

THOMAS HOBBS AND THE DEBATE ON FREE WILL
His present-day significance for ethical theory

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Introduction

In this paper I want to discuss the contribution Hobbes made to ethical theory, in his controversy with John Bramhall, concerning the problem of volitional determinism versus indeterminism. The controversy was occasioned by a debate on the concept of "free will" that took place in 1645 during his stay in Paris, and that opposed Hobbes to John Bramhall, bishop of Derry in Ulster. Inspired by the method of geometrical thinking and by the tendency to apply the paradigm of Newtonian dynamics to social and moral theory, in the form of a mechanistic psychology, Hobbes defended a deterministic doctrine. In the opinion of Bramhall this doctrine was a public danger, because he thought it contrary to official theology and philosophically established truth, and because it could threaten religious piety, law and morality on account of its practical inconveniences. For that reason Bramhall opposed against publication of the debate. In 1654, however, one of the disciples of Hobbes published the doctrine of his master, without his consent, under the title "*Of Liberty and Necessity*". This publication provoked the indignation of Bramhall. He published a reply, entitled "*A Defence of True Liberty from Antecedent and Extrinsic Necessity*" (1655), which in turn occasioned Hobbes to write a counter-reply. A year later, he published the book of Bramhall supplemented with his answers to the bishop's objections towards his doctrine, leaving final judgment to the reader: "*The Questions concerning Liberty, Necessity, and Chance*".¹

In this paper I shall discuss the doctrine of Hobbes concerning volitional determinism as it is propounded in this book, because

the structure of thesis and antithesis, of reply and counterreply, allows for a treatment of that doctrine against the background of a controversy that still may be considered as illustrative for the indeterminism-determinism-debate such as it remains yet open in present-day moral philosophy and ethical theory. In the form it was published in 1656 this work is a long series of theses, replies, and counterreplies. It contains the initial theses of Hobbes, the replies of Bramhall, and the subsequent replies of Hobbes. In this formula the book gives a fair idea of the steps in which the controversy was fought out. For the reader who is mainly interested in the basic propositions and the fundamental arguments of the opponents, however, the book is rather long-winded and tedious, from time to time even annoying. He has to endure an almost endless repetition of the same propositions and arguments, rather limited in number and restricted in argumentative value. Moreover, in large parts the controversy appears to be a deaf men's talk. Both participants continue to affirm and re-affirm their own viewpoints without much substantial argumentative force and — from the side of Bramhall — without much adequate analysis and criticism of the proposed doctrine. From the very beginning Bramhall clearly misunderstands Hobbes' position, dragging that misunderstanding with him throughout all his replies, whereas he also repeatedly disfigures the debate by side-leaps, derailing digressions, and polemic attacks. To distil the conceptual, propositional and theoretical essence out of this cumbersome word-and-counterword quarrel requires a lot of the patience and concentration of the careful reader. But the painstaking is nevertheless worthwhile. Much of what is written by Hobbes in his "animadversions upon the Bishop's replies", especially his answers to his opponent's indeterministic objections, touches the heart of the matter and, in my opinion, remains highly significant and worth mentioning in present-day debates on determinism and indeterminism in anthropology and ethical theory. I think, Hobbes was one of the first philosophers in the history of Western thought to put forward, in a clear and precise formulation, some convincing and even decisive refutations of volitional indeterminism. Even today I think those refutations lost almost nothing of their importance. Many indeterminists still take positions and use arguments that have been adequately criticized by Hobbes. Therefore, his criticism still deserves our attention. But let us first look more closely at the viewpoints that are pleaded by the opponents.

1. *The viewpoint of Hobbes*

The position of Hobbes in the controversy is that which defends *actional liberty*, combined with *volitional determinism*. With *actional liberty* is meant here that some actions can be legitimately called *voluntary* actions. Those are actions which proceed from the *will* of the actor, which means that they would not occur if there were no will that determined them. For those actions the will is the sufficient determining factor. In the sense that he is capable of this sort of actions, man can be said to be *free*. He is free as far as he is a subject of such voluntary actions. In Hobbes's view, *freedom* or *liberty* indicates the human characteristic of being able to perform actions which proceed from the will, unless this performance is impeded by external and material circumstances :

“...I conceive liberty to be right defined in this manner : Liberty is the absence of all the impediments to action, that are not contained in the nature, and in the intrinsical quality of the agent”².

On the other hand, by *volitional determinism* is meant the conviction that the *will* itself cannot legitimately be called *free* in the sense of being *indetermined* and *capable of autonomous selfdetermination*. The so-called “will” can only be understood and explained if it is apprehended as a volitional process which is *determined* by its *antecedent causes*.

“... I conceive nothing taketh beginning from itself, but from the action of some other immediate agent without itself : and that therefore when first a man had an appetite or will to something, to which immediately before he had no appetite nor will, the cause of his will is not the will itself, but something else not in his own disposing. So that, whereas it is out of controversy that of voluntary actions the will is a necessary cause; and by this which is said, the will is also caused by other things whereof it disposeth not; it followeth that voluntary actions have all of them necessary causes, and therefore are necessitated”³.

In this view, man is *free* as far as his capacity to act according to *his will* is concerned. But he is *not therefore free to determine* his own *will*. Man can act according to his will, but it is not in his own power to determine “freely” whether he “will will” or “will

not will", nor what will be the object of his will. The determination of the will is dependent on the *antecedent factors*, which are its *necessary* and *sufficient causes*. Being *antecedents*, these causes are *extrinsical* to the will itself. The *will* is their *product* or *consequence*. It is not an independent and autonomous entity, which has the power of selfdetermination. "The will" is but a metaphorical expression for the *act of willing*. And acts of willing are fully determined, in their occurrence as well as in their objects, by their extrinsical causes. Man cannot *choose* his will. The answer to the question "whether the will to do this, or not to do this, be in a man's own election" is plainly negative⁴.

According to Hobbes, the act of willing is dependent on *appetites* for specific *objects* which *arise in man's mind* beyond his control. It is not in his power to *choose* or to *determine* his appetites and the objects that appear in his imagination. Consequently, if appetites and mental images of objects constitute the primary elements of what is called "the will", then it follows that the will cannot determine itself autonomously. The "will" is not a subject which could choose "freely" the appetites and mental objects by which it is constituted. These appetites and mental objects simply *arise* or *do not arise*, according to the *presence* or the *absence* of their *determining causes* inside and outside the organism. Nobody can determine freely whether he will be hungry or not, or whether he will be sensuously attracted towards another person, nor whether images of food or attractive persons will arise in his imagination. Consequently, if the so-called "will" is to be reduced to *appetite*, or [in case several appetites concur successively] to the *last* or *remaining* appetite, it is undeniable that the will is not "free". It is *necessitated* by the antecedent causes of its elements⁵.

In order to avoid a priori the misunderstanding which is provoked in Bramhall by Hobbes' thesis that the so-called "will" can only clearly be understood if its meaning is reduced to that of "last appetite" (determining the action if it is not impeded by external circumstances), let us add what follows.

Hobbes does not deny, that between the first occurrence in the mind of appetites and images, and what will be ultimately "willed", there often take place complex processes of so-called "rational" *deliberation* and *election*. Rational deliberation and election means an evaluation of the desirable or undesirable consequences of an action that is proposed by an arising appetite, or an

evaluation of alternative actions proposed by several appetites and imagined objects, which may be contrary to one another, or which appear successively. This evaluation is a set of cognitive acts of anticipating the probable consequences of the alternative actions, or of choosing the adequate means for the attainment of a desired end. It operates in relation with cathectic propensities, such as fear and hope. Let us quote Hobbes :

“..I conceive when a man deliberates whether he shall do a thing or not do a thing, that he does nothing else but consider whether it be better for himself to do it or not to do it. And to consider an action, is to imagine the consequences of it, both good and evil. From whence is to be inferred, that deliberation is nothing but alternate imagination of the good and evil sequels of an action, or (what is the same thing) alternate hope and fear, or alternate appetite to do or acquit the action of which he deliberateth”⁶.

This process leads to a final or ultimate appetite, which is called the “will”, and which determines the action, unless it be impeded by material external causes. Quoting Hobbes again :

“..I conceive, that in all deliberations, that is to say, in all alternate succession of contrary appetites, the last is that which we call the will, and is immediately before the doing of the action, or next before the doing of it become impossible. All other appetites to do and to quit, that come upon a man during his deliberation, are usually called intentions and inclinations, but not wills; there being but one will which also in this case may be called last will, though the intention change often”⁷.

In cases in which the “will” does not immediately coincide with the first arising appetite, such rational processes do take place. But from this fact it does not follow that it makes sense to call such *volitional* acts “free”, because *rational* processes of deliberation and election play a large part in their constitution. Whether or not such rational processes occur between the initial appetite and the final act of willing, is dependent on former causes which antecedently determined the subject to engage or not to engage in them. To call acts of willing *selfdetermined*, because rational deliberation and election plays a considerable part in them, is mere word-playing, for it does not dispense from the question about the *determinants* of that so-called *selfdetermination*. Volitional indeterminists ought

therefore to prove, that rational processes of deliberation and election are without any *causes*; which cannot be proved, for it has no conceivable sense.

In short, the doctrine of Hobbes teaches that man is free in that he has the liberty to “do *if he will*” and “to do *what he wills*” (as far as there are no external impediments concerning the action he intends), but he is not “free to will”, or to “choose his will”.

2. *The Viewpoint of Bramhall*

Bramhall defends the position of *volitional indeterminism*, saying that man is not only free in the sense of being able to act according to his will, but that he is free too in the determination of his will. Man can freely activate or suspend his will, and he can freely choose the object of his will. The will is a “faculty of the soul” which has the power of selfdetermination. Therefore, it cannot be said to be causally necessitated.

Let us now look at the *arguments*, with which Bramhall defends this position against the determinist view of Hobbes.

(1) The *will* is an independent faculty of the soul. In order to reach decisions it takes advice from Reason, being another independent faculty of the soul. The distinguishing mark of the will is its use of man’s power of *rational deliberation* and *election*. To constitute its object the Will mobilizes or activates Reason to deliberate on the proposed object of inclination, to consider alternatives and to reflect on the best means for the attainment of a proposed end. Thereby Reason takes into account some viewpoints of moral goodness, honesty, justice and other moral categories, besides considerations of the real possibilities. In this manner Reason furnishes the will with the information it needs in order to *choose* its object. But it does not causally determine the Will. The Will is independent from Reason. It can consent to the proposals of Reason, or refuse to accept them. The ultimate *choice* is with the Will, which is autonomous in its *elective power*⁸.

From this, Bramhall draws *two conclusions*

(a) The fact that the Will mobilizes Reason for deliberation and election destroys volitional determinism, because deliberation and election would be impossible, or at least senseless, if it were true

that the object of the will were completely predetermined by antecedent causes. For, if the outcome of volition were necessitated in advance by extrinsic factors, then there would be no alternatives to be deliberated on. Deliberation would be superfluous. And election would be impossible. The object of the will would be predetermined without any interference of the Will itself, or — as Bramhall puts it — “without any concurrence of the subject in the determination of his will”⁹.

(b) The second conclusion is that the Will is not causally determined by the rational processes of deliberation, because Reason has only an advisory function with respect to the Will. Reason may *propose* or *suggest* an object to the Will, but cannot necessitate the Will, which is “free” to consent or to refuse the proposed or suggested object. The ultimate power of *choice* remains with the Will, which is therefore *free* in the sense of *selfdetermination*.

(2) Bramhall’s *second argument* concerns the notion of “antecedent causes”. He denies the implication of “necessity” or “necessitation” which Hobbes associates with it.

Bramhall agrees with the general idea that all phenomena suppose for their occurrence and for their understandability some antecedent causes. But he disagrees with the opinion that the existence of antecedent causes implies the “necessity”, or extrinsic determination of those phenomena.

To argue this distinction, he assumes that antecedent causes may in themselves be not necessary. Their occurrence may be *contingent*. If that is the case, the phenomena which are the *effects* of such causes cannot legitimately be called *necessary*, because their causes are *contingent*.

Secondly he argues that even in the supposition of necessary causes we cannot rightly affirm that their *co-operation* is *necessary*. The way they interact and concur simultaneously, as a necessary condition for the production of the effect, may be contingent. And thirdly, even in the supposition that the causes as well as their interaction are necessary, they cannot legitimately be said to *determine* human agents *causally*. Human subjects dispose of the faculties of rational deliberation and volitional election. For this reason they cannot be *really necessitated* by the *influences* exerted upon them. It is in their power to consent or to withstand. The influences are mediated by reason and by selfdetermining volitional election. They can only determine the will *morally*, i.e. depending on the consent of the will as an independent faculty.

Bramhall introduces this notion of "moral determination" (borrowed from Scholastic philosophy) in order to distinguish from "natural determination". The latter is the kind of extrinsic causal determination that governs the world of inanimate objects and non-rational agents. It puts them under the law of *absolute necessity*. On the other hand, *moral* determination indicates an *hypothetical necessity*, which he calls "necessity by supposition". Hereby Bramhall means a necessity which is depending on the consenting interference of the selfdetermining Will in the production of the effect. Inclinations and appetites, fears and hopes, and the like, have no direct and uncontrollable power over the Will. They may be necessary causes for the Will to operate and to determine itself, but they are not *sufficient* causes without the mediational processes of rational deliberation and election. Which processes render the effect *free*: "because the will may suspend, and not assent, therefore it is not absolutely necessary"¹⁰.

3. *The Replies by Hobbes.*

The replies of Hobbes on these objections of Bramhall can be summarized as follows.

- (1) Reply on the first argument, concerning rational deliberation and election.

Hobbes does not deny the occurrence of deliberation and election in the determination of the will. Neither does he deny that these processes may be called "rational", nor that they take into account moral viewpoints (concerning goodness, justice, honesty, and the like) which are different from mere sensuous or passionate appetites. But he denies the conclusion that the result of such a cognitive-volitional process [and it is only this result that Hobbes calls "the will"] is for that very reason *free*. He disagrees with the opinion that this is a sufficient reason for stating that the output of this process could sensefully be conceived of as indetermined by antecedent causes.

So far this reply is undoubtedly correct. Bramhall's argument does not prove the point he is trying to make. The question is not whether sets of deliberation and election are constitutive elements of volitional processes. This could not sensefully be denied by anyone. The question is whether the occurrence of such "rational" acts is a sufficient reason for calling them "not causally necessitat-

ed". Which apparently it is not. For, Bramhall should demonstrate that so-called rational acts of deliberation and election could not possibly be described and explained in causal terms. Or he should at least make clear in which meaning of "indeterminateness" or "freedom" we could sensefully conceive of such acts, which he does not¹¹.

The conclusion of Bramhall that Hobbes' view renders acts of deliberation and election superfluous, because the object of the will would be predetermined in advance, clearly misses the point. It rests upon a misunderstanding of Hobbes' notion of "antecedent cases" and "extrinsical determination". Bramhall reads "extrinsical determination" as if it meant determination by causes *outside* the subject in which the volitional process takes place. He treats Hobbes' position as if he were telling that the elements of the volitional process itself (which leads to the "will") were to be excluded from what is meant by causal determination of the will. Which is clearly the opposite of what Hobbes tells.

Hobbes simply stated that the will is determined by the antecedent psychological process of which it is the effect, and that we cannot but conceive of this process in terms of a causally linked chain of factors which are "extrinsical" with respect to the will as the final result of that process; the "will" being ultimate appetite after a chain of deliberation, change, correction and election has taken place. The acts of deliberation and election constitute parts of the chain of causation that determines the will¹².

Further, Hobbes rejects the view of Bramhall that Reason and Will can be discussed sensefully as two *separate* and *independent* faculties of the soul, the Will being an autonomous entity which ultimately can *freely choose* with respect to the advice given by Reason. Bramhall suggests a kind of dialogue between two *subjects* within man's soul. He *presupposes* what, as an indeterminist, he ought to *prove*: viz. the existence in the psyche of an obscure *entity*, thought of as a kind of autonomous *subject*, which, being in itself undetermined (and consequently unintelligible), nevertheless disposes of the power to determine its own action and the further course of the psychological process¹³. Bramhall splits up a psychological act into an *agent* (disposing of a *faculty* of *power* to act in certain ways) and an *activity* of that agent. He speaks about the "Will" (the *agent*) that can "will" or "suspend his willing" (the *activity*); about "Reason" that can "think" (delibe-

rate, elect, consider alternative actions or means for action). He suggests that for each class of logically distinguishable activities there must be a specific *agent* in the human soul, making of the soul a sort of compartmentalized domain in which several autonomous "subjects" compete or cooperate with each another. For instance, he describes the volitional-cognitive process which leads to the will as if the Will as a subject initially chooses freely an object, then calls in the advisory help of Reason, as if the Will were a subject that could mobilize or activate Reason as another subject in the domain of the soul; after Reason has done its work, it *proposes* something to the Will, which can then again *freely choose* to consent or to dissent.

Hobbes points critically towards this kind of metaphorical language, which attributes activities to different "faculties of the soul" as if they were human subjects or autonomous agents: the Will that wills something, or suspends its willing; the Understanding that deliberates; the Will that elects and chooses, and so on¹⁴.

I think this criticism to be very important and substantial. Hobbes reveals one of the fundamental traits of the kind of thinking that usually characterizes pleas for indeterminism: the fallacy of metaphorical analogy which is mistakenly held for reliable ontological assertion. Still in present-day debates on determinism and indeterminism we often meet with this fallacy. Many indeterminists continue to argue their positions from such speculative metaphysical psychology, which treats psychological processes as if they were *activities of autonomous agents* in the human soul, not aware of the fact that these supposed "agents" are mere *hypostasies* and *subjectifications of imaginery entities* in the human psyche. They project into the black box of the psyche a set of subjectified entities which are conceived of in analogy with the concept of "autonomous human agents". In his opposition to such metaphysical psychology Hobbes may be said to be very "modern". He avoids the fallacy that will keep Kant at its mercy more than hundred years later, when he attempted to found morality on *practical reason* as on a *specific and autonomous faculty* of Reason with the empirically undetermined "free will" as its ultimate *agent*. Hobbes appears to have been much ahead of what in moral philosophy has been taken for granted for centuries, and what came to be petrified in ethical theory after Kant made it the cornerstone of his system. In this respect, Hobbes was an early modernist, whereas Kant was a rather "reactionary" prisoner of Aristotelian and Thomist conceptions. In his insistence

on a non-metaphysical and anti-speculative psychology as a base for ethical theory, and in his plea for an empiricist and causalistic approach of mental phenomena, he anticipated the modern criticism of Kantian moral philosophy, and was an early precursor of pragmatist and behavioristic approaches in his analyses of the functions of law and morality.

- (2) Reply on the second argument, concerning the non-implication of "necessity" in the notion of "antecedent causes".

The core of Hobbes' replies is that Bramhall makes a senseless use of the concepts of "cause", "necessary and sufficient cause", "necessity" and "contingence".

If we understand by the "cause" of a phenomenon the antecedent factor, or the total sum of determinately linked and cooperating factors, which render the phenomenon possible *and* which produce its factual occurrence, then the "cause" is that which *necessitates* the phenomenon, and then the notion of "cause" implies that of "sufficiency". Antecedent factors that may be thought to constitute necessary *conditions* for the possibility of a phenomenon to occur, but which do not actually *produce* that phenomenon, are not the "cause" of that phenomenon. Unless "causes" is taken erroneously for "necessary conditions", speaking about "antecedent causes" that do not imply "necessity" makes no sense at all. That which renders a phenomenon possible, and which actually produces it, cannot possibly be given and nevertheless *not* produce the occurrence of that phenomenon. In Hobbes' own words :

"I hold that the ordinary definition of a free agent, namely, that a free agent is that, which when all things are present which are needful to produce the effect, can nevertheless not produce it, implies a contradiction, and is nonsense; being as much as to say, the cause may be sufficient, that is necessary, and yet the effect not follow"¹⁵.

If "cause" is defined as that which is necessary and sufficient for the occurrence of a phenomenon, and if phenomena are a priori supposed not to occur in absence of such causes (as Hobbes clearly supposes), then it is logically true that all phenomena are causally necessitated.

We quote Hobbes :

"Hence it is manifest, that whatsoever is produced, is produced

necessarily : for whatsoever is produced, hath had a sufficient cause ot produce it, or else it had not been. And therefore also voluntary actions are necessitated”¹⁶.

Bramhall might have criticized Hobbes' position by pointing to that *a priori* supposition of him, and by asking him for his reasons to believe a priori that no phenomenon can occur but as an effect of necessary and sufficient causes. Because that is the real point at stake in the controversy. But Bramhall overlooks this Hobbesian presupposition, and looses his way in trying to argue that we could conceive of “antecedent causes” that would not necessarily produce the effect that is already logically presupposed in the notion of “cause”.

The same applies to the rest of Bramhall's argumentation. The effects may be not necessary, he says, because the causes themselves can be contingent. This, of course, is mere playing with words, and deserves no serious consideration. A phenomenon occurs when its cause occurs, and only *if* that cause occurs. Whether or not that cause occurs, in turn depends on its own cause. Either the cause of a phenomenon occurs, and then the phenomenon is necessarily produced, or the cause does not occur, which means that the cause of that cause does not occur, meaning simply that it is no cause at all. Consequently, Bramhall's notion of *contingent causes is terminological nonsense*, arising from a confusion of the *epistemological* with the *ontological* level. Because we can never *know* all causes of all phenomena, Bramhall assumes that there are phenomena which *have no causes*; and, because we can in most instances not know where and when certain causes will occur, he states that these causes are *contingent*¹⁷. And the same answer holds for his remark that the simultaneous or cooperating occurrence of the necessary, but in separation insufficient conditions may be contingent instead of necessary.

It will be clear to the reader that Bramhall did not succeed in objecting strong and convincing arguments against the deterministic thesis of Hobbes, at least not as far as logical, epistemological, and ontological reasoning is concerned.

But careful reading of the text reveals that Bramhall's rejection of determinism has only little to do with rational and purely philosophical theoretical considerations. His anti-attitude towards determinism has its roots in irrational motives. Determinism does not fit into his *Weltanschauung*. It contradicts some basic assumptions about man and the world at the core of his beliefsystem,

which is a product of scholastic theology and philosophy and of so-called "common sense" and "intuitive evidence". The fundamental reason for his rejection of determinism has to be looked for in a scarcely rational defence-reflex of a belief-system which perceives a threat of its vital "certainties" ("evidential truths", "introspective intuitions", "commonly held social convictions") when it is confronted with a denial of free will.

4. *Irrational motives for the rejection of volitional determinism.*

As it is still the case nowadays, the rejection of determinism in ethical theory is often motivated by non-logical or non-epistemological considerations, especially by motives concerning the *practical* or *psychological consequences* that are associated with it from the viewpoint of certain metaphysical worldviews and speculative anthropologies. This sort of *irrational* rejection of determinism is clearly exemplified by Bramhall's objections against Hobbes. Behind his attempts to find rational counter-arguments we can easily detect three deeply rooted irrational motives for his rejection of determinism.

(1) The first one is the *experience of cognitive dissonance*, provoked by volitional determinism when projected against the background of the *subjective experience of "free will"*. Pre-critical and pre-philosophical introspection yields the idea of "free will". Human subjects have the impression of being free in their choice of alternative actions when they are not compelled or hindered by external forces. They experience introspectively that, in many situations, the choice depends exclusively on their "own will". This experience gives them a feeling of "freedom". As a matter of fact this freedom is really theirs, as far as it is understood as absence of external compulsion or hindrance. However, the determining factors of the will remaining unconscious and hence unknown [and even when they are known they do not destroy that feeling of having power over the choice of alternative actions] people ordinarily tend towards the impression that *the will itself is free*; free, not only from external compulsion or hindrance, but also from any causally determining factors. Being free from external compulsion or hindrance is mistaken for freedom from necessitating causation. This mistaken introspection, however, is firmly rooted in common sense and in traditional philosophical anthropology, as a sort of "intuitive evidence". And we may safely suppose that it is hard to destroy, because it helps to satisfy the human need of a self-image

that stresses human power, grandeur, rationality, and autonomy. The insistence on the suggestion of "free will" cannot be fully understood, I think, unless its function in the safeguarding of such images is apprehended. And this sort of image is threatened by determinism in anthropology and ethical theory. Hence the cognitive dissonance it appears to provoke again and again, because of its implication that man can or should be interpreted in terms of the same paradigm of causal determination that is used in the understanding of non-human reality. That is why Bramhall writes :

'It (determinism) destroys liberty, and dishonours the nature of man. It makes the second causes and outward objects to be the rackets, and men to be but the tennis-balls of destiny'¹⁸.

(2) A second motive for irrational rejection can be found in the fear that determinism implies beliefs which are contrary to fundamental conceptions in traditional theology. This motive may seem less interesting for present-day debates on determinism and indeterminism in ethical theory. It is, however, illustrative for the kind of dogmatic-authoritarian thinking against which Hobbes had to fight. It sheds light on the cultural-ideational obstacles that determinist philosophies have to face, and, in variant forms, such obstacles continue to exist.

As a spokesman of the theological orthodoxy, as it was put down by Church Fathers and Scholastic philosophers and theologians, Bramhall objects to determinism, because it conflicts with the attempts to reconcile the belief in the Providence of God and the idea of God as the first cause of all things, on the one hand, with the notion of man's free will, on the other hand. Bramhall, as a bishop of the Anglican Church, is an outspoken adversary of the extreme Calvinist predestination doctrine and a defender of the traditional Thomistic view on the harmonizability of indeterminism with the Providence and Omniscience of God. His association of volitional determinism with theological predestination-theory accounts for his emotionally sharp attacks on Hobbes and for his almost explicit charge of blasphemy and even atheism. Determinism, he wrote, is

"dishonourable to God, because it makes the first cause, that is, God Almighty, to be the introducer of all evil and sin into the world... if God, by his special influence into the second causes, did necessitate them to operate as they did"¹⁹.

In all events, including all human actions, result from a chain of linked causes, and are therefore "necessary", then it follows from the belief in God as the first cause that he ordered the occurrence of all subsequent events. And if He ordered them, He must be held responsible for them. And, consequently, He must be considered as the originator of what He himself declared "sin" and "evil", and wherefore He subjects man to punishment, thus making Himself appear as *unjust*, cruel, or arbitrary. Taken the belief that God cannot be unjust as dogmatic premisses, it then deductively follows that determinism is false.

In itself this kind of reasoning has no present-day significance. Whether or not volitional determinism fits into Bramhall's theological beliefsystem is irrelevant in a discussion of the sound arguments that can be brought forward in favour or against the tenability of determinism, unless of course one is prepared to accept some religious dogmatic assertions as undoubtable criteria for judging the truth of all philosophical and scientific propositions and theories. In a moment we will take up this question again, in order to make clear that Hobbes tried to answer the charge of atheism and blasphemy by showing the possibility of harmonizing determinism with the Bible and with the doctrine of some authoritative Reformatory theologians. But let us first point out that though Hobbes spent many pages on this attempt because Bramhall made it to his central point, it must be doubted whether Hobbes himself really accepted theological viewpoints as touchstones for his opinions. It seems to me that his attempt resulted from a mere opportunistic attitude, considering that he could scarcely afford being charged with blasphemy and atheism in the intellectual climate of his social surroundings. However this may be, in this part of his replies Hobbes paid a large tribute to the dogmatic restrictions which were still laid upon the legitimate scope of rational thinking in the political context in which he lived and published. In this respect a large part of "The Questions concerning liberty, Necessity, and Change" is of a purely historical interest, and has no present-day significance. But it preserves a symptomatic importance. It reveals that most of the opposition against determinism has its roots in the dissonance it provokes by threatening some basic assumptions about the nature of man (and its transcendentalist projections in religious beliefs and theological conceptions) that are firmly established in the uncritical common sense and sophisticatedly transferred into speculative philosophy. And, in my opinion, this kind of irrational opposition to determinism nowadays still governs in more or less sophisticated and variant forms much of the rejection it meets with.

Let us now come to the attempt of Hobbes to reconcile his deterministic doctrine with traditional theology.

Hobbes replies that *sin* denotes a violation of the law of God, without implying that this violation would be unnecessitated. He argues that the notion of "free will" is incompatible with that of God's Providence on pure logical grounds. If man's actions were not predetermined by a chain of causes, it would not be possible for God to foresee them, because it logically makes no sense to presume that somebody could know beforehand the things that are not necessarily bound to happen. So, if God's Providence is a fact of religious belief, then it ought to be accepted as a consequence that God himself is the first cause of the chain of events that leads to the actions that are called "sin"; which means that He has willed the actions that are offences against his decreed Will. Hobbes agrees that this is a paradox. But he only uses it to draw the attention to the consideration that the belief in God's Providence is an argument in favour rather than against his deterministic viewpoint. And he points in return to some difficulties in the traditional scholastic ideas about the relationship between God's Providence and the so-called "free will" of man.

Firstly, theology accepts that God not only punishes sinners, but that he also inflicts pain and suffering upon innocent people, which means that the indeterministic viewpoint cannot but face also the problem of God's justice.

Secondly, in the hypothesis that God judges people according to their sins and merits, because He has given them "free will" to accept or to reject his Law, one cannot avoid the problem of God's justice, when one is to believe that He can or will inflict the eternal suffering of hell upon sinners. Which is a twofold problem. Firstly, one cannot but wonder whether *eternal* suffering can be a *just* punishment for particular sins of imperfect people. And, secondly, one cannot but ask why God permitted people to commit such sins, since He could have retained them from doing so.

The core of Hobbes' reply is his use of the retorsion argument. He agrees that determinism poses difficult problems concerning God's justice, but he ascertains that indeterminism does no better in this respect. In order to support his claim of non-contradiction between his determinist position and "religious truth" he draws up a theological "ad hoc"-construction. The paradox or even absurdity that God caused people to sin and evil, whereas his revealed Will forbids them and threatens them with punishment, is manoeuvred

away by making a distinction between the *revealed will* of God and his *secret* or *internal will* : the first being God's Will as it is explicitly given to mankind as a guideline for human actions, and the second being God's deepest will and real intention which He made not public in his revelation and which can only be known a posteriori from the actual historical process. A distinction which is supposed not to imply two different wills in God, which would be a denial of the unity and consistency of his will, but is thought to be the result of God's intention to reveal his will in the form of commands that are open to human understanding. This construction should allow for a "solution" of the problem. If "sin" is any infraction of the "revealed will" of God, then it follows that it is not necessary against his "internal will". God may have had reasons for causing people to commit acts that are against his publicly revealed and decreed Law, and he may have his reasons for punishing them nevertheless, in the same way as he has his reasons for the affliction of suffering upon innocent, not-sinning people. From the fact that people can never know the internal will of God, it is then derived that the rationale of this seeming paradox or absurdity must remain unaccessible for human understanding. A second element in Hobbes' construction pertains to the problem of the justice of God. If God secretly caused all actions that he decreed as sin, and if he punishes sinners for actions that he himself determined in them, then the question about his justice remains unanswered. This problem Hobbes eliminates by pointing without any further arguments to the power and omnipotence of God, of which his so-called "justice" is nothing but a manifestation. It would be blasphemy, Hobbes returns the reproach, if people arrogated to themselves the right of putting the problem of God's "justice" in terms of their human understanding of "justice". Religious people have to accept the *power* of God, and *justice* cannot be understood in another way than as one of the manifestations of that power, because that would mean a questioning of God in terms of a claim of justification. To quote Hobbes :

"The power of God alone, without other help, is sufficient justification of any action he doth... That which he does is made just by his doing"²⁰; and, further, with respect to the story of Job :

"When God afflicted Job, he did object no sin to him, but justified that afflicting him by telling him of his power"²¹.

The modern rationalist reader may smile compassionately at this

artificial theologico-philosophical "ad hoc"-construction. Hobbes wards off an attack of scholastic philosophical theology, — which he criticized for being pure verbalistic speculation without any precisely discernible sense, by a counter-blow which is subject to that same criticism. And, finally, he agreed that he had no convincing rational answer to the theological questions about the problems implied by the concepts of godly Providence and Justice.

But Hobbes only tried to show that determinism does not raise more problems with respect to these concepts than indeterminism does. Apparently he only engaged in this kind of discussion, because his opponent made a central point of it in his attempts to throw discredit on him by reproaching him of holding blasphemous and atheistical opinions. There is no evidence in the text that he was prepared to take this kind of theological objections to his doctrine serious; nor, that he thought theological orthodoxy in whatever form or version could legitimately serve as a touchstone or guarantee for rational truth or falsity. Opportunistic considerations forced him to draw up a theologico-philosophical rationalization in order to make his readers believe that his determinist doctrine was no more dangerous for religion than the scholastical indeterminist interpretations.

(3) The third irrational motive for rejection of determinism consists of the fear that equally deeply rooted opinions about *moral guilt* and *merit*, about *moral and legal responsibility*, and about *moral and legal reward* and *punishment* would appear to lose their *justifiability* if volitional determinism were held to be true, and hence the fear that *morality* and *law* as such would reveal themselves as having no *legitimation*.

Here again we see that disagreement with volitional determinism appears to be largely motivated by considerations about *practical inconveniences* that are supposed to follow from that position²².

It is said that determinism renders impotent all kinds of *influence*, *persuasion*, or *criticism*. Moral, aesthetic, religious, pedagogical and juridical value-judgments, and every sort of normative practice, would lose their sense and efficacy if determinism were held to be true. It would be useless to try to change patterns of action that are causally determined to occur as they necessarily do occur. Efforts to bring about actions that necessarily will occur are superfluous. Efforts to bring about actions that cannot possibly

occur are in vain. If all things that happen are either inevitable or impossible there cannot be any justification for *reward* or *punishment*, for *praise* or *blame*, for *persuasion* or *dissuasion*, for *merit* or *guilt*, or for any sort of moral and juridical *sanctions*. Judging people for what they did or for what they let undone, cannot be legitimate, unless it was in their power to do what they did not, or not to do what they actually did. Evaluative and normative practice presupposes some kind of volitional indeterminism. Otherwise, positive sanctions would be undeserved, and negative ones would be unjust²³.

In his replies on these objections Hobbes tried to justify morality and law in a deterministic perspective.

Firstly, he points to the fact that efforts of influence, persuasion, criticism and the practice of afflicting sanctions, are not senseless in a deterministic view, unless they are unnecessary elements in the process of constitution of the will. They may very well be necessary and efficacious means for bringing about the kind of will which is intended by those who control and perform the practice of influencing and sanctioning. There is no reason for the assumption that internalized sanctions could not belong to the series of necessary conditions for the determination of the will. They are often themselves the cause(s) of the will. From this it follows that sanctions are not at all superfluous for the determination of the object of the will. On the contrary, they are constitutive.

Secondly, Hobbes refutes the argument that negative sanctions for past actions would be unjust if the actor could not have acted otherwise than he did.

As far as internal feelings of guilt or shame in the actor are concerned, their occurrence only proves that there is an internal conflict between his awareness of what he ought to have done from the viewpoint of internalized morality or law, and what he actually did. The existence of such conflicts on the level of introspective consciousness does, however, not prove that the actor could have acted otherwise. It only indicates that he perceives a non-coincidence of his actual behavior and his theory about good behavior. It is true that this perception should not instigate the actor to sanction himself negatively for having done what he did. It was not in his power to avoid the action. Hence, selfreprobation is a kind of useless masochism. But these negative feelings can function as useful stimuli for changing behavior in the future in making the object of the will in accordance with the precepts of morality and law²⁴.

As far as external sanctions are concerned, they are indeed unjustified if they are meant as *punishments* for behavior that could have been avoided, but they are justifiable as *affliction of stimuli* in order to determine the future will of the actor in another direction, to make it better adapted to the requirements of law and morality. And even if they might be considered as *unjust* towards the actors on whom they are afflicted, they serve the useful purpose of deterring others from engaging in undesirable actions.

“The institution of the law is not to grieve the delinquent for that which is passed and not to be undone; but to make him and others just, that else would not be so : and respecteth not the evil act past, but the good to come. Inasmuch as without this good intention of future, no past act of a delinquent could justify his killing in the sight of God”²⁵.

The function of law and morality consists of the elimination of persons and actions that are destructive from the point of view of personal and collective survival-protection. Sanctions are means used for the attainment of this end, and they are put into work irrespective of the causes that determined or will determine the undesired persons or actions. The question whether those actions result from “free will” or from a causally determined volitional process is irrelevant from that moral and legal viewpoint. The reason why they are sanctioned is their being perceived as destructive for the survival-protection of individuals and society, whatever the psychological or philosophical explanation for their occurrence may be.

“And thus it is plain, that from the necessity of a voluntary action cannot be inferred the injustice of the law that forbideth it, or of the magistrate that punisheth it”²⁶.

So, volitional determinism does not allow for a punitive justification of moral and legal normative practice on a base of a metaphysical conception of guilt, but it does allow for a pragmatic behavioristic justification of moral and legal sanctions as necessary means for influencing the will of individuals towards conformity with established moral and legal rules : “because by the punishment of one, or of a few unjust men, they are the cause of justice in a great many”²⁷.

People are sanctioned when their *will* determined them to actions that are against the law or morality, because there is a social

agreement that those who willingly engage in forbidden actions shall be punished. This excludes from punishment all those that engage in such actions *involuntary*, i.e. compelled by internal or external forces which by juridical or ethical *stipulation* are agreed upon as being *legitimate excuses* for committed acts. All actions which cannot be subsumed under the stipulated categories of 'compelled actions' are taken for "voluntary" actions, and belong thereby to the area of morally or legally sanctionable behavior. This does not imply or prove that the will from which these actions result is to be considered as "free", in the sense of causally undetermined. It only means that these actions proceeded from the will, and not from any compelling force.

Contrary to the indeterministic belief, people are not sanctioned because they could have acted otherwise than they did. They are sanctioned because they behaved willingly against moral or legal rules. It is the will to behave contrary to these rules that is considered as non-acceptable, whether this will is "free" or "determined". The will as such is taken into account, not the question whether the actor could have acted otherwise. Normative practice is a practical means for influencing or changing the will of people who are subjected to socially established moral and legal rules, in order to make them conform to these rules. This practice does not derive its justification from any metaphysical belief concerning intrinsic fault or guilt in a subject (for having done what he did), but from the social agreement upon the desirability of influencing people so that the objects of their will be in accordance with the objectives of the law and morality, to which they are subjected by explicit or implicit consent²⁸.

In think that Hobbes gave in his reply an adequate answer to the question whether or not morality and law presuppose the acceptance of the view of volitional indeterminism, by showing convincingly that a reasonable explanation and justification of moral and legal practice can be given against the background of a determinist view.

5. *The political philosophy behind Hobbes' pragmatic determinist view.*

If we agree that Hobbes had good reasons to argue the *compatibility* of moral practice with the theory of volitional determinism, then we have to ask for his *justification* of that moral practice. This

question refers us to the *political philosophy* of Hobbes, which constitutes the background of his philosophy of law and morality. I suppose that this political philosophy will be discussed more thoroughly in other contributions to this issue. Therefore I shall be very brief and I shall only point to Hobbes' basic assumptions concerning the problem of *legitimacy* of law and morality. Let us put the question this way.

Supposing that no metaphysical-punitive justification in terms of personal merit or guilt can be given for legal and moral practice of sanctioning, and supposing further that, from a deterministic point of view, law and morality can only be understood pragmatically as means for making people conform to some desirable patterns of behaviour, it is clear that a *justification* of law and morality has to be found in the *desirability* of those behavioral patterns. Now, in the political philosophy of Hobbes the right to decide on the desirability or non-desirability of behavioral patterns resides exclusively with the political Sovereign Power, and with the ecclesiastical and civil authorities appointed by that sovereign power, i.e. the official clergymen and the magistrates. Consequently, *morality* is synonymous with *public morality*, and *public morality* with *legality*, which is identical with the *legislation of sovereign state power*. This means that desirable behavioral patterns are those which are aimed at by the *legislation of the supreme political power*. But, of course, this is an arbitrary *stipulation*, and not a *justification*. *Why should the subjective* viewpoint of the Sovereign Power on desirability be generally accepted as *objective* desirability? How could that subjective viewpoint be shown to be *legitimate*, i.e. *non-arbitrary*, and accepted as a *justification* for the practice of moral and legal control that takes its *function* from that viewpoint? Assuming that a *stipulation is justified* raises the question of the meaning and foundation of *justice*. If Hobbes holds that it is *right* for the State Power to influence people according to his viewpoint on what has to be taken for individual and societal protection and survival, and that it is unconditionally *obligatory* for all subjects to obey public morality and law, then he is saying that the established political control is a *just* practice, or that it is the practice of *justice*. But does he really say so? In order to argue such a claim of justice he ought to show that the point of view of established law is the *only* or at least the *best available* one in order to guarantee individual and collective protection and survival, and hence that all *rational* subjects have *sound reasons* for its *acceptance* and for *obedience* to the law. But this is precisely what Hobbes does not show, and — what is more — does not *want* and even *refuses* to show. Why? Because

he holds (a) that the point of view of the Sovereign Political Power is *not* legitimate because it can *rationally* be shown to be the best one — he even explicitly agrees that it is perfectly possible that the viewpoint is *wrong* when it is considered from a theoretical perspective of rationality —, but simply because it is the viewpoint of the Sovereign Political Power, and (b) that the subjects *ought not to be convinced rationally* of the *legitimacy* of that viewpoint, because as the viewpoint of the supreme power it is by that very fact a priori legitimate. This means that Hobbes assimilates the notion of *legitimacy* to the notion of *absolute power*, meaning simply that no subject is granted the right to question the established political power and to examine it critically in terms of *justice*. Hobbes “solves” the problem of *justice* by denying its existence. In the manner of extremely *authoritarian* political philosophy he reduces justice to an unquestionable and basically meaningless (for it is conceptually undefinable in terms that would differentiate it from the notion of “absolute power”) attribute of supreme political power. And in a purely *dogmatic* way he forbids any questioning of this authoritarian reduction of the problem. As far as *justice* is a critical notion, serving as an *instrument* or as a *criterion* in order to *judge* the *legitimacy* of public law and morality, Hobbes severely rejects this notion as a fundamental threat to morality itself. It endangers the popular attitude of absolute obedience and unconditional acceptance of the Law of the Supreme Power. Public discussions on “justice” should be avoided, for the reason that there is no ultimate rational criterion for agreement. In the absence of such a criterion they can only favour different subjective interpretations which must inevitably lead to social discord, religious doubt, political disobedience, chaos and civil war :

“But he who holds that laws can be unjust and tyrannical, will easily find pretence enough, under any government in the world to deny obedience to the laws, unless they be such as he himself maketh, or adviseth to be made”²⁹

This authoritarian and absolutist position of Hobbes in political philosophy is well known. It needs no further elaboration and comment here. But I wish to point to some remarkable aspects of it, which, in my opinion, are highly characteristic for what I would like to call the “*schizophrenic*” traits of Hobbesian philosophy in its peculiar *mixture* of intellectual progressiveness and extreme political and religious conservatism with even reactionary conclusions as far as his practical positions with respect to ideological and poli-

tical issues are concerned. We have seen that Hobbes insists very strongly on clear and clean conceptual-analytic thinking and on the use of "natural reason" against authoritarian and dogmatic restrictions on the scope of rationality. He was very progressive and "modern" in his attacks on philosophical and theological scholasticism and on speculative metaphysics in general. In his objections to volitional indeterminism he fought against speculative and metaphysical psychology based on uncritical introspection, on traditionally transmitted "intuitive evidences" and on dogmatic conceptions and semantical or logical nonsense. He asked for precise definitions and semantically and logically meaningful and intelligible propositions. And he refused to accept traditional and dogmatic doctrines as touchstones for his rational analyses and criticisms. With a lucidity which is often sharp and implacable, he points to irrational motives behind ideas and theories and to mechanisms that account for irrational derailments of philosophical thinking. In his analyses of the psychological presuppositions and the social functions of morality he was at the origin of a tendency towards a mechanistic empiricist and sensualistic psychology and a precursor of a pragmatist and behaviorist ethical theory, and as such he was one of the fathers of the anglosaxon scientific tradition, even anticipating critical analyses of moral language and ethical reasoning as we find them with the 20th century logico-empiricists and the authors of the analytical school.

But in sharp contrast with all this Hobbes appears to defend absolute, antidemocratic political power, unlimited authoritarian political rule, unconditional civil submission and obedience to the Sovereign (be he king, emperor, tyrant, usurping despot or who-soever succeeds in establishing absolute power and in imposing his legislation), blind dogmatic religious belief and loyal obedience to the official doctrine of the church and their spokesmen, and the uncritical acceptance of the absolutist myth of the divine origin and legitimation of Sovereign Power.

How can a sharply intelligent, rationalistic and realistic philosopher like Hobbes, who was a radical opponent of all attempts to silence critical rational thinking wherever they crossed his intellectual way, defend such conservative and even reactionary positions, which are often in flagrant contradiction — or at least in unsolved paradoxical tension — with his critical rationalism? How can he possibly teach his readers to accept, without rational discussion and questioning, such a dogmatic aprioristic stipulation as the one that

simply reduces *justice* and *legitimacy* to *absolute power*, whereas he is prepared to admit without reluctance that this power may *err* and hold *arbitrary* or even "*wrong*" convictions? And that this *fallibility* is no reason whatsoever to question the legitimacy of the mythological rationalization of the divine origin, and hence of the "*infallibility*" of that power? And how can he keep up the undoubtable truth of christian religion and the duty of submission to ecclesiastical doctrine and orthodoxy, after having radically rejected all biblical and theological dogmas and teachings as borderlines or touchstones for "natural reason"? Can a rational man doubt the rational infallibility of the Sovereign, and of the magistrates and clergymen he appoints as his interpreters and representatives, and nevertheless leave unquestioned the legitimating appeal to Divinity and the claim of being entitled to require unconditional obedience of all subjects? In short, how can a rationalist philosopher make a stand for the perpetuation of anti-rational attitudes on the ideological and political level, like e.g. in this quotation?

"And for the infallibility of the ecclesiastical doctors by me attributed to them, it is not that they cannot be deceived but that a subject cannot be deceived in obeying them when they are our lawfully constituted doctors. For the supreme ecclesiastical doctor, is he that hath the supreme power: and in obeying him no subject can be deceived, because they are by God himself commanded to obey him. And what the ecclesiastical doctors, lawfully constituted, do tell us to be necessary in point of religion, the same is told us by the sovereign power. And therefore, though we may be deceived by them in the belief of an opinion, we cannot be deceived by them in the duty of our actions"³⁰

Or like in the next quotation, where Hobbes denies everyone (including himself?) the ability and the right to moral judgment, except the sovereign and his representatives:

"The knowledge of good and evil is judicature, which in Latin is *cognitio causarum*, not *scientia*. Every private man may do his best to attain a knowledge of what is good and evil in the action he is to do; but to judge of what is good and evil in others, belongs not to him, but to those whom the sovereign power appointeth thereunto"³¹

Is this a mere tactical compromise with the established system

of political and ecclesiastical authority, or a pure lip-service to its ideological rationalizations and myths, for reasons of practical convenience? Should we consider this "schizophrenic" mixture as cynical provocation of a rightist ideologist, who puts rationality aside without any scruples as soon as it might endanger vested interests and their official justifications? Is it a lack of political courage to draw the practical conclusions of theoretically radical convictions? Or should we read Hobbes as a progressive and critical intellectual who made his radical message heard to those who understood its lurking between the lines and who took the conservative accommodation-clothing with a wink of the eyes?

These questions can only be answered in a speculative way. In my opinion, Hobbes was not a cynical provocateur, nor a convinced tactical compromiser. Neither do I think that he can be adequately characterized as nothing but a clear-cut rightist ideologist. I think this "schizophrenic" mixture to have been very conscious and intentional, well thought-out, with its own intrinsic "rationale". It was not *simply* "schizophrenic". This "rationale", as I see it, has to do with two considerations of Hobbes: a *practical consideration* and a *theoretical one*. The *theoretical* one, I think, is as follows.

Because Hobbes had come to the firm conviction that there cannot be found or given an ultimate *criterion* that would allow for universal agreement on the nature and the content of *justice* (as soon as the direct reduction to absolute *power* is given up) he considers all attempts at a purely *rational* determination as being a priori *condemned to failure*, and hence as *useless*. If this conviction is true, it follows that the search for a rational determination of justice is in itself an *irrational* activity, which ought not to be furthered.

Moreover, the *anthropology* of Hobbes contains sufficient reasons for making him suspicious and sceptical with respect to optimistic rationalism. His emphasis on selfish and irrational motives and drives behind human behavior forbids on purely theoretical grounds the idea that rational insight in *justice* could in itself turn the sense of justice into a changing determinant of human behavior. Man, being a wolf towards his fellow-men, cannot *educationally* be transformed into a spontaneous social being with a sense of justice by furthering rational insight and public rational discussions. So, there is no immediate *educational use* that could justify rational debates on justice or the propagation of a rational philosophy of justice. Here we come to the practical consideration.

When an ultimate rational agreement on the nature and content of justice is already beyond reach on the purely philosophico-theoretical level, and when this kind of irrational search for rationality serves no direct socially or politically useful purpose, one should look for the possible moral and sociopolitical harm that could be elicited by it. And here we see the core of Hobbes' objections against a public philosophy of justice, be it divine or worldly justice.

I already quoted the passage where Hobbes suspects people engaging in discussions on justice of being pushed into the sort of relativism that can easily serve as a welcome theoretical pretext and alibi for the contestation of *any* political and religious system, authority or legislation. If people are granted the right of judging the established authority and power system by their own view on divine or sociopolitical justice, and if a general rational agreement on this notion is impossible, people are granted the right to contest that system on *any subjective and arbitrary* base; a situation which practically amounts to chaotic-anarchist contestation.

“For all men living equally acknowledging, that the High and Omnipotent God is to be obeyed before the greatest emperors; every man may pretend the commandement of God to justify his disobedience. And if one man pretendeth that God commands one thing, and another man that he commands the contrary, what equity is there to allow the pretence of one more than of another? Or what peace can there be, if they be all allowed alike? There will therefore necessarily arise discord and civil war, unless there be a judge agreed upon, with authority given to him by every one of them, to show them and interpret to them the word of God; which interpreter is always the emperor, king, or other sovereign person, who therefore ought to be obeyed”³².

Hobbes feared the practical — ideological and political — consequences of the implantation in public opinion of a sense of relativism, that might result from certain kinds of rational thinking and philosophical questions about justification. Therefore he thought it wise not to propagate and further them. Not because he was personally convinced of the truth or legitimacy of the established religious and political myths of absolutistic regimes. On the contrary, it seems to me that, in his most private and intimate convictions, he sharply detested them as irrational and nonsensical humbug. But because he saw no “democratic” alternative for an authoritarian

system of "law and order". And because such myths are prerequisites for unifying sociopolitical control and for the justification (be it an irrational justification) of the authority and power system. I think that Hobbes was a genuine and honest theoretical philosopher in his defence of absolutist political authoritarianism. He was not a trivial compromising or apologetical ideologist of the historically contingent regime in which he lived and on whose authorities he depended for his living, but a sharply rational and critical philosopher who thought out the implications and consequences of his anthropological viewpoints and his ideas about the practical possibilities and uses of rational thinking. This led him to the firm conviction that human nature does not allow for a stable and peaceful societal organization, unless "law and order" is imposed and guaranteed by an unquestioned, absolute and sovereign power. He saw no better solution than the irrational, dogmatic and authoritarian defence of the established system, inasfar and simply because it imposed and guaranteed that order, being the smaller evil as compared with the alternative of chaos and politically annihilating relativism and subjectivism in ethical thinking and in political philosophy. For this reason, he added himself a new legitimizing myth to the existing ones : that of the unconditional delegation of power by the people to the Sovereign, or of the passive acceptance by the people of usurped sovereign power, in grateful exchange of the individual and collective protection they enjoy by their submission and obedience.

NOTES

¹ All quotations in this article refer to "*The Questions concerning Liberty, Necessity, and chance*" as published in : *The English Works of Thomas Hobbes of Malmesbury*, collected and edited by Sir WILLIAM MOLESWORTH, London, John Bohn (Henrietta Street, Covent Garden), 1841, second reprint by Scientia Verlag, Aalen, 1966, vol. V.

² op. cit., p. 367.

³ op. cit. pp. 372—373.

⁴ op. cit. p. 237.

⁵ With respect to the reduction of the "Will" to the "last appetite" (after a process of deliberation and election has taken place) Hobbes

writes :

"..the truth in general is that it followeth the last opinion of the goodness or evilness of the object, be the opinion true or false", op. cit. p. 77.

⁶op. cit. pp. 357—358.

⁷op. cit. p. 360.

⁸Bramhall's notion of "*elective power*" stems from the Scholastic notion "*actus elicited*", denoting the act of choice by the *will* which is supposed to be *autodeterminating*, as opposed to the "*actus imperatus*" which denotes an act that proceeds from external force or inner compulsion.

Bramhall's objections towards determinism appear to be inspired by his wish to safeguard the scholastic classification of actions into (a) actions proceeding from external force (compulsory actions, forced by an extrinsic motion), (b) actions proceeding from internal passionate force (compulsory actions, forced by an intrinsic but non-rational motion, such as passions or temptations that determine the will "naturally", i.e. without interference of rational deliberation and election), and (c) actions proceeding from inclinations that are mediated by a representation of a goal and by rational deliberation and election. The third class of actions is called *voluntary*, as opposed to involuntary actions of the first and second type.

Within the class of *voluntary actions* Bramhall makes a subdistinction between *spontaneous* and *free* actions. *Spontaneous* actions are actions which are consciously purposive (based on a vague representation of a goal) but correspond immediately to a given inclination towards an object, whereas really *free* or *moral* actions proceed exclusively from conscious purposivity and rational deliberation and election. As far as man as a moral agent is concerned, he has to be considered as free from external and internal compulsion and obeying exclusively to an unneccessitated (and therefore "free") choice between alternatives.

Hobbes is right in pointing to Bramhall's unjustifiable equalization of "freedom from external or internal-passionate compulsion" with "absence of any kind of causation" or "freedom from any antecedent determination" of the so-called "will".

⁹Bramhall continues to misinterpret Hobbes by presenting Hobbes' thesis as if he were teaching that "causation of the will" meant "a predetermination of the will by antecedents *outside* the human subject of that will", as is clear from the following quotation :

“And if his opinion of absolute necessity of all things were true, the destiny of men could not be altered, either by examples or fear of punishment”, op. cit., p. 233.

All that Hobbes asserts is that it makes no sense to conceive of what Bramhall calls “the concurrence of the subject in the determination of the will” as of a causally unnecessitated (and hence unintelligible and unpredictable) phenomenon.

¹⁰ op. cit. p. 108.

¹¹ Bramhall simply associates “volitional freedom” with “rationality”, as if this terminological equation were a proof of the causal indeterminateness of rational processes.

¹² See notes 9 and 11.

¹³ Put in terms of Aristotelian and Scholastic jargon, which permeates the indeterministic approach of Bramhall, the Will is a specific kind of “unmoved mover”, which is an absurdity from the Newtonian-mechanical view of Hobbes.

¹⁴ “But as it is absurdly said, that to dance is an act allured or drawn by fair means out of the ability to dance; so it is also to say, that the Will is an act allured or drawn out of the power to will, which power is commonly called the will”, op. cit., p. 274.

“...he (Bramhall) speaketh of the will and other faculties as of men, or spirits in men’s bellies”, op. cit., p. 289.

¹⁵ op. cit., p. 385.

¹⁶ op. cit., p. 380.

¹⁷ “But, because men for the most part think those things are produced without cause, whereof they do not see the cause, they use to call both the agent and the action contingent, as attributing it to fortune. And therefore, when the causes are necessary, if they perceive not the necessity, they call those necessary agents and actions, in things that have appetite, *free*; and in things inanimate, *contingent* (op. cit., p. 189).

“If they saw the whole order and conjunction of causes, they would say it were as necessary as any thing else can possibly be; and therefore God that sees that order and conjunction, knows it is necessary” (op. cit., p. 226).

“Men call necessary agents, such as they know to be necessary, and contingent agents, such inanimate things as they know not whether they work necessarily or no, and free agents, men whom they know not whether they work necessarily or no. All which confusion ariseth from that presumptuous men take for granted, that that *is not*,

which they *know* not" (op. cit., p. 227).

These quotations make apparent that Hobbes reduces the problem behind the determinism-indeterminism to a pseudo-problem provoked by a misunderstanding. It rests on the distinction between necessity and contingency on the ontological level, whereas this distinction is a false translation of the epistemological opposition between "known" and "unknown" causes. Contingency and freedom equal "unseen necessity".

¹⁸ op. cit., p. 111.

¹⁹ op. cit., p. 111.

²⁰ op. cit., p. 115.

²¹ op. cit., p. 116.

²² Bramhall warns repeatedly for the "pernicious consequences (of Hobbes' doctrine) for piety, public policy, and morality", op. cit., p. 433.

²³ op. cit., p. 15.

²⁴ op. cit., p. 200.

²⁵ op. cit., p. 152.

²⁶ op. cit., p. 153.

²⁷ op. cit., p. 16.

²⁸ "He (Bramhall) would have the judge condemn no man for a crime, if it were necessitated; as if the judge could know what acts are necessary, unless he knew all that hath anteceded, both visible and invisible, and what both every thing in itself, and altogether, can effect. It is enough to the judge, that the act he condemneth be voluntary", op. cit., p. 181.

²⁹ op. cit., p. 235.

³⁰ op. cit., p. 269.

³¹ op. cit., p. 269.

³² op. cit., p. 290.