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Introduction

Robin Douglass and Johan Olsthoorn

This is the first book-length study in English of Thomas Hobbes's *On the Citizen* (1642/1647).¹ The amount of scholarly attention this political tract has received pales in comparison with the later *Leviathan* (1651/1668) – a text which has achieved canonical status and has even been called “the greatest single work of political thought in the English language” (Rawls 2007: 23). Numerous monographs and several volumes of essays exclusively dedicated to *Leviathan* have appeared over the years (e.g. Foisneau and Wright 2004; Sorell and Foisneau 2004; Springborg 2007). Most scholarly discussions of Hobbes's moral, legal, and political ideas take *Leviathan* as their point of departure, with earlier enumerations of his political philosophy treated merely as stepping-stones toward the later work. The aim of this volume is to bring *On the Citizen* out of the shadow of *Leviathan* and to show that it is a valuable and distinctive philosophical work in its own right. That this aim is worthwhile is supported by both historical and philosophical considerations, which we outline briefly here by way of introduction, before providing an overview of the chapters that follow.

On the Citizen was the first published statement of Hobbes's political philosophy.² He wrote it after having fled to France in 1640, and it was complete by November 1641, the date of the “Epistle Dedicatory” to his patron William Cavendish, the Earl of Devonshire. Its full Latin title, *Elementorum Philosophiæ Sectio Tertia de Cive*, signaled its place as the third

¹ A volume exclusively dedicated to *On the Citizen* has recently appeared in German. Höffe (2018) offers a chapter-by-chapter commentary of Hobbes's text and is intended more as a classroom resource than as original scholarly interpretation.

² *The Elements of Law* was circulated in manuscript form in 1640 and was later published in two parts (without Hobbes's authorization) in 1650. For helpful discussions of the publishing history of Hobbes's works, upon which we draw here, see Warrender (1983: 1–36); Tuck (1998); Malcolm (2002: 459–69). Further details are supplied by Baumgold and Harding (Chapter 1), and Johann Sommerville (Chapter 11).

part in Hobbes's planned "Elements of Philosophy" project.³ Marin Mersenne arranged for a small number of anonymous copies to be printed privately in Paris, which appeared in 1642 but were not for sale. Mersenne shared copies with members of his intellectual circle, soliciting feedback which he then passed on to Hobbes. From the responses they received, it soon became clear that *On the Citizen* – and especially its views on religion – would prove deeply controversial. Summarizing the reception of the 1642 edition, Jon Parkin (2007: 36) writes that, even among this carefully selected audience, *On the Citizen* "ran into a hail of criticism as soon as it appeared," and it was immediately apparent that many of Hobbes's arguments "would be simply unacceptable to a wider audience."

On the Citizen nonetheless received such an audience with the publication of a revised edition in Amsterdam in 1647, which appeared under the more concise title *Elementa Philosophica de Cive*. While its place in the tripartite system was jettisoned from the title, Hobbes added a "Preface" explaining both the "Elements of Philosophy" plan and his decision to complete *On the Citizen* first due to the impending civil war in England (OC Pref. 18–19).⁴ He also added many notes to the 1647 edition, in which he clarified and defended some of his arguments in response to criticisms raised against the 1642 text. The 1647 edition was an instant commercial success, but many readers still found its doctrines deeply subversive. In 1654, *On the Citizen* received the dubious honor of being the only of Hobbes's works to make it onto the Vatican's index of prohibited books during his lifetime; *Leviathan* was only added in 1703, soon followed by the rest of Hobbes's works in 1709 (Malcolm 2002: 470).

While *On the Citizen* courted controversy in both England and Europe, it was also regarded as a work of the utmost philosophical importance. Hobbes certainly regarded it as such, memorably pronouncing "Civil philosophy . . . no older . . . than my own book *De Cive*" (EW 1: ix; also EW 7: 471). If this seems like vain-glory on Hobbes's part, it is worth noting that some of his contemporaries came close to endorsing the view. François de Verduis wrote to Hobbes that in *On the Citizen*, "you were the first and the only person to demonstrate the true principles of the duties of

³ The first part, *On Body (De Corpore)*, was later published in 1656, and the second, *On Man (De Homine)*, in 1658.

⁴ Hobbes's own account does leave some questions unanswered. As Deborah Baumgold (2008: 835–6) points out, in marked contrast to the 1647 "Preface," the "Epistle Dedicatory" to the 1642 edition stressed Hobbes's reluctance to intervene in the politics of any particular state (OC Ep. Ded. 11).

civil life” (C 228). Gottfried Wilhelm Leibniz, later a trenchant critic of Hobbes, likewise declared that in “your little book *De Cive* you seem to have surpassed yourself in the strength of your reasoning and the weight of your opinions, so that one might think you were giving the pronouncements of an oracle rather than handing down the theories of a teacher” (C 733). Perhaps readers exaggerated their true opinion in private correspondence with Hobbes, but the philosophical significance of *On the Citizen* was also avouched publicly in some of the most important works of philosophy in the seventeenth century.⁵ In the “Preface” to his *Two Books of the Elements of Universal Jurisprudence*, for example, Samuel Pufendorf ([1660] 2009: 10–11) acknowledged the debt “we owe to Thomas Hobbes, whose basic assumption in his book, *De cive*, although it savours somewhat of the profane, is nevertheless for the most part extremely acute and sound.” Similarly, in the entry on “Hobbes” in his landmark *Historical and Critical Dictionary*, Pierre Bayle ([1697] 2000: 84) wrote that *On the Citizen* “made Hobbes many enemies but he obliged the more far-sighted to admit that the fundamentals of politics had never previously been analysed so well.”

Bayle’s view was subsequently cited as authoritative, even by those who were generally critical of Hobbes,⁶ and it succinctly captures the importance of *On the Citizen* to its early-modern European audience. Indeed, it is worth stressing the European dimension here, given that *On the Citizen* was originally published in Latin and swiftly translated into French by Samuel Sorbière in 1649 (by contrast, a French translation of *Leviathan* was first published only in 1971). As Noel Malcolm (2002: 459) observes, *On the Citizen* “dominated the European understanding of Hobbes” and was the one work “most likely to be cited by any continental writer discussing his ideas in the late seventeenth and eighteenth centuries.”⁷ Many of the most important European philosophers of the seventeenth century – including Hugo Grotius, Benedict de Spinoza, Samuel Pufendorf, Gottfried Leibniz, and Pierre Bayle – first encountered Hobbes’s political ideas from reading *On the Citizen* and, even if they read *Leviathan*

⁵ Including by Leibniz ([1667] 2013: 160–1) in *A New Method for Learning and Teaching Jurisprudence*.

⁶ The most influential example is probably Jean Barbeyrac (1706: §29), who quoted Bayle on this point in his magisterial “Preface” (of nearly a hundred pages) to his widely-read translation of Samuel Pufendorf’s *Of the Law of Nature and Nations*. On Barbeyrac’s influence in shaping Hobbes’s reception history in France, see Douglass (2015a: 37–46).

⁷ See at greater length Malcolm’s (2002: 457–545) comprehensive study of Hobbes’s European reception, which also details the influence of *On the Citizen* on many lesser-known figures today.

subsequently, their views on his political philosophy were likely formed by their engagement with the earlier work.⁸

As we move out of the seventeenth century, it becomes more difficult to discern which of Hobbes's texts shaped the understanding of his readers, especially following the publication of a collection of his Latin works (the *Opera Philosophica*) in 1688, which included the Latin *Leviathan* and all three parts of the "Elements of Philosophy." Nevertheless, *On the Citizen* clearly remained a highly influential expression of Hobbes's political philosophy throughout much of Europe. Some ideas or turns of phrase unique to *On the Citizen* became a staple of Hobbes commentary. A good illustration of this is found in mid-eighteenth century French thought, where a series of prominent philosophers – including Jean-Jacques Rousseau ([1755] 1992: 35; [1762] 2010: 196), Claude Helvétius ([1758] 1973: 59), and Denis Diderot ([1765] 1992: 28) – all discussed Hobbes's claim from the "Preface" to *On the Citizen* that "an evil man is rather like a sturdy boy" (OC Pref. 13).⁹ Insofar as we are interested in how Hobbes's ideas shaped the development of early-modern political philosophy, such examples suggest that *On the Citizen* should be our first port of call.¹⁰

There are, of course, many other reasons for reading Hobbes today, aside from studying his intellectual legacy. What can be said for the importance of *On the Citizen* to understanding his philosophy more broadly? The text contains some pedagogical advantages over the other enumerations of his political thought. It is the most concise and arguably the clearest and most systematic statement of his political philosophy (points highlighted by Warrender 1983: 29; Tuck 1998: xxxiii). Somewhat ironically, given its place in the tripartite "Elements of Philosophy" project, it is also the one version of Hobbes's political philosophy that purports to be fully intelligible without being underpinned by a more detailed examination of human nature. Its opening chapter – "On the state

⁸ For example, when Pufendorf published *Two Books of the Elements of Universal Jurisprudence* in 1660, his knowledge of Hobbes appears to have been based principally on a close and detailed study of *On the Citizen*, whereas by the time he completed *Of the Law of Nature and Nations* in 1672, this was supplemented by a wider reading of Hobbes, including *On Man* and *Leviathan* (see Malcolm 2002: 522).

⁹ For further discussion, and for the evidence indicating that Sorbière's translation of *On the Citizen* was the most likely direct source of Rousseau's knowledge of Hobbes, see Douglass (2015a: 17–20).

¹⁰ While it is true that among English readers, the prominence of *On the Citizen* was more quickly eclipsed by *Leviathan*, the earlier work still had a central role in shaping Hobbes's largely hostile reception, with critics like John Bramhall having most likely formed many of their opinions of Hobbes's political philosophy before even reading *Leviathan*. See Parkin (2007: 32–71).

of man without civil society” – closely parallels chapter 14 of the *Elements* and chapter 13 of *Leviathan*, which means that the reader of *On the Citizen* is launched straight into Hobbes’s state of nature argument without having first been exposed to his analyses of human knowledge, reason, the passions, and language. In the “Preface” to *On the Citizen*, Hobbes assures us that the work does “not need the preceding parts, since it rests upon its own principles known by reason” (OC Pref. 19). Whether he was right (or even sincere) in claiming this is one of the issues that some of the following chapters grapple with, and in doing so they address the question of whether Hobbes successfully set out a freestanding political philosophy, which can be understood on its own terms, detached from his wider philosophical commitments.

As we suggested earlier, one aim of this volume is to resist a teleological approach to the development of Hobbes’s thought, which assumes that *Leviathan* is his most complete and accomplished political treatise. Some of the chapters in this volume address the extent to which – and the reasons why – Hobbes’s arguments change between the major recensions of his political philosophy; first, from the *Elements* to *On the Citizen*, and, second, from *On the Citizen* to *Leviathan*.¹¹ As is now well-known, thanks largely to the work of Deborah Baumgold, Hobbes employed a method of serial composition, which involved not just copying passages from one work to another, but also carefully editing and reorganizing the material.¹² Studying *On the Citizen* on its own terms is evidently imperative if we want to understand Hobbes’s philosophical development and the intellectual climes of Europe in the 1640s. Yet scrutinizing changes, additions, and deletions between Hobbes’s texts is valuable even for those primarily interested in the philosophy of *Leviathan*, since it improves our understanding of the position he ended up arriving at there. Reconstructing earlier arguments and conceptual presuppositions provides important heuristics to understand Hobbes’s later views, especially when former views are discarded.¹³ It can help us distinguish the moving parts of

¹¹ This is not to claim that these three works exhaust his political philosophy. There are also important changes between the English and Latin versions of *Leviathan*, and many of Hobbes’s other works address political issues. Some chapters draw on his wider corpus, although their focus tends to be more on works from the 1640s, given that *On the Citizen* is our principal focus.

¹² Baumgold’s three-text edition of Hobbes’s work now makes these changes far easier to trace (Hobbes 2017). On the method itself, see Baumgold (2008) and her chapter with Ryan Harding (Chapter 1).

¹³ We have tried to display this approach in our own work on Hobbes’s conception of justice and theory of property rights (Olsthoorn 2015a, 2015b), his account of liberty (Douglass 2015b), and ideas of representation and authorization (Douglass 2018).

Hobbes's arguments from the framing commitments. In *Leviathan*, for instance, the idea of authorization replaces the earlier *volenti non fit injuria* maxim to preclude sovereign injustice; recognizing this helps us to determine the function and place of authorization in Hobbes's political theory. Analyzing and reconstructing the arguments found in *On the Citizen* on their own terms is easier said than done. We are prone to read all-too-familiar ideas from *Leviathan* back into earlier texts, to allow us to swiftly make sense of passages that should give us pause. When, in *On the Citizen*, Hobbes boldly states that that “the *King* is the *people*” (OC 12.8), it is tempting to read him as grasping at the thought that the monarch *represents* the people, an idea amply found in *Leviathan*, but we may fail to duly understand the claim and its place in Hobbes's wider theory if we treat it merely as a precursor of the later position. The chapters collected in this volume admirably resist this tendency of (unwittingly) filling in the blanks through the lens of *Leviathan*.

Understanding how Hobbes's arguments changed between his different works places us in a strong position to evaluate whether – and in what ways – the *Leviathan* version of his theory is, in fact, an improvement on his earlier accounts. As a working hypothesis, it seems reasonable to suppose that Hobbes's later works are argumentatively and theoretically superior on many scores, much as we would expect of a philosopher continually tweaking and refining his ideas. Absent countervailing contextual reasons, we may assume later works to contain Hobbes's philosophically most compelling views. Yet, as several of the following chapters remind us, the political context did change dramatically between 1642 and 1651, and *On the Citizen* and *Leviathan* were written in different languages for different audiences. While Hobbes clearly tried to improve the philosophical cogency of his arguments in many places, this was not always the sole reason he had for revising his theory. Some contributors to the volume see more changes between Hobbes's works than others, and some argue that the *On the Citizen* version of certain arguments is stronger than *Leviathan*, while others argue otherwise. This sometimes signals plausible interpretative disagreement, but not always: one of the virtues displayed by many of the chapters is that they are attentive to both what is gained and what is lost in the changes between *On the Citizen* and other works.

On the Citizen is divided into sections on “Liberty,” “Government,” and “Religion,” and we have tried to ensure that they are all covered in plenty of depth (there are, of course, many overlaps between the three). The organization of chapters loosely follows this ordering, although the volume

commences with a more general study situating *On the Citizen* in relation to both the development of Hobbes's political theory – of which it was the second enumeration – and his tripartite “Elements of Philosophy” system. In Chapter 1, Deborah Baumgold and Ryan Harding seek to disentangle these two projects and expose the tensions between them. In particular, they show how each project gives rise to a different form of scientific enquiry: one formalist, on the model of geometry, and the other more substantive and empirical. Carefully tracing the revisions and reorganization of material from the *Elements* to *On the Citizen*, Baumgold and Harding argue that *On the Citizen* starts to move away from the formalistic approach due to its narrower focus on questions of a more substantively political nature. Examining the transition from the *Elements* to *On the Citizen*, they suggest, is key to understanding how Hobbes came to write distinctively *political* theory.

The political theory of *On the Citizen* commences with Hobbes's memorable rejection of the Aristotelian assumption ‘that Man is an animal born fit for Society’ (OC 1.2). At first glance, it might seem that Hobbes offers little more than a caricature of Aristotle's philosophy to enhance his own claims to originality, but, as Nicholas Gooding and Kinch Hoekstra argue in Chapter 2, the contrasts between their understanding of the natural and artificial bases of politics are, in fact, far deeper and more interesting. To show why, Gooding and Hoekstra identify the precise sections of Aristotle's *Ethics* and *Politics* that Hobbes targeted and maintain that his case for having placed civil philosophy on a new footing is based on systematic engagement with Aristotle's account of the foundations of political science. The very idea of naturally political animals, they argue, proves to be an oxymoron on Hobbes's account.

Chapter 3 also takes its point of departure from *On the Citizen* 1.2 – namely from Hobbes's claim that all the pleasures of the mind relate to glory. S. A. Lloyd unpacks the moral psychology behind this assertion and explores its implications for understanding Hobbes's political philosophy. She shows that Hobbes emphasizes the centrality of glory – or a certain aspect of glory, which she terms self-admiration – to a far greater extent in *On the Citizen* than in *Leviathan*, but that the psychological theory of the earlier work provides a crucial resource for understanding how political society might be successfully stabilized, a project to which Hobbes devoted more attention in the later work. While Hobbes is typically remembered for stressing the importance of fear in holding political society together, Lloyd argues that our desire to be considered equal to others – or, at least, not inferior – provides an under-appreciated basis both for motivating

compliance with the laws of nature and for educating people to become more civil in a Hobbesian commonwealth.

Chapters 4 and 5 both address the distinctive account of natural right in *On the Citizen*, albeit from very different perspectives. In Chapter 4, Susanne Sreedhar analyzes its implications for the scope and limits of political obligation. She focuses on the case of parricide – an example unique to *On the Citizen* – to demonstrate that subjects may justifiably disobey dishonorable commands, and not just those that imperil their life. By carefully reconstructing the logic of Hobbes's argument, Sreedhar shows that it relies on two conceptually distinct limitations to the rights that individuals transfer to the sovereign. In practice, these limitations will rarely come into tension with another, but it is possible to imagine occasions – such as that of Charles I's executioner – where the logic of Hobbes's argument leads to the paradoxical conclusion that a subject can be required to both obey and disobey a sovereign's command. This tension, Sreedhar argues, is clearest in *On the Citizen*, but remains unresolved in Hobbes's later discussions of political obligation.

In Chapter 5, Michael LeBuffe argues that Hobbes sets forth an account of right reason (*recta ratio*) in *On the Citizen* that is inconsistent with the account of reason found in both the *Elements* and *Leviathan*. By comparing passages from across the three works, LeBuffe shows that it is only in *On the Citizen* that Hobbes understands right action and the good in terms of right reason. Right reason thus undergirds Hobbes's account of natural right and natural law there in ways that it does not do in the other works, where he argues that humans lack (access to) right reason by nature. What are we to make of these differences? LeBuffe proposes an interpretative rule of thumb to explain cases where Hobbes changes position between the *Elements* and *On the Citizen* and then back again in *Leviathan*. Applying this rule, LeBuffe suggests that the account of right reason in *On the Citizen* – despite the emphasis that some commentators have placed on it – should not be taken as Hobbes's sincerely held position.

Hobbes scholars have long debated the extent to which his political theory should be regarded either as anticipating, or as completely antithetical to, liberal principles. In Chapter 6, Laurens van Apeldoorn adopts a novel perspective for addressing this question by deftly piecing together Hobbes's oft-neglected theory of property and considering its implications for sovereignty. He argues that if ownership consists in having preeminent power in conjunction with a natural right to exercise that power, as Hobbes holds in *On the Citizen*, then it follows that sovereigns, by virtue of their sovereignty, own everything in the commonwealth that can be

owned, including the citizens themselves and all that they possess. In showing that citizens cannot hold any property rights against the sovereign, Van Apeldoorn argues, *On the Citizen* develops a powerful and coherent defense of despotic sovereignty.

The proprietary conception of sovereignty is explored further in Chapter 7, which focuses on Hobbes's general theory of the state. Daniel Lee contends that Hobbesian sovereignty essentially consists in the lordship of a *dominus* over slaves; political subjection is thus modeled on domestic slavery. This claim might sound surprising to readers of *Leviathan*: Hobbes there appears to limit despotic sovereignty to commonwealths by acquisition. Lee argues that this shift is due to *Leviathan*'s English readership, for whom the view that sovereignty is of a kind with the dominion of masters over slaves would have been plainly unacceptable. However, the fundamental structure of Hobbes's theory of sovereignty, Lee reveals, remained essentially the same. Given how carefully concealed dominion is in *Leviathan*, close study of *On the Citizen* is imperative to grasp Hobbes's theory of statehood.

The idea of a multitude of natural persons uniting themselves by mutual agreement into one corporate person is at the heart of the various iterations of Hobbes's political theory. When writing *On the Citizen*, Hobbes had not yet developed the notion of authorized representation to explicate incorporation. In Chapter 8, Michael J. Green argues that *On the Citizen* contains three alternative accounts of how corporate persons are formed. A multitude forms one corporate person when its members accept obligations to support a sovereign, when the members are all compelled to act in concert, or when the members of the group adopt voting rules for making decisions. Green argues that the voting rules account remains crucial to explaining the formation of sovereign assemblies in *Leviathan* – notwithstanding Hobbes's attempt to exclusively rely on authorized representation. Green's analysis of *On the Citizen* thus offers new insights into the strengths and weaknesses of *Leviathan*'s better-known theory of incorporation.

Hobbes was acutely aware that political order would be jeopardized if people thought that their duties to God and the sovereign conflicted, hence his decision to include a section on religion in *On the Citizen*. Across his works, Hobbes maintains that we have a duty to love and fear God. However, Hobbes also raises a range of philosophical doubts about whether God really can be an object of passions such as love and hate. How are we to make sense of this apparent tension? In Chapter 9, Thomas Holden investigates Hobbes's doubts about directing our passions

“Godward” – focusing on arguments from inconceivability, honor, and ignorance. He argues that, in *On the Citizen*, Hobbes radically reconceptualizes the traditional duties to love and fear God. Rather than experiencing any feeling of passion toward God, Holden shows that, for Hobbes, to love God involves nothing more than obedience to the laws of nature.

The chapters on religion in this volume are particularly attentive to changes in emphasis and doctrine between Hobbes’s different works. Most existing scholarship on the development of Hobbes’s religious ideas has focused on the differences between *On the Citizen* and *Leviathan*, but in Chapter 10 Alison McQueen argues that *On the Citizen* represents a crucial “Hebraic turn” away from the *Elements*. She does so by identifying three important changes. First, Hobbes devotes considerably more space to religious and scriptural matters in *On the Citizen*, thereby giving them far greater emphasis than in his earlier work. Second, he strengthens his argumentative strategy in *On the Citizen* by adding new defenses of conclusions already established in the *Elements*. Third, Hobbes draws a lot more heavily on scriptural evidence from the Old Testament, especially in his detailed analysis of the Israelite kingdom of God, which is original to *On the Citizen*. These changes are best explained, McQueen argues, in terms of Hobbes’s increasing sensitivity to the changing political and religious context of 1640s England.

In Chapter 11, Johann Sommerville takes up anew the contested question of whether Hobbes’s ideas on church–state relations alter in any significant way between 1640 and 1651. He points out that Hobbes toned down his anti-papalism in *On the Citizen* – a work that was published, after all, in Catholic France. *Leviathan*, which first appeared in Protestant England, railed much more heavy-handedly against the pope and his “*Kingdome of Fairies*” (L 47.21: 1118). Notwithstanding this change of emphasis, Hobbes’s substantive views on church–state relations remained largely the same according to Sommerville – as his detailed analysis of the history of the printing and reception of Hobbes’s works attests.

In Chapter 12, A. P. Martinich likewise appeals to contextual reasons to explain a *prima facie* puzzle in Hobbes’s covenant theory. Hobbes uses the same language of covenanting to describe the mutual agreement by which individuals erect a civil sovereign over themselves, and the biblical testaments which God made with Abraham, the Jewish people, and all Christians, respectively. Yet sovereign-making and biblical covenants differ in structure in one important respect. While Hobbes is adamant

Introduction

II

that the civil sovereign is not a contracting party to the original covenant, but merely its third-party beneficiary, God is presented as a contractual party to each of the three biblical covenants. Martinich argues that Hobbes had the resources to align the sovereign-making and biblical covenants by making God a third-party beneficiary in the last, thus obtaining theoretical parsimony and removing lingering doubt about how we can know God accepted His part. Yet Hobbes never made this move, presumably because the revisionist biblical exegesis required would have courted too much controversy. While Hobbes was sometimes willing to advance controversial religious views, he was far more inclined to do so when there were direct political advantages – and not just philosophical cogency – at stake.

Taken together, we think these chapters bring to light distinctive aspects of Hobbes's thought that are often concealed by the prevailing focus on *Leviathan*. What we have achieved we do not know, for we are all poor judges of our work (OC Ep. Ded.12). But we hope that the renewed attention to *On the Citizen* makes for a richer and more nuanced picture of Hobbes's moral and political philosophy – whether it is a more convincing one, we leave for the reader to decide.