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Hobbes against the Aristotelity of the Schools in the English and Latin Leviathan

Hobbes against the Aristotelity of the Schools in the *Leviathan*  
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And since the authority of Aristotle is only current there [i.e., in the Schools], that study is not properly philosophy (the nature whereof dependeth not on authors) but Aristotelity. [Hobbes, *Leviathan*, ch. 46, p. 1074]<sup>1</sup>

[I]t is manifest, that the only thing which paines him is the desire that Aristotelity may be changed into Hobbeity, & instead of the Stagyrite, the world may adore the great Malmesburian Phylosopher. [Seth Ward, *Vindiciae academiarum* (1654), p. 58]

The World, [...] is Corporeall, that is to say, Body; and hath the dimensions of Magnitude, namely, Length, Breadth, and Depth: also every part of Body, is likewise Body, and hath the like dimensions; and consequently every part of the Universe, is Body; and that which is not Body, is no part of the Universe: And because the Universe is All, that which is no part of it, is *Nothing*; and consequently *no where*. [Lev. ch. 46, p. 1076]

And if it were so, that there were a Language without any Verb answerable to *Est*, or *Is*, or *Bee*... what then would become of these Terms, of *Entity*, *Essence*, *Essentiall*, *Essentiality*, that are derived from it...? They are therefore no Names of Things... [Lev. ch. 46, p. 1080]

Therefore, *to bee a Body*, *to Walke*, *to bee Speaking*, *to Live*, *to See*, and the like Infinitives; also *Corporeity*, *Walking*, *Speaking*, *Life*, *Sight*, and the like, that signifie just the same, are the names of *Nothing*... [Lev. ch. 46, p. 1080]

When Aristotle, who regarded words more than things, understood (for example) what things should be understood as underlying the two names 'man' and 'animal', he was not content with that; being a diligent man, he inquired further what thing he should conceive as underlying the copula 'is', or at least the infinitive 'to be'. And he did not doubt that that name 'to be' was the name of some thing, as if there were in the natural world some thing whose name was 'to be' ['esse'] or 'essence'. From this absurdity he fell into another still worse, namely, that there are certain essences which are separated from their entities: these, he declared, stood beside the heavenly bodies and drove them round. He also said that the human soul, when separated from the man and in a different place from him, subsisted by itself... [Lev. (Latin vers.) ch. 46, p. 1081]

The Word *Body*, in the most generall acceptation, signifieth that which filleth, or occupyeth some certain room, or imagined place; and dependeth not on the imagination, but is a reall part of that we call the *Vniverse*. For the *Vniverse*, being the Aggregate of all Bodies, there is no reall part thereof that is not also *Body*; nor any thing properly a *Body*, that is not also part of (that Aggregate of all *Bodies*) the *Vniverse*. The same also, because Bodies are subject to change, that is to say, to variety of apparence to the sense of living creatures, is called *Substance*, that is to say, *Subject*, to various accidents [...] And according to this acceptation of the word, *Substance* and *Body*, signifie the same thing; and therefore *Substance incorporeall* are words, which when they are joined together, destroy one another, as if a man should say, an *Incorporeall Body*. [Lev. ch. 34, p. 610]

...it is annexed to the Sovereignty, to be Judge of what Opinions and Doctrines are averse, and what conducing to Peace; and consequently, on what occasions, how farre, and what, men are to be trusted withall, in speaking to Multitudes of people; and who shall examine the Doctrines of all bookes before they be published. For the Actions of men proceed from their Opinions; and in the wel governing of Opinions, consisteth the well governing of mens Actions, in order to their Peace, and Concord. [Lev. ch. 18, p. 272]

... [I]n a Common-wealth, a subject that has no certain and assured Revelation particularly to himself concerning the Will of God, is to obey for such, the Command of the Common-wealth: for if men were at liberty, to take for Gods Commandements, their own dreams, and fancies, or the dreams and fancies of private men; scarce two men would agree upon what is Gods Commandement; and yet in respect of them, every man would despise the Commandements of the Common-wealth. I conclude therefore, that in all things not contrary to the Morall Law, (that is to say, to the Law of Nature,) all Subjects are bound to obey that for divine Law, which is declared to be so, by the Lawes of the Common-wealth. [Lev. ch. 26, pp. 446-8]

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<sup>1</sup> Page references to the *Leviathan* are to the text as given in the Clarendon Hobbes, edited by Noel Malcolm, Oxford University Press, 2012. Texts taken from Hobbes's Latin version are so noted, and are given in Noel Malcolm's English translation.

But seeing a commonwealth is but one person, it ought also to exhibit to God but one worship; which then it doth, when it commandeth it to be exhibited by private men, publicly. And this is public worship; the property whereof, is to be *uniform*: for those actions that are done differently, by different men, cannot be said to be a public worship. ... And because a commonwealth hath no will, nor makes no laws, but those that are made by the will of him, or them that have the sovereign power; it followeth, that those attributes which the sovereign ordaineth, in the worship of God, for signs of honour, ought to be taken and used for such, by private men in their public worship. [Lev. ch. 31, p. 570]

From this consolidation of the Right Politique, and Ecclesiastique in Christian Sovereigns, it is evident, they have all manner of Power over their Subjects, that can be given to man, for the government of mens externall actions, both in Policy, and Religion; and may make such Laws, as themselves shall judge fittest, for the government of their own Subjects, both as they are the Common-wealth, and as they are the Church: for both State, and Church are the same men. [Lev. ch. 42, p. 864]

The greatest and main abuse of Scripture, and to which almost all the rest are either consequent or subservient, is the wresting of it, to prove that the kingdom of God, mentioned so often in the Scripture, is the present Church, or multitude of Christian men now living, or that being dead, are to rise again at the last day... Consequent to this error, that the present Church is Christ's kingdom, there ought to be some one man, or assembly, by whose mouth our Saviour (now in heaven) speaketh, giveth law, and which representeth his person to all Christians.... [Lev. ch. 44, p. 960]

Consequent to this claim of the Pope to vicar general of Christ in the present Church, (supposed to be that kingdom of his, to which we are addressed in the gospel,) is the doctrine, that it is necessary for a Christian king to receive his crown by a bishop; as if it were from that ceremony, that he derives the clause of *Dei gratia* in his title; and that then only he is made king by the favour of God, when he is crowned by the authority of God's universal vicegerent on earth; and that every bishop whosoever be his sovereign, taketh at his consecration an oath of absolute obedience to the Pope. [Lev. ch. 44, p. 962]

[T]he Pope prevailed with the subjects of all Christian princes, to believe, that to disobey him, was to disobey Christ himself; and in all differences between him and other princes, (charmed with the word *power spiritual*,) to abandon their lawful sovereigns; which is in effect an universal monarchy over all Christendom. [Lev. ch. 47, p. 1104]

That synod condemned not only the Arian heresy, but also all the heresies of the past, from the birth of Christ onwards; in the creed called the 'Nicene' creed it briefly summarized the orthodox faith out of the Scriptures themselves, taking no account whatsoever of Greek philosophy. [Lev. (Latin vers.) ch. 46, p. 1065]

In subsequent times they followed Aristotle's philosophy in their writings with rather less restraint; also, some of them ambitiously showed off their Aristotelianism when they produced logical and physical treatises in accordance with the views of Aristotle. And the majority of them held almost the same demonology that we find, when we read Homer and Hesiod, to have been long since fixed in people's minds; and Aristotle's doctrine of 'separated forms' seemed to them more in keeping [with this] than the philosophy of the other sects. [Lev. (Latin vers.) ch. 46, p. 1071]

The demonology of the Greeks, arising from this doctrine of essences and separated substantial forms, remained ... in the Church; as did that superstition which the Greeks call ... the fear of phantasms. Thence arose the use of exorcisms, the sign of the cross, and holy water, to charm or chase them away. Then appeared the belief in incorporeal substances, that is, ones without any magnitude at all, and the belief that God himself (who is best and greatest) had no magnitude, although neither 'incorporeal substance' nor 'immaterial substance' is to be found in Holy Scripture. [Lev. (Latin vers.) ch. 46, pp. 1083-5]

But to what purpose (may some man say) is such subtlety in a work of this nature, where I pretend to nothing but what is necessary to the doctrine of government and obedience? It is to this purpose, that men may no longer suffer themselves to be abused, by them, that by this doctrine of *separated essences*, built on the vain philosophy of Aristotle, would fright them from obeying the laws of their country, with empty names; as men fright birds from the corn with an empty doublet, a hat, and a crooked stick. For it is upon this ground, that when a man is dead and buried, they say his soul (that is his life) can walk separated from his body, and is seen by night amongst the graves. Upon the same ground they say, that the figure, and colour, and taste of a piece of bread, has a being, there, where they say there is no bread. And upon the same ground they say, that faith, and wisdom, and other virtues are sometimes *poured* [infused] into a man, sometimes *blown* [inspired] into him from Heaven, as if the virtuous and their virtues could be asunder; and a great many other things that serve to lessen the dependance of subjects on the sovereign power of their country. For who will endeavour to obey the laws, if he expect obedience to be poured or blown into him? Or who will not obey a priest, that can make God, rather than his sovereign, nay than God himself? Or who, that is in fear of ghosts, will not bear great respect to those that can make the holy water, that drives them from him? And this shall suffice for an example of the errors, which are brought into the Church, from the *entities* and *essences* of Aristotle: which it may be he knew to be false philosophy; but writ it as a thing consonant to, and corroborative of their religion; and fearing the fate of Socrates. [*Lev.* ch. 46, p. 1082]

... [F]irst, that they ought not to be in love with any form of government they see in their neighbour nations, more than with their own, nor, (whatsoever present prosperity they behold in nations that are otherwise governed than they,) to desire change. ...

Secondly, they are to be taught, that they ought not to be led with admiration of the virtue of any of their fellow subjects ...so as to defer to them any obedience, or honour, appropriate to the sovereign only...

Thirdly, in consequence to this, they ought to be informed, how great a fault it is, to speak evil of the sovereign representative ... or to argue and dispute his power; or any way to use his name irreverently, whereby he may be brought into contempt with his people, and their obedience (in which the safety of the commonwealth consisteth) slackened....

And because the first instruction of children, dependeth on the care of their parents; it is necessary that they should be obedient to them, whilst they are under their tuition; and not only so, but that also afterwards (as gratitude requireth,) they acknowledge the benefit of their education, by external signs of honour....

Again, every sovereign ought to cause justice to be taught, which (consisting in taking from no man what is his,) is as much as to say, to cause men to be taught not to deprive their neighbours, by violence, or fraud, of any thing which by the sovereign authority is theirs. [*Lev.* ch. 30, pp. 524-30]

And the divines, and such others as make show of learning, derive their knowledge from the universities, and from the schools of law, or from the books, which by men eminent in those schools, and universities have been published. It is therefore manifest, that the instruction of the people, dependeth wholly, on the right teaching of youth in the universities. [*Lev.* ch. 30, p. 532]

But, up to that time, although the schools were useless, they were nevertheless harmless; while the disagreements between the sects went so far as to bring them to blows, philosophy was nevertheless, up to that time, free. No one was compelled to swear by the words of Aristotle, although his dogmas were more widely accepted than those of the other sects. [*Lev.* (Latin vers.) ch. 46, p. 1059]

That which is now called an *University*, is a joining together, and an incorporation under one government of many public schools, in one and the same town or city. In which, the principal schools were ordained for the three professions, that is to say, of the Roman religion, of the Roman law, and of the art of medicine. And for the study of philosophy it hath no otherwise place, than as a handmaid to the Roman religion: and since the authority of Aristotle is only current there, that study is not properly philosophy, (the nature whereof dependeth not on authors,) but Aristotelity. [*Lev.* ch. 46, p. 1074]

The logic, physics, metaphysics, ethics, and politics of Aristotle were taught in the universities as if the universe [universitas] of the sciences were contained in one man, Aristotle (at that time the greatest Father of the Church). In particular, in order to make bashful youth put on a bold face, young men were trained in public disputations and declamations, to enable them both to maintain and to preach the dogmas of the Roman Church. Thus, by the sermons and published writings of the ecclesiastics who were sent out of the universities to almost all the cities, towns, and parishes of the Christian world, it was indelibly fixed in the minds of all Christians that *the only rule of just and unjust is the dictates of the Roman Church; kings should be obeyed no further than is permitted by the Roman Church; kings themselves should obey the Roman Pontiff like sheep.* [Lev. (Latin vers.) ch. 46, p. 1075]

It is therefore manifest, that the instruction of the people, dependeth wholly, on the right teaching of youth in the universities. But are not (may some man say) the universities of *England* learned enough already to do that? or is it you will undertake to teach the universities? Hard questions. Yet to the first, I doubt not to answer; that till towards the latter end of *Henry the Eighth*, the power of the Pope, was always upheld against the power of the commonwealth, principally by the universities; and that the doctrines maintained by so many preachers, against the sovereign power of the king, and by so many lawyers, and others, that had their education there, is a sufficient argument, that though the universities were not authors of those false doctrines, yet they knew not how to plant the true. For in such a contradiction of opinions, it is most certain, that they have not been sufficiently instructed; and it is no wonder, if they yet retain a relish of that subtle liquor, wherewith they were first seasoned, against the civil authority. But to the latter question, it is not fit, nor needful for me to say either aye, or no: for any man that sees what I am doing, may easily perceive what I think. [Lev. ch. 46, pp. 532-4]

To conclude, there is nothing in this whole discourse ... as far as I can perceive, contrary either to the Word of God, or to good manners; or to the disturbance of the public tranquillity. Therefore I think it may be profitably printed, and more profitably taught in the Universities, in case they also think so, to whom the judgment of the same belongeth. For seeing the Universities are the fountains of civil, and moral doctrine, from whence the preachers, and the gentry, drawing such water as they find, use to sprinkle the same (both from the pulpit, and in their conversation) upon the people, there ought certainly to be great care taken, to have it pure, both from the venom of heathen politicians, and from the incantation of deceiving spirits... [Lev. "Review and Conclusion", p. 1140]

I recover some hope, that one time or other, this writing of mine, may fall into the hands of a sovereign, who will consider it himself, (for it is short, and I think clear,) without the help of any interested, or envious interpreter; and by the exercise of entire sovereignty, in protecting the public teaching of it, convert this truth of speculation, into the utility of practice. [Lev. ch. 31, p. 574]