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’être of politicians throughout the ages.

However disliked they may be, 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 that 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 supported opposition and non-participant are equally bound by the laws originated from the ruling party.

Voting is only one way of many 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.
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 therefore 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 (1858-369) 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 happiness. In order to obtain felicity by is 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 Dakehurst, 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 sorts and conditions of men. By the use of 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 not even 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 constant equality of 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 anything which he would not have done to himself.

Dakehurst 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 the others’ 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 hath the power to deliberate, will and act in place of the person for whom he stands.”

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 retrace. Others would dissemble. 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. Dakehurst 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 realize 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 property of his right. Thus the sovereign possesses a moral right to rule his subjects in so far, 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, 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 dissolved must now consent with the rest; that is, be contented to avow all the actions he shall do or else justify himself 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 observes 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 mother before we breathe; when we see the light of the sun, we at once lie on a human being's breast again, her mother before we breathe.”

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, Presbyterians and ‘Independents’ (later known 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 virtues of State Authority and the idea of a Sovereign Authority, while starting from similar egoist philosophies.

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 valuable. 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.”
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, to try and lay out where the problems arise between some factions) but to draw up a map in order to get making 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. It is important to note that, 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 want 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 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 idea of 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 interested 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 – it is more important to be just, or to be fair, than it is to respect justice.

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, Cohen 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 – 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)

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 weren't 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, and indeed, the right to destroy 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., and the same goes, Nozick says, for your body. The implication of this is that we all deserve eyes rather than just a voluntary, but 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 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 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 £25,000 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. There are some of the objections he raises.

Firstly, it might seem just to us that Chamberlain gets the $25,000, but we don’t live in a society with a just insti...
**Hobbes' Theory and Its Controversies**

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 express social contracts. In his idea, express contracts are “words spoken with understanding of what they signify” such as “I give, I grant etc” (Hobbes, p. 193). In other words, express social contracts are 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 war, 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. 260-262). 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 egoists 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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**References**

It is for this reason that he selects the thinkers he does—a set of 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, Runciman puts it in his preface, he wants to be able to ‘inject into an otherwise well-meaning discourse (for example, “natural rights”), or can’t... the original meaning of hypocritical is “insignificant” language, be it “the meaningless jabber of professional jargon”, the contradictory use of meaningless discourse (for example, “natural rights”), or can’t... the original meaning of hypocritical is “insignificant” language, be it “the meaningless jabber of professional jargon”.

Moreover, as he saw it, the conquest of our appetites was more than an obvious political necessity of such concealment. Writing of the English Revolution, Orwell notes that the brute force implicit in the latter is blunted by the moral climate of the former—that the state power that subsists does so to the extent that when the state is simply ‘babble’. This Bentham characterises as ‘ignorant’: language, be it ‘the meaningless jabber of professional jargon’, the contradictory use of meaningless discourse (for example, “natural rights”), or can’t... the original meaning of hypocritical is “insignificant” language, be it “the meaningless jabber of professional jargon”.

This often excoriating, frequently confusing assault on the hypocrisy of anti-hypocrisy and its all too easy collapse into a automatic sanctimony runs like a red thread through Runciman’s analyses of the featured figures. And it probably, Bentham’s usage of this word, as delineate its benign forms from its malign. In other words, at times a hypocrisy appear nihilistic—the act of giving an action a particular moral hue. But lest the argument that emerges from Political Hypocrisy appear nihilistic—that all rhetorical re-description of political actions, whether explicitly moralised 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 climate of the former—that the state power that subsists does so to the extent that when the state is simply ‘babble’. This Bentham characterises as ‘ignorant’: language, be it ‘the meaningless jabber of professional jargon’, the contradictory use of meaningless discourse (for example, “natural rights”), or can’t... the original meaning of hypocritical is “insignificant” language, be it “the meaningless jabber of professional jargon”.

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 show how they can be delineated as hypocrites. He seeks to re-examine them. Virtue bids us subdue, but good breeding only to the truth of the total lie. Orwell had an image for this: ‘Private vices, public benefits.’ 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 existence. They deceive themselves as to the virtue of existence. 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 find out what was the case. For 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 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 M. Runciman.”

Derrida attack on Hobbes’ Levitanth, where the “King is the people”, others like Bentham or Orwell sought recourse in the democratization of power. 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.

In his discussion of the nineteenth-century utilitarian Jeremys Bentham, Runciman engages 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 ‘ignorant’: language, be it ‘the meaningless jabber of professional jargon’, the contradictory use of meaningless discourse (for example, “natural rights”), or can’t... the original meaning of hypocritical is “insignificant” language, be it “the meaningless jabber of professional jargon”.

But it does raise the question as to why Runciman has tried so hard to do precisely that. But despite the temptations of rote linguistic insights about who, indeed, the great strength of Political Hypocrisy lies with its governing impulse. That is, if hypocrisy currently appears so problematically ubiquitous, perhaps it is just not with hypocrisy it is at war 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 a strange arc, from a Hobbesian denunciation of the de facto political order of the day and a moral vision of the 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. The demand for the 'theft' Hobbes really badgered throughout his long writing life (from the late 1620s to the late 1670s) Nonetheless, the book has some highly distinctive features. The task that Hobbes sets himself is one of the most important in political thought, and despite its rich and varied historical context, 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. 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 math 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 was using the book and its themes and titles 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 ruler, not of the ruled. 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 shifting ideological mood in which Hobbes had to circulate his manuscript. De Cive was written in English—his first major work in English. He may have written it in English at some point (late 1650), with nothing to be gained by keeping it secret. 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. That point (late 1660), 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 working it out in England? He needed a careful alibi 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. 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 particularly prize for the new regime. But this was not just a piece of political pragmatism. Hobbes was trying to save a whole range of issues from royalist hopes, but England at least was now under parliamentary control, and Hobbes had always argued that rulers should be obeyed, whoever they were: So should royalists now endorse the new regime?

WHERE’S HOBBES?

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, the year before he left Paris. Nonetheless it points to the shifting ideological mood in which Hobbes had to circulate his manuscript. De Cive was written in English—his first major work in English. He may have written it in English at some point (late 1650), with nothing to be gained by keeping it secret. 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. That point (late 1660), 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 working it out in England? He needed a careful alibi 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.
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. His theology much less so. On the political philosophy was more adaptable than is materialist philosophy, including the deeply contentious idea of God as the 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.”

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**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 leave them 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’.

The film is provocatively titled: ‘Polar bear’ is the local dialect name for a white bear. By contrast, ‘polar bear’ is the European name for the white bear. Why not use the local dialect name? I don’t know. Perhaps this is a deliberate decision and if so I can only say it is a decision that I failed to understand. In summary I didn’t like the film.

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**David Runciman**

David Runciman is Professor of Politics of the University of Cambridge. He is the author, most recently, of The Confidence Trap: A History of Democracy on Crisis, which is due to be published later this year.

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Cafe Philosophy 18 # August Issue 2013

Cafe Philosophy 19 # August Issue 2013
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 Jamieson 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 Mezze, just say “Parlezvous Français?”

The Mezze Bar
9 Durham St. East, Auckland City Centre
Ph : 09-307 2029

The Mezze Bar is an Auckland icon. This relaxed, ambient inner-city space is warm, inviting and casual. Customer Service is paramount, fast and friendly. The menu is inspired by travels in Spain, Morocco, Africa and the Middle East.

THREE GUYS AT THE MEZZE BAR

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