed. After Charles II was restored to the throne in 1660, Hobbes had to do a lot of wriggling to try to explain what he had done a decade earlier. He claimed his intentions had never been anything other than to pursue the royalist cause by whatever means were available: at that point (late 1650), with nothing to be gained by continuing the fight, he was simply advocating a husbanding of resources until the struggle could be resumed. Why antagonize the new regime, when what mattered was waiting it out? In 1662 Hobbes wrote a careful *mea culpa* to explain himself to the new king: “Fighting against your enemies, and seizing whatever weapons I could, I used one sword that had a double edge”. This was disingenuous. The fundamental lesson of *Leviathan* is that only sovereigns can decide who is entitled to wield the sword, and as Hobbes knew full well, in 1650 neither he nor his future king were in a position to make that decision.

The present-day reputation of *Leviathan* is somewhat ironic. Modern readers are shocked by the book’s political philosophy, with its seemingly bleak view of human nature and its endorsement of sovereign power with no constitutional constraints. Yet in fact *Leviathan* offers perhaps the most accommodating version of Hobbes’s political thinking. It adds to the earlier argument of



Leviathan by Thomas Hobbes

De Cive a novel conception of political representation, which although far removed from the modern democratic understanding of the idea, displays some of the lineaments of it. In De Cive Hobbes envisaged the state as having a democratic foundation in popular consent that must necessarily be abandoned in favour of monarchy for reasons of practicality. In Leviathan he offers an account of politics that is open to multiple different political forms. I suspect one reason Leviathan has retained its fascination is that Hobbes’s attempt to map his idea of sovereignty on to a shifting political landscape gave it an open-ended quality, which has allowed later readers to find what they were looking for in it. Hobbes’s contemporaries were more confused than outraged by his political views: they couldn’t be sure if he was really a monarchist or not. What scandalized them were the parts of the book that modern readers skip over: the assault on religion.

Noel Malcolm deals with this rich and intriguing history in his superb introduction to the new edition of the text in Oxford’s Clarendon series (of which Malcolm is one of the general editors, along with Quentin Skinner and Keith Thomas). Everything about these three volumes is testimony to Malcolm’s extraordinary scholarly range and precision. Just as impressive is the lucidity of Malcolm’s own prose. The issues with which he deals in his introduction – seventeenth-century theology and politics, the twists and turns of the civil war, the intrigue

and infighting in Paris, even the multifarious possible interpretations of the term “Leviathan” itself – are intricate and potentially confusing, but he writes about them with exemplary clarity. Specialists will find fresh insights on almost every page, but the argument could be followed by an undergraduate (though by pricing the volumes at nearly £200, Oxford University Press has ensured that almost none will be able to buy it). Malcolm’s measured and gently sceptical style is a perfect complement to Hobbes’s own extravagant scepticism, which in Leviathan can be overwhelming.

The text itself is laid out as a parallel edition of the English and Latin versions of the book. The Latin translation was produced by Hobbes himself around 1667–8. It is shorter than the English version, and not just because Latin is a more parsimonious language. Hobbes made his own contractions and omissions, which included ditching the whole of the “Review and Conclusion”. Many of these adjustments were in the ongoing spirit of making the politics suitable for the times – so, for instance, Hobbes eliminated any passages that indicated it was acceptable to pledge allegiance to successful rebels, now that the rebels were no longer successful. But at the same time, the Latin Leviathan barely modifies the theology of the original – if anything, it doubles down on some of its more outrageous elements. Hobbes added an appendix that spelled out the theological implications of his materialist philosophy, including the deeply contentious idea that God must be a corporeal entity, since the idea of “incorporeal substance” was in Hobbes’s terms an obvious absurdity. He also stuck to his guns on the question of the afterlife: since the only form of resurrection that made sense for Hobbes was the restoration of a body to motion, he insisted that the elect would resume life on earth as corporeal beings. All in all, the Latin Leviathan confirms the impression left by the English one: Thomas Hobbes’s political philosophy was more adaptable than is sometimes supposed; his theology much less so. On the question of why Hobbes wrote Leviathan, Malcolm concludes that in relation to the parts of his argument that first dominated the attention of his intended audience, the straightforward answer might yet be the most plausible. “Where Hobbes’s unorthodox theology is concerned, it is hard to escape the conclusion that he wrote as he did for one compelling reason above all: he believed that what he wrote was true.”

© David Runciman

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by ROY STAFFORD

HOW I ENDED LAST SUMMER

A review By Roy Stafford that first appeared in *The Case for Global Film Website*

I saw this film at the end of a long tiring day. I think that’s why I didn’t have quite the same ecstatic response to it that seems to be the case with so many audiences. It won the ‘Best of Festival’ prize at London last Autumn plus Silver Bears for the two actors at the 60th Berlin International Film Festival.

Writer-Director Aleksei Popogrebsky has always been fascinated by polar exploration (see the interview in the Press Pack downloadable from UK distributors New Wave). After two previous art film successes (Koktobel, 2003 and Simple Things, 2007) he embarked on this extremely difficult shoot using a tiny crew and two actors transported to remote locations in Chukotka Autonomous Region. In the story these locations are on an island in the Arctic Sea and the two men are operating a polar weather station. The older of the two men is Sergey, a veteran of the service. His younger companion Pavel appears to be spending his first summer on the island and the two men are not entirely comfortable together. Sergey takes Pavel to be lazy and possibly careless. Pavel thinks the older man is too uptight. He plays video games, listens to his MP3 player and is skilled in dealing with computer readings. Sergey’s behavior is more disciplined and his activity more physical. The boredom and the endless summer daylight are bound to affect both men. They know that they are on their own, that help of any kind can only come by air or ship – and that bad weather and pack ice could leavethem completely isolated.

The narrative turns on two events. First Sergey goes fishing for ‘Arctic Trout’. He is away in a small boat for a couple of



days. This isn’t allowed of course, but Sergey knows that fresh fish will supplement their boring diet and that the break in routine will do him good. But while he is away, Pavel receives a radio call with urgent news for Sergey. He has to lie about why Sergey can’t respond himself. The news is shocking and when Sergey returns, Pavel fails to tell him about it. Once the lies begin the relationship between the two men is doomed and what was a slight discomfort becomes the basis for psychological and then physical conflict.

The film is beautifully shot and edited (the cinematographer and sound recordist each have a background in documentary) and the generic elements of the thriller with two men in an unforgiving wilderness are generally very well-handled. Polar bears, especially in September, are a real hazard in this area – the director had a first-hand experience of one! Why then wasn’t I overwhelmed? I think that I wasn’t entirely convinced by the plotting but possibly more important I was irritated by the younger man. My sympathies were all with Sergey but the narrative seems to push us to if not identify with, then at least follow, Pavel. The director says that he doesn’t consciously build parables into his script, but that when they meet an audience, people may find parables. It did seem to me that Sergey represents the Soviet professional – someone who began working life before the break-up of the Soviet Union – and that Pavel represents the ‘New Russia’.

© Roy Stafford

Roy Stafford is a freelance lecturer and writer working on film education with cinemas in the North of England.



mezze bar

Anais Thomas

Anais: pronounced, *Ahn-ay-ees*

Anais Thomas is on a working holiday in New Zealand having left Rochefort, France 2 years ago. She initially went to Cork, Ireland and worked at the famous Jameson Distillery as a tour guide/bar manager but sometime later she arrived in Auckland and has been here ever since. She said she enjoys the scenery and landscape in NZ. She mentioned having tramped and enjoyed the Kepler track in the South Island.

I asked her whether she'd studied philosophy in France and she told me that as part of her literature subject, her involvement with philosophy consisted of 8 weeks tuition during the year.

She also mentioned that she enjoyed watching rugby and knew the score of the 3rd Test between France and NZ.

She has a distinctly French accent, so if you happen to meet her at **The Mezza**, just say "Parlezvous Français?"



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THREE GUYS AT THE MEZZA BAR



The traditional Friday night after-work drinks being celebrated at the busy **Mezza Bar**, Durham St East, Central Auckland. From left to right Adrian Griffiths, (who was also celebrating his 50th birthday) Greg Balla, and Paul Robinson.



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