

A Reading of Hobbes' *Leviathan* with Economists' Glasses

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Introduction

Thomas Hobbes (1588-1679) is known principally for his contributions to the history of political and social thought. The implications of his political philosophy is remarkable for the logical clarity of its arguments and the coherence with which it reaches its ultimate conclusions. It attempts to support absolute government during the turbulent period of the English civil wars. Its anthropological presuppositions lead him to break with a traditional manner of understanding society, introducing thereby the called 'modern principle' (see Hoffman, 1996).

In this paper, however, we focus not on this facet of his thought but rather on his contributions to the formation of a capitalist ideology. The questions we are trying to answer are: what economic doctrines are to be found in Hobbes's works? and, is there in him a developed theory of market mechanisms? We will attempt to show how Hobbes is the first author to present in speculative form a philosophy of the businessman, of economic man. In his writings appear the essential elements of *homo oeconomicus*, with its most distinctive characteristic, individualism.

In this sense his most valuable intuitions appear in the chapters *Of Man* and *Of Commonwealth* in his best known work, *Leviathan*. For this reason we will use *Leviathan* as the main thread of Hobbes' general argumentation.

There is a broad literature on the various aspects of his political philosophy. The classical work of MacPherson (1962) has been challenged by Thomas (1965) and criticized in the last years by a number of scholars the most recent Schmitt (1996) or Weiler (1994), who, in turn, discusses the Schmitt's thesis on absolutism, or Bobbio (1993) whose work on the natural law tradition in Hobbes, or Chappell's collecting book of 1992. But there is little written on his economic viewpoint; perhaps Myers' book (1983) is the most interesting for its connections with the *economic man* model.

The work is divided into five sections. We begin (1) analyzing the rationalist and mechanistic substratum of his thought. In the second we identify four principles (fear, security, self-interest, and domination) underlying his ideology. The elements more directly related to Economics appears (3) in connection with his theory of power. The origin of society (4) is linked with his political theory. We finish (5) with the conclusions of this paper.

1. Mechanism based in the natural sciences

Hobbes starts from the positivist logic dominant in the intellectual atmosphere of the seventeenth century, which considers man as a being who always moves in the environment of means and excluded from consideration the existence of a final cause in actions. The method he uses is rationalist, deduced from certain initial premises. The entire fifth chapter of *Leviathan* is dedicated to showing these explicative principles of reality. For him this presupposes developing a theory of language, because truth is found in words, not in things. Science begins "with the Definitions of Words" (*Leviathan*: V, 30). It therefore is a question of means; falsity is the absence of significance. The human being is the inventor of the word, his most precious gift and the touchstone of his rationality.

Modern rationalism implies the primacy of subjectivity over the objective reality of things. This is the great revolution of the seventeenth century, which placed in reason the principle and criterion of all sciences, physical as well as moral. From that point on it converts into the method for knowing the truth, which has given place to a world vision opposed to the old order in which prevailed custom and authority. Rationalism situates us before one of Hobbes' central problems: the limits of reason in its approach to reality.

Within philosophical instrumentalism it is advisable to distinguish what constitutes one of the sets of characteristics most typical of Hobbes: the financial vision of society as a free market, which vision corresponds to *homo crematisticus* or the philosophy of the businessman. MacPherson (1962:

44) maintains that in already in Hobbes' thought one finds the fundamental elements for the construction of the modern competitive market and therefore of capitalist society.

It is purely political the reason why we must wait for Locke to see the model converted into reality: seventeenth century English society was not prepared to accept certain economic ideas within the context of political absolutism. His *homo crematisticus* is essentially instrumentalist, a doctrine that does not recognize the classical notion of finality, that in view of which one does something. By way of contrast with finalism, instrumentalism affirms that there is no end exterior to the process. It supposes the primacy of means or the non-consideration of the practical end of human actions.

Hobbes adopts Galilee's mechanistic principles and presents his scheme as one acceptable to honest persons. The primary human impulse is to preserve one's own life and to avoid death. Passions are movement. Science appears in a rationalist key as "knowledge of Consequences, and dependence of one fact upon another" (V, 21). He sets forth the scientific creed when he says "the Light of human minds is Pespicious Words; Reason is the pace; Encrease of Science, the way; and the benefit of mankind, the end" (V, 22). Reason understands means only as the instruments by which each person may obtain a comfortable life.

This leads him to remain always in a naturalistic plane. "Nature itself cannot err" (IV, 15), he says, and he converts it into the source of all human certainty. It is a formulation of optimistic rationalism: "reason itself cannot err". In fact, he affirms that "reason it selfe is always Right Reason, as well as Arithmetique is a certain and infallible Art" (V, 18). He leaps from mathematics to ethics and connects reason with the former: "Reason is nothing but Reckoning (that is, Adding and Subtracting) of the Consequences of general names agreed upon" (V, 18). This is the nucleus of his rationalist platform: "reason it selfe is always Right Reason", what is reasonable must be true. His thesis is that all problems can be resolved by means of "right Reason constituted by Nature" (V, 19).

Life is mechanical movement and incessant desire. A human being is a creature of countless appetites and desires (see ch. XI). It is a process with no end but the conservation of all that belongs to the person, of both his life and property. The accumulation of wealth is the means to attain one's end. This posture supposes the application of concepts taken from the natural sciences to human conduct: "Life it selfe is but Motion, and can never be without Desire, not without Feare" (VI, 29). Individualism, which establishes in the person the basic unit of analysis for human behavior, is found at the heart of this mechanistic scheme.

What I mean with 'individualism' is a system characterized by the following notes: 1) each individual's liberty is a choice's power that develops up to the point where neighbor's one begins; 2) man is looking for his self-interest, above all, for he is unable of self-denial actions. Individualism and self-interest are not the same, of course, but easily could be.

In social life it implies that: 1) there is a strong gap between public and private spheres; 2) State and Market are enough to coordinate individuals; 3) individuals interaction goes through contracts and covenants freely assumed and rescindable. The hobbesian model tends to reflect the market's capitalistic logic, and the bourgeois mentality.

Hobbes understands that the accumulation of wealth is the necessary but insufficient condition for the development of a modern economy; it is also necessary for wealth to be converted into capital, a process that requires the inclusion of human work. He takes up these questions when analyzes the birth of civil society out of the state of nature, which implies, in his perspective, the transition from a pre-human situation to one that is properly human.

For Strauss (1959: 237) the link between both states is movement or mechanism. The problem Hobbes fails to resolve is the relation between natural and social mechanisms. Hobbesian man belongs to natural mechanism but escapes it by means of a rational reflection that allows him to take account of the miserable state of constant war in which he lives.

Happiness in life cannot for that reason be found in rest from desire, because there is nothing but inertia, life itself is nothing but movement. He says "continual success in obtaining those things which a man from time to time desire, that is to say, continual prospering, is that men call felicity" (VI, 29). The origins of conflict in the state of nature are to be found in man's desire of glory and not

to the mere lack of property rights. Even profit and wealth are not an end in itself, but rather one of the chief means of achieving man's true objective, namely the pleasure of honor and glory.

The logical sequence is as follows: (a) life is movement, incessant desire; b) happiness is not found in mental repose; it is an uninterrupted succession of the attainment of desired objects; c) the desirability of objects is instrumental, since their only purpose is to assure the possession of the next object; d) there is no final end because of which all things are desired; the final end is one's own self, "every man, not only by Right, but also by necessity of Nature, is supposed to endeavour all he can to obtain that which is necessary for his conservation" (XV, 76); e) man has a right to everything; this postulate is based in a mechanical conception of liberty as expansive power; which in turn reinforces the conception of economic competition with a metaphysical-geometrical aspect (XV).

2. Underlying principles of Hobbes' economic ideology

To Hobbes' mind his predecessors had mixed concepts derived from the idea of God and of reason, proposing as the objective of life such things as virtue and excellence which, in his opinions, are aims too high for man. His predecessors were ingenuous, they were considering a utopia, Hobbes will come to say. He is searching for a more realistic approach and appeals to man's elemental instincts, those which are directly derived from human nature.

Human passions are neither good nor bad, and must be channeled. For this reason he centers his attention in four empirical principles or presuppositions which one recognizes intuitively in oneself: fear, security, selfishness, and the desire for control. In my opinion, behind these presuppositions we can encounter many of the constituent elements of capitalist ideology.

1. The Principle of Fear

The fear of insecurity is perpetual and leads to distrust. Hobbes believes that the danger of the resurgence of "force and fraud" is enormous. He bases the fictive origin of society in the constant fear of a return to such a condition: "feare of oppression, disposeth a man to anticipate, or to seek aid by society: for there is no other way by which a man can secure his life and liberty" (XI, 49). This new social condition is based in fear: everyone surrenders part of his liberty to the sovereign to achieve a certain personal security. Fear is the only sentiment that causes him realize the badness of his condition and arrive at society.

It does not surprise that he reaches this principle when one takes into account the circumstances of his country at that particular time. Open war between royal forces and those of Parliament had led England into a chaotic situation. Hobbes himself had to flee to exile in France, given the mortal dangers he was facing. His personal situation led him to apply this explicative principle to labor relations. He defines work as "the sorrow that surpress sorrow" (that is, hunger).

I suggest that there is a link between the principle of fear and worker's motivation under capitalism. There is no pact without violence. This system requires a sovereign government –the Leviathan– that favors the accumulation of wealth and maintains this tension avarice-fear. Marx and radical economists will return to this theme: to work because of fear. This is one way of taking power from the worker and converting him into a piece of the productive process.

The same idea appears again later in Hobbes' thought when he develops his theory of the pact as the means of entering into society: "the force of Words, being too weak to hold men to the performance of their Covenants" (XII, 71). "Generosity too rarely found to be presumed on". The entire chapter, based on contract's doctrine, is a balance between fear and trust, settled in favor of the former. "The Passion to be reckoned upon is fear", here we have the key. The force which causes pacts to be honored is fear.

2. The Principle of Security

Security is converted into the principal preoccupation and consists in assuring oneself the possession of goods concerning other people: life is individual struggle for security. Goods are particular because they contribute to a singular good, which is the conservation of life. The means that conserve life are material property and the liberty to use it. It is suitable that the control of these means be pa-

cific (XIII, 227). Such intense concentration in the problem of 'a minimum of security' renders him incapable of finding other advantages in human relations. Locke, in leaving aside the problem of security, was able to concentrate his attention in precisely these advantages.

Hobbes' definition of property is exclusive, in that it reduces to a right to exclude others, except the sovereign, from its use. "Where there is no Common-wealth, there is a perpetual war and every thing is his that got it and kept it for force: which is neither Property nor Community, but Uncertainty. The Property is attributed to the Law Civil ... it is the act only of the Sovereign, and consists in the Laws" (XXIV, 127-8). Uncertainty is one reason for Hobbesian conflict; scarcity means competition but uncertainty, including the one of what strategies potential rivals will adopt, turns the competition in the direction of violence.

Hobbes' negative conception of human nature causes him to view government as a dike which prevents the flood of force and fraud from invading society. The Hobbesian problem was evaded subsequently by Locke by means of the artifice of natural convergence of interests among all members of society. Hobbes recognizes no normative element of order save governmental coercion.

Hobbes' iron logic in the development of his presuppositions leads him to an exaggerated fear of the consequences of the Revolution. But his is a greater achievement than Locke's reasonable attitude, incapable of distinguishing the normative suppositions of facts. Hobbes is consistent with the basic axioms of his thought, which will lead him to its ultimate consequences. It is precisely certain incongruencies in Locke, which proceed from his desire to maintain the major premises of Hobbesian ideology, which allow him simultaneously to deny Hobbes' minor premises.

3. The Principle of Selfishness

He begins by affirming the primacy of the passions over reason, which is their slave. He proposes a theory based in the lowest but strongest of all passions: love of oneself. He defines economic activity as the "rationalization of selfishness". From that point follows his affirmation that "every man is presumed to do all things in order to his own benefit"; and that "of the voluntary acts of every man, the object is some Good to himself" (XIV, 66). Thus, "no man gives but with intention of Good to himself" (XV, 75). The capacity for giving does not exist, everyone who gives something does so in the expectation of obtaining for himself an equivalent or greater good.

One could consider whether Hobbesian instrumentalism is necessarily selfish. After all, Adam Smith opts for an ameliorative reading in his famous passage from the *Wealth of Nations* (I, 2): "It is not from the benevolence of the butcher, the brewer, or the baker that we expect our dinner, but from regard to their own interest. We address ourselves, not to their humanity but to their self-love, and never talk to them of our own necessities but of their advantages".

4. The Principle of Control

Hobbes assumes that "every man's power resists and hinders the effects of other men's power" (VIII, 26). Consequently, in fact, every man is my enemy and I must anticipate, by means of controlling: "all acquired power consists in command over some of the powers of other men". He formulates his premise based upon the fact that two persons desire the same thing and both may not enjoy it, from which arises that they become enemies and each tries to exercise control over the other.

This control should be peaceful, because "the passions that encline men to Peace are Feare of Death; desire of such things as are necessary to commodious living; and a Hope by their industry to obtain them. And reason suggesteth convenient Articles of Peace, upon which men may be drawn to agreement. These Articles are they which otherwise are called the Lawes of Nature" (XIII, 63). This is the basis of the bourgeois platform: enrichment without interferences.

Capitalism's underlying financial approach includes distrust: "we find three principal causes of quarrell. First, Competition, secondly, Diffidence, Third, glory" (XIII, 61). Men become enemies because they pursue goods which cannot be shared. This is the problem of scarcity, central to all of his thought, and which originates many of his meditations on the sense of economic activity. But as Benson (1994: 129) states the conflict over scarce resources in the Hobbesian jungle may be avoided if rules of obligation delineating property rights develop along with institutions and governance.

3. The appearance of economics in connection with Hobbes' theory of power

Hobbes defines man as a being capable of means. The means at man's disposal shows the measure of his power. "The Power of a Man is his present means, to obtain some future apparent Good" (VIII, 35). Thus "every man must always seek to have some power". But the means are not assured except by even more means; the inclination to possess ever greater means ends with death: "he cannot assure the power and means to live well without the acquisition of more" (VIII, 35). This is because the passions are a "restless desire of power". Means are related necessarily to other means, in an apparently endless chain. In fact, there are no aims in this way of understanding human conduct.

He distinguishes between 'natural' (faculties, virtues) and 'external power' (external means and tools to 'acquire more'). These later means are of greater interest from the viewpoint of Economics. Power is "eminence" over others, "the excess of the power of one above that of another" (VIII, 26). The reason is simple: only by having power can I prevent others from making me their vassal by means of their power. This is a rule, formed by observation. Its corollary is "all acquired power consists in command over some of the powers of other men".

Power is the difference of means, the "excess". Relationship with others is established in terms of difference in power, of competition, and of exchange of means. This scheme is repeated in capitalist 'competitive markets', where it is understood that all others in the market are potential competitors. Little room for cooperation is left. "The competition for any power whatsoever inclines to struggle, the way for each competitor to obtain his desire is to kill, to subdue, to supplant or to repel the other" (XI, 200). In competition, as in the market, the only limits upon the individual are those imposed by the other contestants.

The English philosopher takes many elements from mechanics. He is attempting to arrive at order but in its stead appears war. Left to its own natural laws, the system, rather than establishing stability, degenerates into chaos –because each contestant pursues his own ends. One realizes that this, as all utilitarian systems, on their own produce chaos, not order. Specialist literature on Hobbes has often discussed his relation to later Utilitarian and liberal positions (see Hoffman, 1996), and has either endorsed (Rider, 1993) or criticized (Strauss, 1959) the view that he maintained favorable attitudes to market relations.

Since competition between individuals is inevitable because the market is an unstable balance that ends in war, it must resort to a monopoly of power. In his consideration of the natural state, Hobbes excludes economy, and thus there is neither society nor state. If there is no market economy, there is no society. His model describes the birth of a market for everything that is scarce. The scarcity provoked by the desire of all men to have more things requires some type of institutional solution, whether that of a State which establishes a monopoly of power or a market where everyone goes to acquire scarce goods.

The consequence is that all things must pass the test of the market, even virtues, because "virtue is somewhat that is valued for eminence; and consists in comparison. For if all things were equally in all men, nothing would be priced" (VIII, 32). The varying worth of each person's resources sets the criterion for mercantile valuation. It reminds one of a culture of fast profits. "Competition of Riches, Honour, Command, or other power, enclineth to Contention, Enmity and War: Because the way of one competitor to the attaining of his desire is to kill, subdue, supplant or repell the other" (XI, 47-48). The reason a man lowers his guard and submits himself to the Sovereign is that the "desire of Ease and sensual Delight, disposeth men to obey a common Power" (XI, 48). Again we are faced with the passions that lead one to leave his own protection in the hands of another.

Within this theory of power scientific knowledge is "small power, because not eminent" (X, 42), it does not enter the market: the intellectual is an expense, he absorbs means. The price of value ("Worth, Value") of a man is given in the demand for the means at his disposal: "The Value of a man is so much as would be given for the use of his power" (X, 42). The value of a man is his price, that which would be offered for the use of his power (in a worker, his work).

Thus: (a) man is comparable to any other salable item ("as in other things, so in men"); (b) he

is “his price”, what is paid to use what he has; (c) this price is not absolute, is not fixed, but varies with demand; (d) the price is fixed by those who require and evaluate your work (“a thing dependent on the need and judgment of another”); (e) buying is superior to selling: the buyer is the one who sets the rules (“not the seller but the buyer determines the price”).

A man’s work is merchandise: “for a man’s labor also is a commodity exchangeable for benefit, as well as any other thing” (XXIV, 130). The market sets the value: “the value of all things contracted for is measure by the appetite of the Contractors: and therefore the just value is that which they be contented to give” (XV, 75). The sovereign’s role is to preserve free initiative in the accumulation of means. This is the origin of property: “the validity of covenants begins not but with the Constitution of a Civil Power, sufficient to compel men to keep them: and then it is also that Property begins” (XV, 72).

His formulation of *economic man* is related to rationalism and can be understood only from an Aristotelian basis. But in the philosophy of Hobbesian individualistic competition we discover that the bank account is the soul. This is the paradoxical conclusion he reaches when he addresses the social role of merchants and of the enterprises in which private investors invest their money: “the end of these Bodies of Merchants is the particular gain of every adventurer, it is a reason that every one acquainted with the employment of his own ... that shall have the power to order ... and be acquainted with their accounts” (XXII, 119).

The paradox is found in that he affirms as categorically absolute subjection to the sovereign as he denies payment to the investor without the investor’s intervention. Thus one senses strongly the principle that when it is my money that is at stake, I have the right to intervene in decision-making, a principle that Hobbes grants to no other class of goods, all of which are remanded to the decision of the State. This is a characteristic proper to *economic man*.

In another passage Hobbes establishes the analogy of the Common-wealth as similar to the human body, in which money is the blood of society and the functionaries of the Treasury are the veins and arteries: “Property belongs in all kinds of Common-wealth to the Sovereign Power” (XXIV, 128), but his notion of law is equivalent to ‘distribution’, as is his notion of justice.

Individuals look for what is useful or profitable for them; this is the motor of the enterprise. The question is how to moderate profit. The prudent thinkers Locke and Smith say that profit is moderated by friction with competitors in the market: I cannot profit any more because others impede me. Hobbes fails to resolve the problem but his message is clear: without moderation of profits, society will disintegrate.

In our opinion, Hobbes possesses a bourgeois mentality and uses a social model that corresponds to that of the market. This is a society in which each participant competes with others to gain power. Each looks to take the powers of the others and avoid the transference of his to them, and this not by brute force but by an ‘operation of the market’ that situates the value of each person in the measure he obtains it by his power.

He is likely to buy acquiescence by transferring some wealth to potentially powerful individuals in exchange for an agreement not to oppose his extortion efforts directed at others who are less likely to be able to resist. Although he did not explain that the value of each person is established by methods similar to those of the market, the consequence is obvious: it is impossible to maintain a capitalist society by other than legal means. The model of capitalist society is the only model which fulfills these requirements. If this were not so, Hobbes could not have reached the point of postulating the necessity of life in society.

The economic model presupposed as obvious is fully capitalist. Hobbes considers work as merchandise, which is the central proposition of capitalism. He rejects the pre-capitalist concept of commutative and distributive justice on the basis that these forms of justice lose their meaning at the point in which one realizes that the value of all things, including human beings, is determined by the market. He accepts market value determination not only as a fact, but as a right, since he encounters no other moral basis for establishing the value of things. The very fact of undertaking an exchange signifies that the value of exchanged goods was equal. Equality of value is proven by the fact of exchange.

For him goods have value to the extent they are sold and not warehoused. A thing is worth what it is paid for, and if it isn't paid for, it has no worth. This supposes that justice is a fact of valuation and exchange. Thus capitalism converts into 'product' not only the work but the entire process – which is valued in function of its exchange value. The bourgeois of his time were not particularly sympathetic to him for his defense of the sovereign.

Thus what stands out in this mentality of economic man is that:

1) political rights are not so important as security in the market. Consequently the citizens allow the sovereign free reign and attempt to get along well with him. For this reason Hobbes is capable of formulating the principle of absolute obedience, at the same time establishing it on the basis of profits: collective submission to power and incessant appropriation of goods;

2) capitalist liberalism inherits from Hobbes its individualistic bases and its bourgeois-financial platform;

3) moral or transcendent fictions are left to the side to focus exclusively on the empirical fact that –in fact– the capitalist system 'works': man watches for his own interest and society-market is nothing other than the coexistence of these reciprocal interests. The world is a market. What matters is work. Individualism is converted into the substance of society. The economy is built upon these presuppositions.

4. The Origin of Society

We analyze here the reasons for which men reach this solution that is the entrance into society to overcome the unfeasible state of nature, in which the process of the accumulation of capital typical of the capitalist system is untenable.

The "state of nature" is the absence of society and the absolute chaos which would reign if there were lacking a common power capable of restraining individuals. This state would be "continuous fear and the danger of a violent death", a radicalization of civil war, something to be avoided at all costs. So, everyone ought to be disposed to lose part of his liberty, under the condition that everyone else gives up part of theirs, too. This leads to an understanding or contract. Economic activity, which appears united to this change in man's situation, will also seek its normalization by means of laws. I have the right to whatever I feel like but, as in the market, there are always others who impede me.

The contract by means of which man enters into society is a mutual transfer of rights (XIV, 66). Buying and selling are contractual acts, in which a promise is the equivalent of an agreement. Practically all human relations are contract. When the contract is based not in some thing –the object of the contract– but in the exchange of goods that possess instrumentality for the individual, the only thing that preserves the contract is the coercive force which obliges its fulfillment, once it is supposed that this particular pact or transfer of liberty is a lesser evil than the state of nature. My right to property is based in the existence of power which safeguards that right.

States exist to protect individual property. As a supporter of governmental absolutism, Hobbes proposes an individualism that is statist: "it belongeth to the Common-wealth (to the Sovereign) to appoint in what manner, all kind of contract between Subjects (as buying, selling, exchanging, borrowing, lending, letting and taking to hire) are to be made" (XXIV, 130).

His concept of scarcity must not be understood as indigence nor poverty. This scarcity is rather one caused by the human greed that leads him to incessant desire, a scarcity of what man lacks in a society in which the accumulation of wealth is seen in competitive terms. Here we find the reason for which Locke was unable to free himself of Hobbes when he describes the problem of accumulation: he is unable to neutralize the effects of scarcity.

The model of Leviathan is clearly manifested in competitive capitalist society: man is alone, subject to various dangers, and in permanent 'commercial war' against all the rest. With a view towards Locke, what is important in Hobbes is the coherence with which he formulates his principles and carries them to their conclusions. It is impossible more clearly to formulate in scientific-technical

guise selfishness as the radical principle of society.

5. Conclusions

The objective of this paper was to examine Hobbes's *Leviathan* with a view to determining whether Hobbes articulates a conception of 'economic man'. I try to establish both that *Leviathan* contains an idea of human beings which contains elements of the model of 'economic man' (particularly 'individualism') and that Hobbes was the first author to elaborate this conception.

Hobbes is the father of mainstream Anglo-Saxon thought, displaying a series of features which all later authors of the school will share: 1) a philosophical nominalism based on linguistic logic; 2) enemy of abstract metaphysics; 3) an evolutionary materialism; 4) a pragmatic and utilitarian mentality in questions of ethics and politics; 5) agnosticism and religious indifference; 6) moral philosophy based on sentiment; 7) an individualism of freedom as basic vital attitude: inclination towards liberalism; 8) fascination for the scientific method.

In his thought we encounter the essential elements of the so-called bourgeois mentality, linked by birth and later evolution to capitalist ideology. Such a manner of understanding society has received the name of chrematistic. The businessman *-homo oeconomicus-* shares an individualistic vision of society as marketplace.

Hobbes bases his entire speculative edifice in four empirical principals: fear, security, selfishness and domination or property. It is difficult to resist seeing in these presuppositions the principal pieces of the capitalist puzzle: fear and the desire to assure the peaceful possession of acquired property lead to a selfish (individualistic) attitude. It suffices to add that by acting in this manner, the welfare of society is achieved, and we arrive to the Smithian invisible hand.

He finds inadequate the motives of traditional society (reason that guides man to virtue) for a realist platform which includes economic criteria. He proposes an alternative theory based in what is most radical and strongest in man, his passions and interest. Gain is the main motive in men's actions.

The value of a man is his price, what is offered for the use of his power. From that point are deduced the characteristics of this new man who will be the object of study by economic science: a) the person is leveled to the set of things which enter the transactions of the market; b) his value is that which is paid to use what he has; c) the demand for his services conditions his price; d) the buyer is the one with the power in the transaction. Hobbes finds no other moral base for establishing the value of things. Man's work is merchandise; the market sets its value. The equality of things' value is proven by the very fact of exchange.

He has a bourgeois mentality and uses a model which corresponds to a mercantile capitalist society. Work is considered as merchandise. The traditional concept of justice is abandoned. For economic man it is not so much political rights as security in the market that matters; capitalist liberalism inherits from Hobbes its individualistic base and its bourgeois-financial platform.

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Abstract:

This work purposes to show the central role of Thomas Hobbes in the formation of capitalist ideology. He is the first author to present the ideology of the businessman (*homo oeconomicus*), with its most distinctive characteristic, individualism. Every constitutive element of the capitalist system is found in Hobbes' writings. His mentality is bourgeois and uses a model that can only correspond to a mercantile society of capitalist character, in which political rights are less important than security in the market. The economic liberalism of Adam Smith inherits from Hobbes its individualistic basis and its chrematistic platform.

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