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THOMAS HOBBS SOCIAL CONTRACT AS AN IDEA TRANSFORMATION FROM THEOLOGY TO POLITICAL PHILOSOPHY

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Umowa społeczna Tomasza Hobbesa jako transformacja idei
– od teologii do filozofii politycznej

Streszczenie

Artykuł jest próbą ukazania procesu teoretycznego przekształcenia teologii politycznej do filozofii politycznej na przykładzie koncepcji umowy społecznej stworzonej przez angielskiego myśliciela Thomasa Hobbesa. Przemiana ta nie nastąpiła jedynie w wymiarze werbalnym poprzez zastąpienie nomenklatury teologicznej filozoficzną nowomową, ale stała się również przyczynkiem do umocnienia antropologicznej wizji człowieka, świata i procesów społecznych, a przez to niewątpliwie, wydarzeniem oddziałującym w wymiarze historycznie i kulturowym.

Słowa kluczowe: *prawo naturalne, filozofia polityki, teologia polityki, umowa społeczna*

Summary

The article is an attempt to show the process of theoretical transformation of political theology into political philosophy on the basis of a draft of the social contract written by an English philosopher, Thomas Hobbes. This shift was not made only on the level of language changes, that is

by replacing the theological nomenclature by new philosophical terms. More importantly, it became a pillar of a reinforced anthropological view of man, of the world and of social processes. Hence, the entire conceptual shift undeniably had a vital historical and cultural impact.

Keywords: *natural law, political philosophy, political theology, social contract*

INTRODUCTION

There is no doubt that modern understanding of political philosophy is greatly influenced by a specific theory of social contract by Thomas Hobbes (1588–1679)¹. Not least because this English thinker is considered to be one of its inventors². Rather because in his peculiar way of thinking on holistic understanding of political issues he revolutionized its existing model. As the first one he pointed a critical, as for those times, direction of development, or more specifically transformation of *political theology* based in medieval times. The field, back then not particularly defined or even separated as social thought, but based on the principle of interpenetration of planes of human activity (especially intellectual activity)³ was omnipresent and widely acknowledged by scholars. However, what political theology generally is and whether it is possible, intuitively only, to explain that complex phenomenon is not a clear issue. At first sight the connection of words *theology* and *politics* arise a kind of dissonance. The first word, as a result of condemning Averroism⁴ and thereby a disastrous separation of Western civilization

¹ A remarkable English philosopher and state theorist. He was born in Westport, Malmesbury in a family of an Anglican vicar. Completed studies at Oxford University. Then he was a teacher of Lord Cavendish and accompanied him in many travels. He made many friends, for example with Descartes, Galileo or Bacon. His political theory and philosophy of law was included in works *Law Elements* (1640), *De Cive (O obywatelu)*, 1642) and *Leviathan* (1651). He is considered, along with Rousseau, to be the most famous creator of the idea of social contract based on laws of nature. Although lived and created at the turn of epochs, one can see there elements of rationalism, which highlights the fact that his ideas were fully understood and appreciated only in Enlightenment. Com. P. Zientkowski, *Teoria praw człowieka w filozofii Fryderyka Nietzschego*, Oficyna Wydawnicza Fundacji Fuhrmanna, Chojnice 2013, p. 105.

² There are also interesting things on the topic In L. Strauss *The Political philosophy of Hobbes: Its Basis and its Genesis*, University Press, Chicago 1952.

³ Which is not surprising in the light of then the work of the clergy in a field of study. More on the topic in J. Morales, *Kościół i nauka – konflikt czy współpraca?*, WAM, Kraków 2003.

⁴ Averroists did not see a contradiction in the fact that the two thesis deriving from two extremely different spheres – faith and reason are opposed to each other. Such an understanding of the

into theology and philosophy refers only to “dogmatic sphere”, which every so often is attacked or omitted in political considerations, and so the other word belonging to “reason sphere”. On the other hand quite often this situation is shaped similarly to opposition of faith and reason. It is visible in the light of St Paul’s radicalism who claimed that either Jesus Christ Resurrection was a fact which makes reason fail and earthly world loses its value or Resurrection is false, in which case Christianity ceases to exist⁵. Then according to Adam Wielomski “(...) political theology is based on rejecting the illusion of reason and unconditional adherence to Revelation, adherence to all the political, social and moral truths that come out of Revelation; on rejecting any critical research of Revelation, hermeneutic, philological and philosophical reflection on the fact. Jesus Christ’s words are taken as faith coming straight from God”⁶. It seems though that otherwise legitimate separation⁷ of “truths of faith” from “truths of reason” is absurd if we assume (and these days it is more and more common) that both fields are not dichotomy, nor a contradiction, they are only in opposition to each other⁸.

problem made them suggest solutions that only appear to be the correct ones. Preaching the idea of “two truths” they argued that a believer (Christian, Jew or Muslim) when entering the temple had two faiths. When leaving he goes to a philosophical meeting where he comments Aristotle’s works. Rejecting Averroism was just a formality for 13th century Catholic theologians who did not take the dogma that two different people in two different places are obliged by two different truths. There is an interesting text about it in Adam Wielomski. Com. Por. A. Wielomski, *Konserwatyzm – między Atenami a Jerozolimą*, Fijor Publishing, Warszawa 2009, p. 12–13.

⁵ Compare. A. Badiou, *Święty Paweł. Ustanowienie uniwersalizmu*, Ha!art, Kraków 2007, p. 66–67.

⁶ A. Wielomski, *Konserwatyzm...*, p. 35.

⁷ When saying „legitimate separation” I mean legitimacy understood in terms of Cartesian method based on dividing it into single problems in order to get to know its complex issues and after its correct interpretation putting it back together. Descartes uses the words from the second part of *Discourse on Method* where one can read: “Secondly to each of analyzed difficulties separate into as many particles as is needed to find a better solution”. Com. R. Descartes, *Rozprawa o metodzie*, De Agostini, Warszawa 2002, p. 70. Similarly: “The whole method is based on ordering and dividing it, to what one has to draw spirit’s attention to in order to reveal some truth. And so we will follow this method if complex and dark statements are to be made gradually easier, and then we will intuitively try to see those easiest of all and take the same steps to get to know all the others”. See R. Descartes, *Reguły kierowania umysłem*, Antyk, Kęty 2002, p. 28.

⁸ As Karol Wojtyła wrote: “Faith and reason (*Fides et ratio*) are like two wings on which human spirit floats to the contemplation of truth. God himself instilled in a human heart the desire to learn the truth, whose ultimate aim is getting to know Him Himself, so that the man – getting to know Him and loving Him – could also reach to the whole truth about himself (...)”. Jan Paweł II, *Encykliki*, Wydawnictwo AA, Kraków 2011, p. 699.

SEARCHING FOR DEFINITION

In its simplest form political theology is a theory of politics based on God Revelation in history. And although contemporary specialists dealing with the issue suggest various interpretations⁹ of the concept, they basically consider such its understanding to be the best which is closely linked with philosophy of politics¹⁰, and thus only such historical experiences which co-create *iunctim* of transcendence with human order on the basis of rationalism.

Such definition would definitely not be signed by Thomas Hobbes because of two reasons. Firstly, in his papers he did not refer directly to political theology, which does not mean that while building his system he did not take advantage of it. Secondly, as a philosopher he totally separated himself from theology, which more than once was taken to be the confirmation of the thinker's atheism. Already on the first pages of the first part of *Elements of philosophy* one can read: "The subject of philosophy, so the matter, which it deals with is any body whose way of creation one can imagine and that can be compared when considering it from a certain point of view. So the body is that one within which there can be observed joining and separating of its parts; which means: the subject of philosophy is any body about which one can think that it can be created or that it possesses any property. (...) So where there is no creation nor any property then it is not possible to think about any philosophy. Thus, philosophy excludes theology, (...)".¹¹ When it comes to the meaning of Revelation he wrote: "It also excludes [philosophy – P.Z.] any knowledge, whose source is God's inspiration or revelation as it is not knowledge acquired by reason but it is a gift given by God's grace in act of one moment (as though some supernatural sensual experience)".¹² By that denying any connection between political aspects and the same in theology, Hobbes drew our attention to a new order and pointed out a new way of thinking. "Secularizing of earthly life equals the statement that anything that goes on within a man and between people is of immanent character, which means that human experience

⁹ See more M. Scattola, *Teologia polityczna*, IW PAX, Warszawa 2011, p. 7–13.

¹⁰ Understood in classical meaning, as the reflection on what is political, so putting it in the easiest way – reflection of such public human activity which is connected with ruling and organization of the nation. Classical philosophy of politics in 16th and 17th century was disowned by modern ideas which today serve the historians of the idea. Contemporary philosophy of politics opposed to political science can be seen as a kind of patchwork of historical, conceptual, language and norm analysis where the subject of interest apart from the mentioned ones are also social theories and social sciences. In the classic idea one can incorporate views of Socrates, Plato, Aristotle and their students as well as stoics and political preaching of fathers of the Church or scholastics. Obviously to the point to which they were not based only on Revelation.

¹¹ T. Hobbes, *Elementy filozofii*, t. I, PWN, Warszawa 1956, p. 20.

¹² T. Hobbes, *Elementy...*, t. I, p. 21.

knows only one dimension. From theological point of view it means that in history it is not possible to establish any direct connection between God and people”¹³. In practice it looked like that. Creator showed himself in the history of the chosen nation – Israel. He accompanied them, supported and guided for a long time. He shaped them and admonished using prophets’ mouths until he appeared for the last time – in the incarnation of the Son. Since that time, announcing his next coming at the end of history he stopped acting in time¹⁴. Since the time of ascension the history of the only chosen nation and ancient kingdom stopped existing and at the same time God’s presence in human’s life based on prophecy and working miracles in the name of God. As Merio Scatolla shows the situation vividly “After incarnation of Christ it is possible to think only about natural kingdom; whereas any direct God’s interaction in time, any prophetic or miraculous act would mean the beginning of ultimate kingdom and elimination of time. As we live expecting the end, the nearest and at the same time the last possible miracle will be Christ’s comeback, who will come to judge the living and the dead. It must be like that because this event will cause that the expectation will come true; if time did not disappear then the kingdom announced by Jesus would not be ultimate, He himself would not be Messiah, so even God would not be God¹⁵.”

POLITICAL THEOLOGY OF HOBBS

In this context when analyzing the thought of an English thinker we can conclude that no miracle can even be thought of after Jesus’ resurrection and no prophet will ever descend back to the Earth to reveal to us “new” God’s will or because of some reason make a transcendental invasion in history. God definitely stopped acting in time and found another way of operating on the Earth. He uses directly the laws which he gave to nature while creating it. By interacting with their help on the world and giving people the possibility to get to know it, understanding and explaining God gave people the time to expect His Kingdom. In this way he rejected the suggestions that the kingdom is presently existing church – “a multitude of Christians, living presently or dead, but who will raise again on the Last Day”¹⁶. So according to Hobbes there is not any fundamental truth that would confirm that there is any specially privileged individual or social group on the Earth able to represent Christ and announce his rights. God’s Kingdom will come. However, for the expectation time one needs only faith in Jesus Christ and obligation to

¹³ See more, M. Scatolla, *Teologia...*, p. 125.

¹⁴ T. Hobbes, *Lewiatan, czyli materia, forma i władza państwa kościelnego i świeckiego*, PWN, Warszawa 1954, p. 330–335.

¹⁵ M. Scatolla, *Teologia...*, p. 126.

¹⁶ T. Hobbes, *Lewiatan...*, p. 543.

God – in theological context as well as respecting natural law¹⁷ and following human reason – in philosophical way of thinking.

Duality of human nature shown in the synthesis and mutual penetration of what is spiritual with what is materialistic arises an internal conflict in a human being. Requiring a total resignation of attachment to temporality promises of spiritual reward and on the other hand necessity of effort on earthly vale of tears on which everything that happens has its reason in natural law a human being faces a dilemma. How to live? It results in rather focusing on functioning mostly in the mundane world while at the same time simplifying spiritual life and transposing all the aspects that are to protect¹⁸ and make secular existence easier. Undoubtedly one of such aspects is an attempt to copy alliance of the chosen nation with God in Social Contract, which (to my mind) is an attempt to secularize or even transpose the theory of political theology in contractualism. What seems to be relevant here is the fact to which Hobbes draws attention that people¹⁹ themselves did not want any more to be ruled by God and demanded a king similarly to other nations, which God agreed on. So to say with due respect for human's free will, adapting a passive approach towards social activity of people, observing the development of political institutions from aside. The social contract theory promoted (also) by Thomas Hobbes is sometimes defined as “a huge mistake of modern philosophy”, which “delegitimizes the whole old world, its religious, political and cultural ideas, deriving reality from decisions of people themselves, who as a result of the contract created the nation, society and religion *ex nihilo*”²⁰.

Hobbes' ideas were shaped similarly, looking for a credible justification for the facts of creating and functioning of social apparatus. How different they were from the views of philosophers who were his contemporaries is commonly expressed by Leviathan's excerpt: “And so everything that refers to the times of war, in which every human being is an enemy to each other, it also refers to the times in which people live with no other security that the one provided by their own strength and invention. In such a condition there is no place for hard work, as the fruits of work are uncertain; and in turn there is no time for land processing nor sailing as there is no benefit from the goods which can be brought by the sea; there is no comfortable building; there are no tools to move and replace things as it requires a lot of

¹⁷ Including evangelical tips, to name the double commandment of love Mt 22, 37–40 elements of moral law or the Law of Judaism. See more T. Hobbes, *Elementy...*, t. II, p. 487.

¹⁸ „And so the first foundation of law nature is that everyone protects his life and his organs as much as he can”. T. Hobbes, *Elementy...*, t. II, p. 211.

¹⁹ Traditionally understood “chosen nation” in this case should be read as the accurate understanding of a Greek word *περιόσιος* as property, possession. The chosen nation would be the synonym of God's people, not based on property by creating – according to God's assumption, that all world nations belong to Him, but on the basis of establishing the kingdom by the agreement of those who were to be its subjects.

²⁰ A. Wielomski, *Konserwatywizm...*, p. 53.

strength; there is no knowledge about earth's surface nor time measurement; nor art, abilities, word art, community. And what is worst, there is continual fear and danger of violent death. And human's life lonely, poor, without the sun, animal like and short"²¹.

HOBBS POLITICAL PHILOSOPHY

It is not hard to explain why Hobbes was one of those modern philosophers who did not think that imposing power is the biggest possible social evil. Hobbes would rather prefer the evil of absolute power to evil that was inevitable in a society deprived of such power. And still, life in Europe in the times of Renaissance was not easy. We remember Shakespeare and Galileo, but we forget that knowledge and navigation development facilitated skepticism and doubt. Giving sense of security Aristotle's teaching laid in ruins²² as well as certainties of the United Church. God ruling the world by means of kings and queens whose power was sanctioned by "God's right" gave way to God that was more personal and intimate who talked to an average person the way he talked to the king.

The whole rationalistic philosophical system of Hobbes was based on the conviction that the world is a powerful, natural mechanism, in which a human being is the easiest element. Hobbes presents him in the state of nature as focused on himself, selfish, living in a constant fear, not knowing the law and the concept of justice. Directed only by dictate of his own emotions and desires, silenced slightly by the voice of innate reason. It is worth noticing that the fact of being an egoist would not matter if a person lived alone or in small groups. However, cooperating within a wider community gives rise to conflicts which are aimed at fulfilling their needs at the price of others. In this aspect life becomes an arena where people fight for realizing and fulfilling their desires. *Bellum omnium contra omnes*. This is according to Hobbes "life in the state of nature". Uncertainty that there can always appear someone stronger who will take away his fruits of activity causes that a human tries to find a way of providing themselves security or even protection which will help him stop feeling afraid about his own life and focus on efficient work. This model is visible in Old Testament where the chosen nation making alliance with God enjoys His favors and protection.

²¹ T. Hobbes, *Lewiatan...*, p. 110.

²² As it is precised by G. Seidler: "(...) Aristotle's idea of the world as "natural state of universe balance" was questioned by Copernicus, and totally rejected by Galileo by his thesis about natural movement as a natural state of all the bodies. There came the time when the established pyramid should be reduced to one basic principle". See more, G.L. Seidler, *Myśl polityczna czasów nowożytnych*, Wydawnictwo Literackie, Kraków 1972, p. 246.

Such alliance, or as Hobbes calls it “contract” is based on people’s agreement to follow certain rules, in this case being obedient to *Decalogue*, rights given to people by God through Messiah. Such agreement constitutes social rights. Following the rules such as do not kill, do not commit adultery, do not steal, do not testify falsely, respect your parents, do not desire your brother’s property allow to avoid conflicts which surely would arise if there were not such rules. People decide to acknowledge God’s common supremacy on condition that their neighbors act likewise. After transposing the idea of contract only to relations between people the first step is to give yourself on the basis of agreement or compromise the power that would gather strength that would care about the rest of the society. The subject then keeps all his natural rights that were defined in the agreement. As Władysław Tatarkiewicz concludes: “This is how the nation was born: not by nature and instinct, but by fear and reason. And only with the nation there were rights and duties and along with this law objective measure of good and evil”²³.

English philosopher separated natural law from the idea of human perfection, at the same time trying to derive natural right from human feelings and emotions, not reason. However, it is given to a human person to get to know it through internal reflections; it is not, just like social law in any way determined externally. This critical, in his opinion, revelation was thought to be the source of human nature and he subordinated to it his whole philosophy of politics.

Being supported by not less important idea of the law established by nation he wrote about it that: “for each subject the rules imposed on him by the nation by the means of word, writing or other sufficient signs of will to be directed by it to distinguish between what is right and what is not right, which means what is opposed and what is not opposed to the rule”²⁴.

As it is said by Miłowit Kuniński: “One can acknowledge that Hobbes is in favor of methodological individualism since such entities as a nation, relations between a nation and law and citizens’ duties (so norms of common and above individuals character) explain referring to features of people perceived as individuals characterized by a similar set of features. The knowledge of known motives of conduct on the basis of experience so introspection which we have as people enforces this methodological individualism. The knowledge of human nature is, according to Hobbes, empirical knowledge and not a specific human metaphysics”²⁵.

Such reference to an individual lets define the picture of a human both in pre-nation as well as socialized condition, where the obligations of subjects last

²³ W. Tatarkiewicz, *Historia filozofii*, t. II. PWN, Warszawa 2001, p. 152.

²⁴ T. Hobbes, *Lewiatan...*, p. 234.

²⁵ M. Kuniński, *Problem stanu natury i stanu politycznego w teorii umowy społecznej Thomasa Hobbesa*, [w:] M. Chmieliński, Z. Rau (red.), *Umowa społeczna i jej krytycy w myśli politycznej i prawnej*, Scholar, Warszawa 2010, p. 117.

as long as they are able to protect them. The aim of obedience is protection. The authority has the obligation to care about common safety – acts through law and executes it thanks to its unquestioned power. As long as the power is left undivided it will be strong. So Hobbes' suggestion was to acknowledge monarchy as the best form of authority. He was of opinion that only the power that equals Leviathan's power that is beyond the law and in that way is not subordinate to any higher instance is able to control and effectively maintain community. Ruler's rights are not controlled in any way, which in practice means the absolute power of a monarch. Unjust conduct cannot take place as according to Hobbes the one who acts justly is the one who subordinates to the rights of community. The rights are established by a ruler, so anything he does is law.

In this perspective it is hard to find Biblical proveniences. Underlying Leviathan's idea the idea of God we can point theological source and define a model of ideal – cautious and just ruler. The whole history of humankind is seen mostly as people's pursuance to peace²⁶. In Hobbes' historiosophy it is especially seen in discussed here concept of social contract. However, the philosopher was aware that that no single man can carry the weight of that perfectness. In his theory he showed that the only guarantee of the right, and so peace, is not a personal sovereign (as it is in the case of political theology) but the whole nation²⁷. The nation seen here as the institution establishing law, creating powers as well as enforcing their execution²⁸. This way of seeing the nation shows its source as a historical phenomenon, not a logical necessity. At the same time it shows it as a form of justifying the origin of power over its citizens which is the result of consideration and fear, and is dictated by a simple benefit, an interest of the individual itself²⁹. It functions then as "(...) indestructible tool to bring peace, security and order, having all the objective and subjective right at its side since its only and highest employer is the source of any law itself; or does not create in reality and does not serve its function as a peace guarantee, then again the state of nature is legible and there is no question of the State"³⁰.

²⁶ See. H. Arendt, *Korzenie totalitaryzmu*, Świat Książki, Warszawa 2008, p. 376–421.

²⁷ *Extra civitatem nulla securitas*. The only way of securing human rights is the nation

²⁸ It also refers to the rights of an individual. As the socialist concept of rights says: "All the rights of individuals come from the nation which leaves itself the right to limit individual rights and freedom as often as the good of the group requires that". Com. A. Pollis, P. Schwab, *Human Rights. Cultural and Ideological Perspectives*, Praeger Publishers, New York 1979, p. 9.

²⁹ J. Miklaszewska *Umowa społeczna jako uzasadnienie polityki w koncepcji Jamesa M. Buchana*, [w:] Z. Rau, M. Chmieliński (red.), *Umowa...*, Scholar, Warszawa 2010, p. 244.

³⁰ C. Schmitt, *Lewiatan w teorii państwa Thomasa Hobbesa. Sens i niepowodzenie politycznego symbolu*, Pruszyński i S-ka, Warszawa 2008, p. 60–61.

RESULTS

Modern social contract, being a theory referring to the genesis of the nation, is accurate, however is basically different from medieval (based on theology) ideas of what the contract is. In medieval terms any community by contract is based as “the state of law”. In modern terms the contract of all the individuals (everyone with everybody) bases only the grounds to formulate a specific form of the nation institutionalized (*commonwealth by institution*)³¹. Only that form of the nation, organized thanks to the decision of “the masses” that makes national assembly can be actually called constitutional. There is no doubt though that every nation is based on the contract and each of them is the nation of law, but only the country confirmed by the national assembly has its specific system. In a direct way one can see it when reflecting on Great French Revolution, where Hobbes’ and then Rousseau’s theories were of great influence on the claim that no form of nation is of ultimate character. Thus, an obvious right of nature is to call next assemblies, prime and legalize new institutions of the nation.

The state of nature described here when talking about social contract is not a presentation of some historically realistic sphere. Still, it gives a relatively realistic picture of existence of the pre-nation state in which – according to atheistic point of view there are no laws.

To some philosophers Hobbes’ concept was an attempt to explain the next consequences in the history of creating the society. Lack of historical and anthropological proofs to confirm or reject this interpretation proved to be positive for Hobbes. His theory was taken to be the right one. However, it was not Hobbes’ intention to create a historical report about creating the first nation, it was only to show a kind of philosophical justification of existing certain type of governments.

Interestingly enough, philosophical idea of social contract by Hobbes is called “peace at any price” and is not especially welcome by people who find it hard to accept that “whip over their neck”. However, moving the point of gravity from earthly life to eternal life one can come to next motives coinciding with Judeo-Christian theology, familiarity with which undoubtedly let Hobbes create secularized reflection of old alliance. That reflection cannot be as perfect as the origin so results in raising partly lack of understanding and partly social dissonance. It can be

³¹ In modern understanding such calculated guarantee of life and security in society takes a special place. It is the foundation of community. Along with the threat of basic trust in security of the existence by nation the present axiological attitudes question historical social contract in which an individual resigns from their own activity to protect the peace and freedom so that to get a promise of being protected by the community. More on that: E. Picker, *Godność człowieka a życie ludzkie. Rozbrat dwóch fundamentalnych wartości jako wyraz narastającej relatywizacji człowieka*, Oficyna Naukowa, Warszawa 2007, p. 69–76.

confirmed by the fact that Hobbes' ideas for advocates of social contract were too royalist whereas to royalists were too much in favor of social contract.

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