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Hobbes and Aristotle on the Foundation of Political Science

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Thomas Hobbes boldly begins his first printed work of political philosophy, and his first foray into European letters, with a frontal assault on Aristotle. The opening of the first chapter is a self-portrait of the philosopher as a revolutionary: overthrowing the long-accepted approach to politics, he lays down the proper foundations of civil science for the first time. "Civil Philosophy," Hobbes will thus write, is "no older than … the book *Of the Citizen* that I wrote myself," immediately dismissing the "so called" civil philosophers among the ancient Greeks (DCo Ep. Ded.).[1] Even when the hyperbole and self-promotion has been seen as such, Hobbes is frequently credited with inaugurating a new epoch, launching modern political thought.

In particular, the Hobbesian revolution has been taken to consist in the rejection of Aristotle's political naturalism and the natural law tradition built thereon: While Aristotle had maintained that political institutions were natural to human beings, Hobbes recognized that they were, on the contrary, artificial. When understood, however, to mean that Hobbes claimed and Aristotle denied that the commonwealth (or *polis*) is something we humans make in order to serve our own ends (e.g. Keyt 1991: 118), this view must be mistaken. Aristotle does sometimes contrast nature with artifice (e.g., *Phys.* II.1), but when he claims that the *polis* exists by nature, it is not this contrast that he has in mind (*contra* Keyt 1991: 119). He begins the *Politics* by suggesting that the political community "is established (*sunestēkuian*)" by voluntary human action (*Pol.* I.1, 1252a1-3); and in the course of defending his thesis that the *polis* exists by nature, he praises "whoever first established (*sustēsas*)" a political community (*Pol.* I.2,

[1] Translations from Latin works (including the *De Cive*) are ours unless noted, though we have sometimes borrowed choices from Silverthorne's *On the Citizen*. References to Aristotle's texts are to the Greek editions in the Oxford Classical Texts unless noted otherwise in the citation or bibliography. For Aristotle's *Nicomachean Ethics* (*NE*), *Politics* (*Pol.*), and *Eudemian Ethics* (*EE*), we have generally followed the respective translations of Irwin, Reeve, and Inwood and Woolf, with some modifications.

1253a29-31). The *polis* had to be constructed in order to satisfy certain natural needs and tendencies we have, and to fully perfect our nature, but it had to be constructed all the same.

Conversely, however much Hobbes insists that the commonwealth does not exist "by nature," he does not deny that we have natural needs or desires that are best satisfied by establishing a political community – indeed, that is precisely his point. Moreover, he grants that "no one lives outside of Society" (DCv 1.2n); and he is happy to speak of the "natural commonwealth" (DCv 5.12). It seems then that Aristotle and Hobbes *agree* that we need to establish political communities in order to best satisfy our natural needs and our natural desires, and even that humans display a natural tendency to form such communities.

In light of this, careful scholars have concluded that Hobbes's purported disagreement with Aristotle involves a basic misunderstanding or a careless or deliberate distortion; or (more charitably) that Hobbes's real target was not Aristotle himself, but some scholastic or neo-Stoic permutation. We reject both of these conclusions. The contrast between the two thinkers on the concept of nature and its relevance to politics is less obvious (and correspondingly more interesting) than is often acknowledged – or than is suggested by Hobbes's own sometimes exaggerated contrast between himself and Aristotle. But we will argue that Hobbes is nonetheless right to suggest that he is doing something radically new. If one considers his arguments in the opening pages of the body of *De Cive*, one can see that Hobbes's break with the tradition emerged out of a systematic engagement with Aristotle's own conception of (as Hobbes puts it) the "foundation" of "civil doctrine" (or civil science, *doctrina*). To better understand the nature of the break, we propose to focus in some detail on that opening salvo against a doctrine of natural politicality.

In saying that Hobbes targets Aristotle himself, we do not mean to deny that Hobbes may have been motivated by, say, how an influential interpreter such as Louis Le Roy had employed Aristotle's theory, or how a contemporary like Hugo Grotius was deploying a version of the Stoic thesis that human beings have a natural desire for society. But he would have recognized that a forceful refutation of Aristotle's own arguments could serve to show that the common foundation of such views was unsound.[2] As is well known, Hobbes was intent on attacking

[2] We cannot here lay out the case that the Stoic or neo-Stoic theory derives from Aristotle's theory, or that early modern thinkers believed that it did. See e.g. the indications in Winkel 2000. Regarding a possible later Aristotelian impetus for Hobbes's argument, see below, n. 12.

Aristotle's moral and political philosophy, which he regarded as still dominant and authoritative in his own day. Hobbes attacks the view that the human being is a political animal (ζῶον πολιτικόν), and that this can serve as the foundation of civil science; if this can plausibly read as an attack on Aristotle, there is little reason to deny that that is what it is, especially since the other salient doctrines of natural sociability could reasonably be thought to fall with it.

The argument against natural sociability that will be our focus here, unlike other of Hobbes's anti-Aristotelian arguments, is unique to *De Cive*, with no parallel in Hobbes's other works. We believe that this is due to another unique feature of *De Cive*. In order to promptly address the "questions of the right of Command (*Imperii*) and of the citizens' obligations of obedience" with which his country was "boiling" (DCv Pref.19), Hobbes had to rush the work to completion before he had finished what were to be the preceding parts (*On Body* and *On Man*). This means that in *De Cive* he commences with the equivalent to *Leviathan*'s Chapter 13, without being able to rely on his own theory of human psychology.

Hobbes "saw that [*De Cive*] did not need the preceding parts, since it rests on its own principles known by experience (*experientia*)" (DCv Pref.19). In particular, as we shall see, Hobbes thought that he could establish the falsity of the Aristotelian "foundation" on which previous writers had sought to "build civil doctrine (*doctrina*)" via "deeper observation of the causes of the association of people and their delight in mutual society" (DCv 1.2). Hobbes's demonstration of the inadequacy of the Aristotelian foundation discloses what is required for a firm new foundation: Not mutual love or friendship, but mutual fear is the true "origin of large and lasting society" (DCv 1.2). It is perhaps because he thinks that he has at last set civil science on a sound foundation, while demonstrating the failure of Aristotle's foundation, that Hobbes came to feel that he had achieved something entirely new in *De Cive* (cf. VL 258).

Political Animals and the "Foundation of Civil Doctrine"

At the beginning of the first chapter of *De Cive*, Hobbes frames his project in terms of the Aristotelian view that we are naturally sociable creatures: "We shall first say what disposition people have … toward each other, and whether, and by what means (*facultas*), they are born fit for society (*apti nati sint ad societatem*)" (DCv 1.1). It does not take Hobbes long to settle the question:

> Most of those who have written about Commonwealths [*Rebus publicis*] assume, or seek to show, or assert that the Human is an animal born fit [*aptum natum*] for Society – ζῷον πολιτικόν, say the Greeks. And on this foundation they build civil doctrine … This Axiom, although accepted by most, is nevertheless false. (DCv 1.2)

The phrase ζῷον πολιτικόν famously comes from Aristotle. Some scholars have argued, however, that it is not Aristotle himself that is Hobbes's target, but rather his "mindless imitators" (Evrigenis 2014: 101).

One reason for doubting that Hobbes has Aristotle himself in mind is that the argument of *De Cive* 1.2 does not appear to bear much on Aristotle's famous discussion of political animals and the natural origin of the *polis* in *Politics* I.2. Indeed, on Aristotle's central point in *Politics* I.2 – that a human being is not naturally self-sufficient and thus has a need for political community – Hobbes seems to be in essential agreement (Evrigenis 2014: 100-101; cf. Evrigenis 2014: 23-59; Rosler 2002). Hobbes's argument is instead directed at the idea that "the Human is an animal born fit for Society" because "the human naturally loves [his fellow] human" (DCv 1.2). But Aristotle's discussion of political animals in *Politics* I.2 hardly makes use of such a notion of natural sociability. Certainly, it does not appear there as a "foundation" or "Axiom" for the construction of civil philosophy.

This reasoning presupposes that, if Hobbes were targeting Aristotle's notion of the human being as ζῷον πολιτικόν, it must be Aristotle's use of that notion early in the *Politics.* This assumption has *prima facie* plausibility, especially as *Politics* I.2 has come to be seen as the *locus classicus* for the view that the human is a political animal. Would Hobbes not look to the beginning of the *Politics* for an account of Aristotle's own foundation for political philosophy, if that were what he was setting out to demolish?

Perhaps not. Aristotle thought of his *Ethics* and *Politics* as comprising a single science – which he called "the political science" – of which ethics was the prior and more fundamental part. Hobbes may have seen the matter similarly, Parts I (i.e. Chapters 1-4) and II (Chapters 5-14) of *De Cive* roughly corresponding to subject matter from Aristotle's *Ethics* and *Politics,* respectively.[3] That Hobbes thought of the division of the topic in this way is supported by the

[3] Cf. the division into parts of *The Elements of Law, Natural and Politic*, implicit even in its title, and of the first two parts of *Leviathan* ('Of Man'; 'Of Commonwealth').

fact that much of Part I is devoted to natural law (which he insists is the same as the moral law: DCv 3.31), and that he criticizes Aristotelian ethical doctrines therein (e.g. DCv 3.32). It is not until the beginning of Part II that Hobbes comes to the question of the "causes and generation of a commonwealth" – that is, to the very topic of Aristotle's *Politics* I.2. And there, particularly in *De Cive* 5.5, Hobbes considers some of the specific arguments that Aristotle presents in *Politics* I.2. Moreover, the fact that Hobbes's target is the view that the human is a political animal does not by any means rule out his having Aristotle's *Nicomachean Ethics* in his sights, for the idea plays an equally important role there, where it is more explicitly connected with a desire for society.[4]

Still, in *De Cive* 1.2, Hobbes attacks the position that the political community is based on mutual love or *amor* – and that position can seem so fanciful that one might understandably doubt whether *any* philosopher held it, much less Aristotle. However, we suggest that Hobbes is here using *amor* as a translation of what Aristotle calls *philia*. Some five years earlier, Hobbes had already used "love" to translate Aristotle's *philia.* In his digest of Aristotle's *Rhetoric*, Hobbes titles Aristotle's chapter about *philia* as being "Of Love, and Friends," and consistently uses "to love" to translate *philein* (the verb cognate with *philia*) ([Hobbes] 1637: 76).[5]

And it is in his discussion of *philia* (*NE* VIII-IX) that Aristotle's commitment to the kind of natural sociability that Hobbes has in his sights comes out most clearly. "Human beings most of all have a natural love (*philia*) for each other," Aristotle writes, and "in our travels, we can see how every human being is akin (*oikeion*) and beloved (*philon*) to every human being" (*NE* VIII.1, 1155a19-22; cf. *NE* VIII.11, 1161b5-8). In a culminating discussion of *philia*, Aristotle says that it would be "absurd" to think that a flourishing (*eudaimōn*) human life could be a solitary one; "no one would choose to be alone, even if he had all other goods, *since the human being is a political animal* and naturally shares life [with others]" (*NE* IX.9, 1169b16-23). If we consider Aristotle's ethical works in general, and the discussion of *philia* in particular, it is clear

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[4] See *NE* I.7, 1097b9-12 and *NE* IX.9, 1169b16-23. Although less prominent, the connection can also be found in the *Politics* at *Pol*. III.6, 1278b19-21.

[5] Hobbes is here translating from the beginning of Aristotle's *Rhetoric* II.2, following Goulston's translation of this chapter as *De amore & amicitia* (Goulston 1619: 96). We take *A Briefe*, first published anonymously around 1637, to be by Hobbes, making him the first to publish an English rendition of the *Rhetoric*.

why Hobbes would associate Aristotle's claim that we are political animals with the view that we have a natural love or affection for others and a natural desire for society.

Hobbes doesn't only take aim at the idea of natural sociability; he particularly criticizes the view that it could function as an "Axiom" or "foundation" for political philosophy or science. Is natural *philia* a foundation of Aristotle's political science? Although it has not been emphasized by recent scholars, Aristotle does imply that *philia* plays a foundational role in the *polis,* saying that "it seems that friendship (*philia*) holds cities together," and that legislators aim at promoting friendship and concord even more than justice, since they are opposed to "civil conflict (*stasis*)" (*NE* VIII.1, 1155a22-28).[6] In the *Eudemian Ethics,* he goes even further, saying that "the task of political [science] seems, above all, to be creating friendship [among citizens]" (*EE* VII.1, 1234b22-23). This idea also features in the *Politics*. In the course of criticizing Plato's *Republic*, Aristotle says that "we regard friendship (*philia*) as the greatest of goods for city-states, since in this condition people are least likely to factionalize (*stasiazoien*)" (*Pol.* II.4, 1262b7-9). More significantly, the idea that *philia* is characteristic of the political community is crucial to Aristotle's argument that the *polis* has as its end living well, and does not exist merely in order to procure the means for survival (*Pol.* III.9, 1280b38-40). And in the course of arguing that in a genuine city-state the citizens must not be ruled as slaves, Aristotle explains that such rule would be inconsistent with the kind of friendship which is required for there to be a political community (*Pol.* IV.11, 1295b21-24).[7]

Understanding how *philia* plays a foundational role in Aristotle's political thought sheds light on one of the more perplexing features of Hobbes's discussion in *De Cive* 1.2. Hobbes associates the view that humans are political animals with a particular conception of law:

> ...ζῷον πολιτικόν, say the Greeks. And on this foundation they build civil doctrine, as if to preserve peace and the government of the whole human race nothing else were necessary than for people to consent (*consentirent*) to certain

[6] These views are not merely the *endoxa*; Aristotle ends up endorsing them: see e.g., *NE* IX.6. On friendship and justice, see further *NE* VIII.9, *NE* VIII.11, and *EE* VII.10, 1242a19-22. One work that does discuss the politically foundational role of *philia* is Cooper 1990.

[7] Rejecting the requirement of political friendship, Hobbes also rejects the distinction between rule over slaves and political rule. See Daniel Lee's chapter in this volume.

agreements (*pacta*) and terms, which they straightaway call laws. This Axiom, though accepted by most, is nevertheless false. (DCv 1.2)

Why should Hobbes attribute to those who think of humans as "born fit for society" not only a view that people naturally love their fellow human beings, but also a view of law according to which laws are nothing but "certain agreements"?

One reason is that his target in each case is Aristotle. For he later says that Aristotle *defines* law as an agreement or *homologia*:

> They confuse *law* with *agreement* (*pacto*) who suppose that laws are nothing other than ὁμολογήματα or agreed principles for living determined by the common consent (*communi consensu*) of human beings. Among them is *Aristotle*, who defines *law* in this way: Νόμος ἐστι λόγος ὡρισμένος καθ᾽ ὁμολογίαν κοινὴν πόλεως, μηνύων πῶς δεῖ πράττειν ἕκαστα. That is, *law is speech defined by the common consent of the commonwealth, making known how each ought to act*…By commonwealth, he thus understood a multitude of people making known principles for living by common consent… But these are nothing other than mutual agreements, which do not obligate anyone, nor are they therefore laws, until a sovereign is established who can compel, and one has a guarantee against the others who would not otherwise observe them. (DCv 14.2)

Although the quotation itself is not to be found in the extant works now attributed to Aristotle, we will argue that Hobbes is nonetheless right to see "agreement" (*homologia*, *homologēma*) as central to the Aristotelian conception of law.[8]

In his *Rhetoric*, Aristotle explicitly identifies "general law" with "all those unwritten [principles] which seem to be agreed upon (*homologeisthai*) by everyone" (*Rhet.* I.10, 1368b7-9).[9] In Book I of the *Politics,* he invokes the idea that "the law is a sort of agreement (*homologia*)" when assessing the general law that those conquered in war belong to their conquerors (*Pol.* I.6, 1255a5-6). Moreover, we can understand why Hobbes characterizes Aristotle as speaking of law as agreement "as if … nothing else were necessary" – in particular, as if threats of punishment were not necessary for the existence of law – for it is not unusual for

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[8] Athenaeus attributes this definition of law to Aristotle (*Deipnosophists*, 508a), and it is also found in the prefatory letter to the *Rhetoric to Alexander* that is written as if from Aristotle (1420a26-8).

[9] Cf. *Rhet.* I.13, 1373b4-6. In his translation of Aristotle's *Rhetoric*, Hobbes simply drops this line.

Aristotle to discuss law in terms of reason, justice, or agreement without mentioning its coercive function.[10]

So, Aristotle does present law as a kind of *homologia*, as Hobbes says. And careful consideration reveals not only that Hobbes is right to connect the positions that law is *homologia* and that it is by nature that humans love one another and form societies, as having a common source; but also that he is right to discern Aristotle's own connection of political *philia*, agreement, and law.

In the *Nicomachean Ethics*, Aristotle holds that the *philia* between citizens within the political community is bound by agreement, *homologia* (*NE* VIII.12, 1161b11-15). In the *Eudemian Ethics*, he says that *philia* is political and legal (*politikē kai nomikē*) when it is based on *homologia* (*EE* VII.10, 1242b35-6). And in both works, he identifies political friendship (*politikē philia*) with the related notion of *homonoia*, i.e., agreement or concord (see esp. *NE* IX.6, 1167b2-3 and *EE* VII.7, 1241a31-4).

Such *homonoia* is not merely an ideal for a *polis* to aspire to; a certain degree of it is necessary, on Aristotle's view, for there to be a constitution and therefore a city-state at all. To see why, consider that the city-state is, Aristotle tells us, a unity comprised of members that "differ in kind," and "that's why reciprocal equality preserves city-states, as we said earlier in the *Ethics*, since this must exist even among people who are free and equal" (*Pol.* II.2, 1261a29-32; cf. *NE* V.5, 1132b31-4). Aristotle tells us that, in political friendship, a special type of utility friendship, "proportion (*analogon*) equalizes and preserves the friendship," by ensuring that each receives a fair recompense for their contribution (*NE* IX.1, 1163b32-5; cf. *EE* VII.10, 1242a7). His idea seems to be that the political friendship that holds the *polis* together is a mutually beneficial relationship governed by the norms of reciprocal equality. Reciprocally equal exchange requires a kind of *homonoia* as a condition of its possibility because only against the background of a basic agreement about the respect in which people are said to be "equal" or "unequal" will citizens be able to voluntarily enter into reciprocally equalized relations. *Homonoia* and political friendship involve a shared understanding of the common good, and can be thought of as the foundation for all particular constitutions and their particular laws.[11]

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[10] An exception is *NE* X.9, 1180a15-21.

[11] The role of such agreement comes out especially clearly when the parties have a shared *mis*conception of equality. Cf. *Pol.* III.9, III.12.

In sum: What has made *De Cive* 1.2 intractable has been the obscurity of the connection between, and therefore the purpose of Hobbes's assault on, three apparently disparate positions: (1) the claim that human beings are political animals, (2) the idea that human communities are held together by a natural love for one another, and (3) a conception of law as based on agreement or concord. Our contention so far has been that it is Aristotle who makes and connects these three claims, and there is therefore nothing that should prevent us from thinking that Hobbes intends to attack Aristotle.[12] This will in turn give us a better understanding of the substance of the attack, and of Hobbes's rival foundation of political science.

The Attack on Political Friendship

If we do grant that Hobbes's target in *De Cive* 1.2 is the notion of a *philia politikē* that makes a *polis* possible, much falls into place. Near the end, Hobbes draws the conclusion that, "All society, therefore, … is entered into for love of self, not of friends (*sociorum*)" (DCv 1.2); and the section as a whole appears to be structured as a systematic treatment of Aristotle's kinds of *philia,* arguing that none of them could generate a genuinely political community.

Hobbes begins his discussion by considering the general cause of association, arguing that one human being does not love another "as a human being," since "what is sought in every society is … something that seems good to oneself." Here, Hobbes is picking up on an Aristotelian commitment ("each [of us] loves … what appears good for him" [*NE* VIII.2, 1155b25-6]), as if in order to undermine Aristotle's position from within. Hobbes argues that "if the human being loved [each other] human being, loved him, that is, just as a human being, no reason can be given … why everyone would rather seek the company of people whose society is more prestigious or useful to him than others" (DCv 1.2) – an argument apparently directed at

[12] Later thinkers may well have discussed, endorsed, or even combined these three Aristotelian positions. For instance, Louis Le Roy puts them together in his influential translation of and commentary on the *Politics* (1598: fols. Bii^{v}-Biii^{r} and pp. 1-2), which Hobbes had in his library (Chatsworth MS E.1.A, p. 58). And Jean Bodin, in a work that Hobbes had admiringly cited in *The Elements of Law*, suggests that "friendship is the entire foundation of all society," immediately going on to cite Aristotle's *Politics* (1576: III.7, 383). Our argument is that, while he may well have had later writers in mind, Hobbes would still have been going after what he took to be Aristotle's own views in attacking them.

Aristotle's claim that "every human being is akin and beloved to every human being" (*NE* VIII.1, 1155a21-2).

Aristotle famously distinguishes three kinds of *philia* or friendship: friendship among those who are useful to one another; friendship among those who are pleasant to one another; and friendship among those who are good in themselves, or virtuous. Hobbes proceeds through each of the Aristotelian varieties of friendship, arguing in each case that such friends neither exhibit good will to one another "for their own sake" nor want to associate with one another as such, but merely want to gain something *else* from associating. He begins with a kind of friendship closely corresponding to Aristotle's category of friendship for the sake of utility: "Why people gather together may be determined from what they who are gathered do. If they meet on account of business, each one seeks not his associates' advantage but his own" (DCv 1.2). Hobbes takes it as obvious that, in such relationships, we do not love our "friend" in himself or enjoy spending time with him for its own sake, and that they cannot be the grounds of a stable society – as indeed does Aristotle, who says of "those who are friends because they are useful" that their friendship "dissolves as soon as the utility does; for they were not friends of one another, but of the advantageous" (*NE* VIII.4, 1157a14-16).

But Aristotle had argued that there is a special type of utility friendship that, as we have seen, he called "political friendship" – the friendship that holds cities together, which is the greatest blessing for a city, and which legislators aim at even more than justice; and it is interesting to consider how Hobbes proceeds in light of this. Immediately after treating relationships for the sake of utility, Hobbes says: "If the cause [of association] is public service (*officium*), then a kind of political friendship (*forensis quaedam amicitia*) develops, comprising more mutual fear than love (*amor*), from which faction (*factio*) is sometimes born, but never goodwill (*benevolentia*)." Hobbes is acknowledging that people can develop a "kind of friendship" for broadly political reasons: They might seek an alliance with one another out of fear of a mutual enemy, for example, or each in the hope of pacifying the other.

There are two points worth registering here. First, Hobbes is suggesting that this *forensis quaedam amicitia* could never lead to goodwill. It is, after all, a kind of utility friendship – and, as we have seen, in utility friendship, the "friends" are really after their own advantage, not that of their friend. Given that friendship by definition requires the friends to wish goods to one another for the other's own sake (*NE* VIII.2, 1155b31; cf. *Rhetoric* II.4, 1380b36-1381a1), it's

reasonable for Hobbes to insist that political friends do not seem to be friends at all. No work seems to be done by the purported friendship of the parties; "we seek these [honor and advantage] in the first place, and those [friends or associates] secondarily." (DCv 1.2)

Second, it was *amicitia politica* or *civilis,* not *forensis*, that were the more common translations of Aristotle's *philia politikē*. Rather than doubting Silverthorne's translation of *forensis* as "political," however, we would suggest that Hobbes is offering a polemical re-translation. *Forensis,* here, might imply a kind of market exchange, and possibly insincerity or duplicity (cf. e.g. Cicero to Atticus I.8), in a way that *politica* or *civilis* would not. All of this adds up to a vigorous objection to Aristotle's suggestion that political friendship helps "expel faction (*stasis*)" from the city (*NE* VIII.1, 1155a25-6). Quite the opposite, Hobbes argues: from friendships or associations entered into for public or political purposes, "sometimes faction is born, but never goodwill."[13]

Hobbes spends the bulk of his time in *De Cive* 1.2 considering those associations in which people "meet for amusement or fun," a category corresponding to Aristotle's friendships for the sake of pleasure. Perhaps he devotes so much time to this category because such associations seem to have the strongest claim to stem from our love of others and our enjoyment of their company simply for its own sake. In response, Hobbes is gleefully cynical in his account of the "true delights" of society: "everyone usually takes the most pleasure in those things that provoke laughter, from which (such is the nature of the laughable) he may depart thinking better of himself by comparison with another's disgrace or infirmity" (DCv 1.2). Hobbes is not denying that people enjoy associating, but is arguing that such enjoyment is derivative: "they are delighted first and foremost not by society but by their own glory" (DCv 1.2). That is, what the associates are really interested in (what they find useful or pleasant) is something else that they get out of the association, and not the association itself.

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[13] Understanding the gist of Hobbes's argument as suggested can help to make sense of what might otherwise be a perplexing feature of the discussion as a whole. After denying that such *amicitia forensis,* "comprising more mutual fear than love," could be the grounds of political community, Hobbes goes on to conclude by saying "... the origin of large and lasting society arises not from people's mutual goodwill but mutual fear" (DCv 1.2). Hobbes's point therefore is not that it is a problem with *amicitia forensis* that it is based in fear *per se*. But it is misleading to characterize it as a form of *amicitia*, since *benevolentia* plays no part in it; and potentially dangerous too, if it suggests that our mutual fear does not need to be channeled by the artifice of sovereignty in order to make politics possible.

Hobbes turns, finally, to associations of "those who profess to know more than others," the Philosophers. It might seem that Aristotle's category of friendship that is based on virtue is missing from Hobbes's treatment. More likely, however, Hobbes means this as a bitingly reductive picture of supposedly virtue-based friendship. For Aristotle himself connects virtue friendship with friendship among philosophers (*NE* IX.1, 1164a32-b10; *NE* IX.12, 1171b36-1172a14). And it is typical of Hobbes to debunk Aristotle's claims in moral and political philosophy as, in effect, a product of the philosopher's inflated sense of superiority over others (e.g. *Leviathan* 15.21: 234-5). Hobbes finds this vainglory at work in the gatherings of these philosophers, where "all want to be regarded as Masters; otherwise, not only do these comrades, like the others, not mutually love one another, but they pursue hatred" (DCv 1.2). Thus, the friendships of philosophers are not ultimately different from associations among the rest of us, for they, too, are based on the pleasures of having "reputation and honor among companions (*socios*)." The only difference lies in the particular domain in which they are looking for glory (they want to be thought wise, and not, say, witty), or whose respect they are seeking (other philosophers, rather than the rest of us).

In effect, Hobbes has reduced Aristotle's three causes of friendship to two, glory and advantage. He offers an argument for this reduction only later in the section. Interestingly, Hobbes begins that argument with a point of agreement with Aristotle. "For since a society is a voluntary assembly, what is sought in every society is an Object of will, that is, that which appears to each of the members to be Good for himself" (DCv 1.2). This closely parallels the opening words of Aristotle's *Politics*: "We see that every city-state is a community of some sort, and that every community is established (*sunestēkuian*) for the sake of some good (for everyone performs every action for the sake of what he takes to be good)" (I.1, 1252a1-2) – where Aristotle chooses a perfect participle (*sunestēkuian*) that bears the meaning of coming together or associating as friends (LSJ[9], *s.v.* συνίστημι, A.IV). In Aristotle's account of the nature of friendship, too, he suggests that friendship is based on what each of the friends takes to be "good for himself" (*NE* VIII.2, 1155b18-26), the three ways in which one may take another person to be good explaining why there are three types of friendship.

Although Hobbes agrees with Aristotle that the cause of love lies in the agent's seeing the other as good, Hobbes identifies the apparent good with pleasure – not in the sense that whatever we think good pleases us (an idea that Aristotle endorses, at least for virtuous agents), but in that

whatever pleases us, we think of as good. As we have already seen, Hobbes also believes that, in every association, we take pleasure in something distinct from the association itself. One might think that Hobbes would therefore reduce the causes of love to *one*, not two. Instead, Hobbes offers a new account of the difference between associations for the sake of advantage and those for the sake of entertainment, in the distinction between pleasures of the body (advantage or utility) and pleasures of the mind (all of which ultimately relate to glory). Since all society is entered into for the sake of pleasure, and pleasures are either of body or mind, Hobbes concludes: "All society therefore is entered into either on account of advantage or glory, that is, for love of self, not of friends."

Reducing the causes of love to these two would allow Hobbes to establish what he set out to prove, that humans do not love one another "by nature," but "incidentally (*ex accidente*)." After all, Aristotle himself grants that "Those who love because of utility ... and those who love because of pleasure … are fond [of their friend] … not insofar as the beloved is who he is, but insofar as he is useful or pleasant. Hence these friendships are also incidental (*kata sumbebēkos*)" (*NE* VIII.3, 1156a14-17).[14]

Hobbes concludes *De Cive* 1.2 by arguing that, on their own, neither of these motivations can provide the foundation of any "large and lasting society." The desire for glory cannot, for "glorying, like honor, if it belongs to everyone, belongs to no one, since it consists in comparison and preeminence." If we associate merely on the basis of a desire for glory, our "society" would tend toward a constant struggle for recognized superiority. More surprisingly, Hobbes argues that neither can the desire for "advantage" serve as the foundation for a stable society. "Although the advantages of this life can be increased by mutual aid, this may be done much more so by the Dominion than by the society of others." Again, a "society" for advantage would devolve into people constantly vying for dominance. Thus, our natural desire for our own advantage cannot, on its own, motivate us to establish a genuine political community; that natural desire must be channeled through the artifice of sovereignty – through the construction of an entity with sufficient strength to maintain stability and concord by instilling reliable fear.

[14] Note that *kata sumbebēkos* was traditionally rendered in Latin as *per accidens* or *ex accidente*.

On Being Born Fit for Society

We have attempted to show that Hobbes's arguments are directed against genuinely Aristotelian views about the foundation of politics. Still, it might seem that the success of Hobbes's refutation depends upon presenting those views in a crude or simplistic way. It might even seem that Hobbes builds a caricature of Aristotle's position into his gloss of ζῶον πολιτικόν as *aptum natum ad societatem* ("born fit for society"). Of course, Aristotle never intended to suggest that humans are born already able to take part in civil society, only that we are born with a nature that suits us for such a life.

It is worth noting, however, that understanding ζῶον πολιτικόν as *aptum natum ad societatem* was traditional, not a Hobbesian innovation for the purpose of some snide *reductio ad absurdum*. So Robert Grosseteste had translated Aristotle's πολιτικὸν γὰρ ὁ ἄνθρωπος καὶ συζῆν πεφυκός ("for man is a political [animal] and is naturally disposed to live with others" [*NE* IX.9, 1169b18-19]) as *politicum enim homo et convivere aptus natus*, and Aquinas offers this paraphrase of it: *quia homo naturaliter est animal politicum et aptus natus convivere aliis* ("man is naturally a political animal and born fit to live with others") (Aquinas 1969: 2:534, 2:536a). Aquinas does not mean that we are born already able to live with others in society. In fact, *aptus natus* exhibits a similar ambiguity to the Greek πεφυκός that Grosseteste here translates and Aquinas paraphrases: πεφυκός can simply mean "born," but it can also mean "naturally disposed." So, too, *aptus natus* could be taken in the sense of "naturally disposed, inclined" (i.e., having an innate tendency to *become* able), rather than as referring to being born with an already developed capacity. Samuel Sorbière, who oversaw the publication of the second and third editions of *De Cive* in 1647, having been entrusted by Hobbes with the copy of the 1642 edition in which he had written his further annotations, thus translated the line in 1649: "né avec une certaine disposition naturelle à la societé" (Sorbière 1649: 2). Similarly, when *Philosophicall Rudiments*, the 1651 English translation of *De Cive*, has "born fit" for *aptus natus*, a reader at the time would likely take "fit" in the now antiquated sense of "apte, … inclined, disposed" (thus the entry for "fitte" in Baret 1574), rather than meaning (already) able.

It appears, therefore, that Hobbes's ultimate aim is to establish that we are not disposed by nature for civil society, not merely that we are not born already able to enter it. So it is that Hobbes declares in the Preface to *De Cive* that he proceeds as he does in order "to understand

correctly what human nature is like, and on what grounds it is fit or unfit (*apta vel inepta*) for joining together in a commonwealth, and how people who want to unite must be brought together" (DCv Pref.9).

Thus far, we may be satisfied that Hobbes's aim is not to take down a crude distortion of Aristotle's position. Yet it might look like his argument in the 1647 note to *aptum natum* could only succeed against a distorted and silly view.

> It is therefore evident that all people (since they are born infants [*cum sint nati infantes*]) are born unfit for society (*ad societatem ineptos natos esse*); and very many … remain unfit throughout life … Yet infants as well as adults have a human nature. Therefore, a human being is made fit (*aptus* … *factus*) for Society not by nature, but by education (*disciplina*). (DCv 1.2n)

It is reasonable to worry that this argument is beside the point, because it ignores Aristotle's teleological conception of human nature. On Aristotle's view, "nature is an end; for we say that each thing's nature is the character it has when its coming-into-being is complete [or perfected, *telestheisēs*]" (*Pol.* I.2, 1252b32-4). Nature in this sense is something that needs to be realized or achieved, and in human beings this happens in part, as Hobbes puts it, "by education." This means there need be no tension between our being political creatures "by nature" and our needing training and education to become incorporated into a political community (cf. especially *Pol.* I.2, 1253a31-3). In saying that we are naturally political, Aristotle is hardly committed to thinking that human beings are born able to live peaceably in society. Rather, we are born with the capacity to acquire this ability (in other words, born with what Aristotle calls a "first potentiality") by means of "habituation" (*ethismos*). Hobbes might appear to overlook this basic point.

Admittedly, Hobbes does not do justice to the subtleties of Aristotle's position. But his somewhat glib argument does raise genuine difficulties for the Aristotelian appeal to nature. In saying that we are naturally political and naturally desire society, Aristotle is committed to claiming *something* about an innate tendency or impulse, which explains why human beings do everywhere live in communities and why human infants are capable of being brought up to live in communities. The idea that we are "political by nature" will have explained little, however, if it amounts to the position that we have a nature such that we can be educated or trained to live politically. Nor would it be satisfying to claim that we have in us whatever desire or tendency

would lead us to come together in political communities; that would leave Aristotle open, in a rather extreme way, to the classic early-modern objection that appeals to natural teleology are vacuous.

The crudest solution would be to posit, as part of human nature, a determinate desire for civil society as such. But Hobbes's first argument in the note – which is meant to establish that, although "people are driven by nature to seek one another's company (*congressum*)," we are nonetheless *not* "born fit for society" because we are not "born in a condition to desire [civil] society" – does successfully bring out the absurdity of attributing such a desire to human beings from birth. Infants may be "driven by nature" to desire the company of others, but they cannot be said to have a desire for civil society as such. For Hobbes, "civil societies are not mere assemblies (*congressus*), but Alliances (*Foedera*), for which the making of promises and covenants is necessary. Infants and the uninstructed are ignorant of their Force, and those who are unacquainted with the harms without Society are ignorant of their utility." To be "born in a condition to desire society," Hobbes appears to assume, one must know both what civil society is and what good it does. Infants and ignorant adults lack the knowledge of one or both of these requisites. Infants (and, if we believe Hobbes, many adults) simply lack the conceptual resources to be plausibly attributed such a desire. But, since infants and ignorant adults, as much as mature, disciplined adults, "do have a human nature," Hobbes concludes, we are "made fit for society not by nature, but by training."

In the face of this, it might be tempting for an Aristotelian to fall back on the postulation of a more inchoate desire – one which does not involve a determinate conception of its object, but which will, in fact, be best satisfied by civil society. We desire society, in this sense, insofar as we desire our natural end, happiness (*eudaimonia*), and our happiness requires incorporation into a political community. Desiring society as part of our natural end does not mean that we are born with a clear conception of what it consists in.

But, in a second, shorter argument, Hobbes brings out why this too is unsatisfying:

> Moreover, even if people were born in a condition to desire society, it does not follow that they were born suited to enter it. It is one thing to want, another to be able. For even those who from pride do not deign to accept the equal conditions without which there can be no society, nevertheless want it. (DCv 1.2n)

Aristotle's view that humans are naturally political is supposed to provide a "foundation" for "civil doctrine" – to identify an explanatory principle that can help us understand how political communities are formed and sustained. Hobbes's point here is that, if there is a sense in which it is plausible to attribute to human beings an innate *desire* for society, it still cannot play this foundational explanatory role, for it would not explain how we are *able* to so come together.

What is at stake is not only how societies form and what kinds of education human beings are capable of. The fact that, for Aristotle, living as part of a political community is part of our natural end is supposed to show us something about what kind of life is best for us. This means that there is a further difficulty that Aristotle faces, stemming from the fact that the natural human end is brought about in part by a deliberate process of education or training. Though not made explicit by Hobbes, this difficulty might plausibly be thought to lie in the background of Hobbes's focus on the fact that humans are made fit "by education" – the very claim that made Hobbes's argument look beside the point.

One reason Aristotle maintains that we have a natural desire for political society is that we desire our natural end (i.e., happiness) and part of our natural end is to live in political society. In Aristotelian natural philosophy, one can generally determine the natural end of an organic process by examining how that process tends to conclude. But it is not so straightforward for human ends. Being rational creatures, human beings pursue their end by conceiving of it in a certain way – as pleasure or honor, or, much more rarely, as contemplation (cf. *NE* I.5, I.8) – one's conception of *eudaimonia* being in part a product of one's education or habituation. Correspondingly, some constitutions are oriented around an identification of merit with wealth, others with freedom, a few with virtue (cf. *Pol.* IV.1-10). This means that one cannot simply look at how human beings or societies generally develop to determine, in any fine-grained way, the natural end of human beings and human societies.

To determine the true human end, for Aristotle, one needs to consider, not just any human beings, but those who have been educated properly; it is *their* desires that are "in accordance with nature." But how are we to determine what counts as a proper education? We cannot without a conception of what people ought to be educated *for*. There is a threat of circularity in the Aristotelian appeal to "nature" in moral and political philosophy: Sorting what is "natural" for human beings is supposed to help us settle what kind of life human beings ought to pursue, but it turns out that a conception of what kinds of thing we ought to pursue must go into

determining what counts as "natural" in the relevant sense. But then the appeal to "nature" is of no help at all if we are interested in figuring out how humans ought to be shaped in order to be decent members of a civil society, or indeed if we are interested in understanding what an ideal civil society is. If Aristotle claims that our natural end involves living with others in a political community, and therefore that is the kind of life we should pursue, it might appear that he has offered no argument but simply a restatement of the premise.[15]

Political Animals Revisited

Hobbes returns to the topic of political animals in *De Cive* 5.5, now identifying Aristotle by name. "Among the animals which Aristotle calls Political, he counts not only the *Human Being*, but many others too, as the *Ant*, the *Bee*, etc." This appears to be an allusion to *Politics* I.2, for there, in the course of defending the thesis that the *polis* comes about by nature, Aristotle implies that "the bee" and certain other "gregarious animals" also count as "political" (*Pol.* I.2, 1253a7-9). It is unsurprising that Hobbes should here turn to *Politics* I.2, for it is in Chapter 5 that he considers the "causes and generation of the commonwealth."

What may be surprising is that Hobbes does not here contest Aristotle's idea that humans are political animals. Instead, he attacks the idea that any *other* animal is political: "for their government (*regimen*) is only a *consensio*, or many wills with one object,[16] not (as a commonwealth needs) one will." More surprising still is how closely Hobbes's discussion tracks Aristotle's in *Politics* I.2. Hobbes's reasons for thinking that human beings (unlike other

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[15] Aristotle might argue that the circularity here is not vicious, perhaps because his explanatory goals are rather different from Hobbes's. Aristotle says, after all, that only someone who has been properly brought up is an appropriate student of moral philosophy; there is no way to *argue* someone into caring about "the fine" from more basic principles.

[16] In *The History of Animals* (488a7-9), Aristotle defines genuinely political animals as a subspecies of "gregarious" animals by saying that "Political [animals] are those that have as their characteristic activity [*ergon*] some single thing that they all do together, and not all gregarious animals do that." Hobbes's characterization is thus not untrue to Aristotle's official account. (He rides a bit roughshod over the distinction between political and gregarious animals, but, then again, so does Aristotle himself in the *Politics*.) Perhaps Hobbes was even familiar with this passage, as Aubrey says of Hobbes that "I have heard him say that Aristotle was the worst teacher that ever was, the worst politician and ethick …: but his rhetorique and discourse of animals was rare" (Aubrey 1898: vol. 1: 357). It is unclear which of Aristotle's "discourses of animals" Hobbes had in mind.

gregarious animals) need something more than "concord of feelings" in order to sustain peace mirror Aristotle's reasons for claiming that human beings are "more political than the bee or any other gregarious animal."

Aristotle proffers two facts about human beings that make them especially political. First, humans possess *logos* – trading here on two central meanings of *logos*, as language and as the capacity to reason – which is "for making clear what is beneficial or harmful, and hence what is just or unjust." Other animals, however, only possess "voice (*phonē*) [which] is a signifier of the painful and pleasant" (*Pol.* I.2, 1253a9-15). By comparison, Hobbes says that, while non-human "animals may be able to use their voices to signify their feelings" (which could almost be a translation of the Aristotle), only human beings possess "the art of words that is needed to arouse the passions" – thus picking up on the sense of *logos* as shared human language. Hobbes also says that, unlike other animals, humans possess "reason" and that this enables them to reflect on whether the common affairs are being managed well – thus picking up on Aristotle's claim that human beings possess *logos* in the sense of the capacity to reason about "what is beneficial or harmful, and hence what is just or unjust." Of course, Hobbes picks up on these Aristotelian themes in order to invert them: he is stressing, not the ways in which language and reason make shared deliberation possible, but the ways in which they dispose us to conflict.

Second, Aristotle says that human beings possess "perception" (*aisthēsis*) of what is good, and what is just and unjust, while other animals only perceive what is pleasant or painful (*Pol.* I.2, 1253a15-18). While Hobbes characterizes other animals as pursuing their own good, he says that only human beings can distinguish being wronged from being materially harmed, and distinguish their private good from the public good. Again, Hobbes's point is that these capacities cause discord, but it is striking how he focuses on the very capacities that Aristotle believes make the human being more political than other creatures. Even Hobbes's first cause of discord – that unlike animals, "among human beings there is a competition for honor and dignity" – is closely related to the fact that human beings possess "perception" of their good.

But there is reason to wonder whether these differences amount to more than a difference of emphasis. Although he stresses the ways in which they make possible more elevated forms of communal life, Aristotle does not think of these distinctly human capacities as unmitigated blessings. The capacities for practical reason (*phronēsis*) and virtue are "especially prone to being used as … weapons" in the service of "injustice" (which happens above all when an

individual is "separated from law and justice") (*Pol.* I.2, 1253a31-5). Conversely, for Hobbes, reason, language, and perception of the good are not *only* liabilities. For example, the law of nature, which is equivalent to the moral law, is the dictate of right reason (DCv 2.1, 3.31). It is a dictate of reason, in particular, that we enter into a covenant establishing a sovereign authority, since doing so is necessary for peace; and it is only as rational, language-using creatures that we can make covenants at all (DCv 2.12). As such, the possession of reason is also what makes it possible for us to submit to a sovereign authority and establish political institutions.

Thus, we might say, Hobbes and Aristotle *agree* that human politicality derives from distinctive capacities like reason, language, and the ways in which human beings conceive of their own good. They agree that such capacities make human politics possible, but also that their possession opens us up to dangers from which non-rational creatures are safe. Being perennially concerned with the possibility of political breakdown, Hobbes more often stresses the fact that our reason, language, and how we conceive our own good are liabilities that make us needful of politics; while Aristotle more often highlights them as faculties that make us capable of politics. Yet for Hobbes, human security requires living in a commonwealth, no less than human happiness (*eudaimonia*) requires living in a *polis* for Aristotle.

But beneath this seeming similarity is a pivotal dispute about the foundation of political science, and indeed the nature of politics itself. For Aristotle, what makes certain creatures "political" is that they exhibit (in Hobbes's terms) *consensio:* they have a shared end, and they pursue it in a coordinated fashion. The fact that human beings possess reason and "perception" of the good makes them capable of richer forms of such *consensio*, namely, what Aristotle calls *homonoia*. Being both social and rational creatures, humans develop shared conceptions of their shared ways of life (the nature of their community, the ends they pursue together) and they deliberately coordinate their activity; yet Aristotle holds that this is a particularly complex version of the same *kind* of communal life as that of other political animals.

Hobbes's point in *De Cive* 5.5 is that this is exactly wrong. It is not just that the capacities to use language and reason, to distinguish one's private good from the public good, and to be concerned about one's fellows can be liabilities, but also that they make reliable human *consensio* impossible. For Hobbes, politics is what is required to *overcome* the natural human tendencies that lead to disorder. Although living in a political community is essential for human flourishing, this is not because doing so is valuable in itself, as Aristotle would maintain, but

only because it is necessary for avoiding the evils of the state of nature. Creatures that do not have this problem, whose nature brings them to a *consensio* or concord that facilitates communal life, simply cannot be described as political at all. It is in this sense that the notion of a naturally political animal turns out to be a contradiction in terms.

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