

A Pseudo Dichotomy: Hobbism and Kantianism in Political Philosophy

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This article examines the nature of a common tendency in studies of the political philosophies of Hobbes and Kant to presume that a dichotomy exists between them. In order to investigate this tendency, the two prevailing approaches in current scholarship on Kant and Hobbes are explored, and the content of two ideologies on which these studies heavily rely, Hobbism and Kantianism, are revealed. In the final section, a discussion of Hobbes' and Kant's theories of international politics will be used to point to how this tendency functions and what consequences it has for the study of political philosophy. The article closes by drawing attention to the wider implications of this tendency when it is applied to studies of Western political thought.

Keywords: Thomas Hobbes; Immanuel Kant; Kantianism; Hobbism; political philosophy

The theoretical relationship between Thomas Hobbes and Immanuel Kant has been a highly debated and revealing topic in studies of political philosophy.¹ It is revealing because it illuminates a common tendency in studies on the history of political philosophy for commentators to 'model' a specific political philosophy to suit their argumentative purposes.² By 'modelling' I mean a process in which the theoretical relations between two or more political philosophies are *presumed* before the details of their political theories are examined. The goals of this process are usually those of simplification and clarity. The process consists of two steps: first, an over-simplified reading of the political philosophies is typically made which commentators can conveniently criticise. Since the complexities within the political philosophies are ignored criticism is easier. The result of this distortion is that '[i]nstead of a real person, a "man of straw" has been refuted' (Parkin, 2011, p. 3). Jon Parkin maintains that the construction of 'straw men' has been prevalent throughout the history of political philosophy and is in some sense necessary. Following Trudy Govier, Parkin defines a straw man as 'a logical fallacy that occurs whenever "a person misrepresents an argument, or theory or claim, and then, on the basis of that misrepresentation, claims to have refuted the position that he or she has misrepresented"' (Parkin, 2011, p. 2). In other words, 'if someone claims X is true, and you represent him as having claimed Y and attack Y as though it were an accurate account of X, then the straw man fallacy has been committed' (Parkin, 2011, p. 3). Crudely, 'the straw man fallacy' implies an unfaithful argument which is made to make the original text more vulnerable to criticism.

One of the most obvious objections to this 'straw man fallacy' is that the distinction between a straw man and a legitimate interpretation is not always clear, for any complex political theory is always capable of 'a wide range of legitimate interpretation' (Parkin, 2011, p. 3). By drawing on Oakeshott's distinction between philosophical and political reflection, Parkin argues that straw men are likely to be fostered when an interpretation is a 'transformation of philosophical reflection into [a] crude practical or ideological stereotype'

(Parkin, 2011, p. 3). In other words, Parkin argues that one way to distinguish straw men from legitimate interpretation is to ascertain whether the interpretation misrepresents the original position as a defence of problematic political ideologies.

To clarify, the emphasis of this article is on the second step. The second step is an over-simplified reading of the relations between two or more 'straw men', namely the over-simplified reading of specific political philosophies. Again, this presumed but distorted reading of the relationship might also help in reducing complexities to achieve greater clarity when two or more political philosophies are compared.

The problem with this process is that the modelling (the first step) and consequent over-simplification (the second step) might not only lead to the misrepresentation of a political philosophy but also create a barrier to deeper understanding of both the history of political philosophy and the political philosophy itself. This article will explore the nature of this tendency using the political philosophies of Hobbes and Kant as a case study and the consequent widely held but misleading view of the theoretical relationship between them.

The article is structured as follows: in the first section, the article reviews the prevailing approaches to the study of the relationship between Hobbes' and Kant's political philosophies. It asserts that the prevailing approaches are based on certain assumptions regarding both political philosophies which are unjustified. The approaches are unjustified because they dismiss some of their explicit statements as irrelevant from the outset. This article argues that such neglect results in taking for granted certain presumptions about each political philosophy (henceforth termed Hobbism and Kantianism). The second section explores how dichotomous models of Hobbism and Kantianism have been established. Finally, the existence of this dichotomy in the field of international relations is discussed in order to illustrate how this dichotomised picture has succeeded in penetrating studies of international relations and in so doing has contributed to reinforcing the ideologies themselves.

The Two Prevailing Approaches

There are two main views regarding the theoretical relationship between Hobbes' and Kant's political philosophies: the first regards their philosophies as antithetical,³ while the other argues that they share a number of common features.⁴ These prevailing views both depend upon presumptions that cannot withstand close scrutiny. For convenience, the main presumptions are categorised under the terms *Hobbism* and *Kantianism*, which predetermine the scope and approach of current studies on Hobbes' and Kant's political philosophies before their actual accounts are examined. Before this article explores the way in which these ideologies inform the two predominant approaches, their content needs to be specified.

Hobbism and Kantianism

Hobbism

Hobbism originally referred to a specific interpretation of Hobbes' political philosophy by his contemporaries, which often led to 'something quite different in most fundamental points from the theories Hobbes set forth in his writings' (Lamprecht, 1940, p. 32).⁵ Since

Hobbes' time, however, the term 'Hobbism' has taken on a more negative meaning and has become an accusation of support for totalitarianism (Skinner, 2002, pp. 268–9) or, more widely, a 'specific moral and political outlook' (Skinner, 2002, p. 268). Briefly, Hobbism can be understood as an over-simplified reading of Hobbes which not only contributed to Hobbes' notoriety in his day, but also led to the present-day misinterpretation of Hobbes' philosophy. The following specifies the content of Hobbism with recourse to Sterling Lamprecht's analysis.

In *Hobbes and Hobbism* Lamprecht outlines the specific content of Hobbism. According to Lamprecht, Hobbism makes three main claims about human nature, morality and political authority, and although they together appear to afford a systematic depiction of Hobbes, they differ from what Hobbes actually states and what he intends to argue. According to Lamprecht, the first feature of Hobbism is a 'particular "scheme of human nature"' (Skinner, 2002, p. 269) that is self-interested, asocial and violent. In this reading of Hobbes, it appears that human nature is fundamentally malicious, competitive and selfish. It suggests that Hobbes believes that '[m]an's typical acts, when he is unrestrained, are violent and ruthless, savagely disregarding the persons and property of his fellows. His great longing is to preserve himself by gaining power over others. And he deems the exercise of power honorable, no matter for what ends it be exercised' (Lamprecht, 1940, p. 33). In the absence of a common power, therefore, Hobbesian men cannot cooperate, because they are essentially egoistic and power oriented. The second characteristic of Hobbism is its contention that, since Hobbes' account of human nature is centred on self-interested, competitive individuals, his moral theory is unsatisfactory because it is difficult to derive *real* moral and political obligations from it, only prudential calculation. It appears, therefore, that '[t]here is no real distinction between moral right and moral wrong. Moral distinctions are artificial suppositions foisted upon the generality of men by some superior power; they are arbitrary conventions which rulers impose upon their subjects and have no validity beyond the frontiers within which those rulers exercise control' (Lamprecht, 1940, p. 33). Closely related to this, the third trait of Hobbism is its claim that Hobbes regards:

The state [as] ... the original of what men have come to deem virtue; and apart from the state there would be no moral distinctions or principles at all ... [a] *de facto* ruler is always justified in all his ways. If the criterion of legitimacy of political authority lies in the hand of rulers, if the political power being itself the source of morality, the rulers *ipso facto* cannot be immoral (Lamprecht, 1940, p. 33).

In sum, Hobbism's three key contentions seemingly appear to provide a comprehensive account of Hobbes' political philosophy. First, Hobbism assumes that Hobbesian people are born antagonistic, violent and self-maximisers. Second, this account of human nature gives morality a peripheral role in a Hobbesian political system, limited to where morality relates to self-preservation. Third, since Hobbes establishes no moral criterion superior to the sovereign, he can be considered a positivist, for only the sovereign's command can determine what is morally right or wrong.

The first question naturally arising here is: in what sense do these principles constitute an over-simplified reading of Hobbes' political theory? My initial answer is that they are over-simplified because they conveniently ignore those essential subtleties of the theory

which facilitate an alternative reading of Hobbes. By contending that these Hobbist principles constitute over-simplified interpretations of Hobbes I do not mean that they are completely wrong, but that they selectively – wittingly or unwittingly – dismiss the subtleties that may be essential to understanding Hobbes. I will now illustrate how these three Hobbist principles contradict some of Hobbes' explicit statements.

By examining what Hobbes actually writes, three things will be shown: first, while Hobbesian men are self-interested in the sense that they are *mostly* concerned with their own well-being and security, it does not follow that they care for nothing else but their own self-preservation. Put differently, although there is nothing wrong in saying that the Hobbesian men are self-interested in a general sense, it is incorrect to claim that Hobbes advocates egoism if egoism is defined as that 'men *never* act in order to benefit others, or because they believe a certain course of action to be morally right' (Gert, 1967, p. 505, emphasis in original). As Bernard Gert helpfully indicates:

To say only that most actions of most men are motivated by self-interest presents no philosophical problems, though it states a pessimistic view of human nature which may not be justified by the facts ... It is the claim that *all* actions of *all* men are motivated entirely by self-interest that is philosophically interesting (Gert, 1967, p. 505, emphasis in original).

It is also a philosophically problematic claim because Hobbes explicitly states that it is precisely because men are by nature often motivated by motives other than self-preservation – such as honour, conscience or respect for ancient authority – that the sovereign must educate them that the only way to their real self-interest is via simple obedience (Hobbes, 1994a, p. 96, pp. 212–5). Moreover, while Hobbesian men are asocial in the sense that they are not born Aristotelian political animals, they are far from violent and aggressive beasts. Rather than invade others ruthlessly, Hobbes actually considers men to be naturally diffident (Hobbes, 1994a, pp. 75–6). Therefore the state of war is in essence a war of self-defence rather than self-assertion (though the effect is the same) (Hobbes, 1994a, p. 75).⁶

If these subtleties are taken into account, the Hobbist claim that Hobbesian men are by nature unable to cooperate in the absence of a common power is in need of reconsideration. Rather than describing a condition where men are isolated, Hobbes considered some forms of cooperation in a state of nature as possible. Contrary to the Hobbist claim, for Hobbes, seeking allies is part of human nature (Hobbes, 1997, p. 30), both in the sense that it follows from the drive for self-preservation and in the sense that it is a dictate of right reasons: according to Hobbes men seek peace but also 'seek aid for war when peace cannot be had', and this 'is a dictate of right reason, i.e. a law of nature' (Hobbes, 1997, p. 31). The Hobbesian men may seek company for power rather than friendship, but this does not deny a natural need and desire for company, because company can also be – is – one kind of power. Power, according to Hobbes, not only includes 'the faculties of body and mind' but also 'riches, places of authority, *friendship* or favour, and good fortune' (Hobbes, 1994b, p. 48, emphasis added). The need to seek out the company of others is implicit in Hobbes' account of natural right (Hobbes, 1994b, p. 79). To preserve ourselves, in company, or by alliance, is necessary in the state of nature, where our individual weakness exposes us to every threat, even from still weaker individuals. Cooperation then, whether it takes the form

of an alliance in battle or mutual aid, is not only beneficial but also expressive of the natural predisposition of men, because friendship is part of power, and pursuing power is 'a general inclination of all mankind' (Hobbes, 1994a, p. 58).

Moreover, the Hobbist principle that Hobbes says nothing about natural morality presents, at best, a partial reading, because in his accounts of laws of nature, Hobbes does provide a much fuller account of natural morality than is usually acknowledged. These articles of peace entail the fundamental law of seeking peace by laying down natural right, keeping faith, gratitude upon receiving benefits from others, mutual accommodation and other articles conducive to a peaceful life (Hobbes, 1994a, p. 78). While the role and function of the Hobbesian laws of nature remain highly disputable,⁷ the point here is that it is incorrect to argue that Hobbes considers morality as a mere artificial product. Neither does Hobbes consider political authority as entitled to act as it pleases. While the Hobbesian sovereign's authority is, by definition, indivisible and absolute, he or she is not allowed to rule *arbitrarily*. On the contrary, Hobbes explicitly confines the scope of sovereign authority within 'the end for which he [the sovereign] was trusted with the sovereign power, namely the procuration of *the safety of the people*, to which he is obliged by the law of nature' (Hobbes, 1994a, p. 219, emphasis in original). Since 'by safety here is not meant a bare preservation, but also all other contentments of life, which every man by lawful industry, without danger or hurt to the commonwealth, shall acquire to himself' (Hobbes, 1994a, p. 219), a Hobbesian sovereign is required to be equitable. Specifically speaking, he must administer justice equally 'to all degrees of people' 'so as the great may have no greater hope of impunity when they do violence, dishonour, or any injury to the meaner sort, than when one of these does the like to one of them' (Hobbes, 1994a, p. 226). Hobbes goes so far as to claim that 'a sovereign is as much subject as any of the meanest of his people' (Hobbes, 1994a, p. 226) to the dictates of natural morality. Far from constructing an arbitrary tyrant, Hobbes provides a much more subtle account of the scope and constraints of sovereignty than Hobbism acknowledges.

The above arguments are, of course, sketchy, but they highlight the need for interpreters to take into consideration various subtle but explicit statements. In the case of Hobbism, it is not the content of Hobbism itself that renders Hobbism an erroneous reading of Hobbes. Rather, it is that Hobbism sets aside all these subtleties at the outset which makes it an illegitimate reading.

The problem with this sort of reading lies in the obstacles it generates for alternative readings. On the one hand, if these premises of Hobbism are accepted unconditionally, it seems natural that commentators should reach the same conclusion as the first prevailing interpretation: Hobbes' political philosophy should be regarded as incompatible with that of Kant. On the other hand, even for those commentators who advocate the second widely held interpretation – which acknowledges similarities between Hobbes' and Kant's political philosophies – unreserved acceptance of these premises precludes them from gaining a comprehensive understanding of the relationship. To be specific, the consequence for Kant scholars is that although they are aware of the affinities, these presumptions prevent them from *explaining* them. Hobbes scholars seeking to account for these apparent similarities are forced to concede that Hobbes fails to derive his political doctrines from his self-interest-oriented conception of human nature (Hampton, 1988, esp. ch. 7; Taylor, 1938). To make this point clearer, I now turn to Kantianism.

*Kantianism*⁸

Like Hobbism, Kantianism refers to a specific way of interpreting Kant through the lens of Kantian ethics (Gregor, 1963; Murphy, 1994; Riley, 1983; Williams, 2003).⁹ More specifically, Kantianism tends to understand Kant's later political works (such as *The Metaphysics of Morals*) as the mere application of the moral principles expounded in his early ethical works. In other words, when commentators who subscribe to Kantianism explore Kant's political philosophy, Kantian ethics are assumed to inform every aspect of what Kant states in his political works. For convenience, the interpretations applying Kantianism can be called 'ethical reading'.¹⁰

For the purpose of this article, it is sufficient to refer to some interpretative difficulties immediately following this sort of reading. To argue that this sort of reading will face these interpretative difficulties is not to argue that other readings will not. Rather, the point here is that any legitimate reading should take into consideration these interpretative difficulties, then proceed to provide an adequate comprehensive interpretation of Kant. First and foremost, in *The Metaphysics of Morals*, his only systematic account of politics, Kant appears less concerned with the essential concepts in his ethical theory – such as the categorical imperative and end-in-itself – as with the ethical reading claims.¹¹ The only place that reminds his readers of the categorical imperative is the account of the universal principle of right: 'Any action is right if it can coexist with everyone's freedom in accordance with a universal law' (Kant, 1996, p. 24). Nonetheless, far from being a universalised test for morality in his ethical theory, Kant confines the application of the universal principle to external actions (Kant, 1996). As Thomas Pogge helpfully indicates, this makes the universal principle of right a juridical permission rather than a moral claim (Pogge, 2002, p. 143).

Second and relatedly, it appears confusing for the interpreters who read Kant's political philosophy through his ethical theory when Kant insists on the distinction between justice and ethics in *The Metaphysics of Morals*. One of the focal points in Kantian ethics is concerned with incentives. In *The Metaphysics of Morals*, however, Kant explicitly states that juridical duties are only concerned with external duties which do not require 'the idea of this duty ... itself being the determining ground of the agent's choice' (Kant, 1996, p. 21).

Third, one of the most apparent interpretative difficulties for the ethical reading might be that Kant's main concerns in his ethical and political works sometimes appear irreconcilable. In particular, Kant's accounts about politics sometimes appear to contradict his ethical theory which is mainly concerned with individual morality. In *The Metaphysics of Morals*, for instance, Kant spends one-third of the book on property rights, the main concern of which is to assert the necessity and absoluteness of political authority (Kant, 1996, pp. 49–86). Additionally, in *Theory and Practice* Kant seems to reinforce this impression by arguing that 'the people has no coercive right against its ruler, since it can apply coercion legally only through him' (Kant, 1991, p. 83). Moreover, Kant's accounts of international relations, such as his insistence on the autonomy of states, reluctance to justify a world government and the rightful status of human rights, also appear to contradict his concern with the universal moral standing of human beings that is so characteristic of Kantian ethics.¹²

These are not new insights about Kant's political philosophy. Nor do I argue that Kant's political philosophy should be considered completely independent from Kantian ethics. The

point here is that since Kantianism and its ethical reading, discussed above, remain highly disputable, its product – a presumed opposition to Hobbes' political philosophy – should not be regarded as self-evident. If it is regarded thus, this Kantian reading closes off potentially worthwhile avenues to a greater understanding of the relation between the two political philosophies. The situation is captured nicely by Ludwig Wittgenstein: 'a man will be imprisoned in a room with a door that's unlocked and opens inwards; as long as it does not occur to him to pull rather than push' (Wittgenstein, 1984, p. 42). People are trapped, in other words, by their own assumptions; yet the effect is no less constricting for that. The point of this article is to point out to the imprisoned person the *possibility* that the door might open.

To reveal how Hobbism and Kantianism affect current studies, a number of commentators' interpretations will be drawn upon in order to support my claim that no matter which interpretative approach is advocated, accepting Hobbism and Kantianism makes it difficult to understand properly either of these political philosophies or their relationship.

Examples of Hobbism: Howard Williams and A. E. Taylor

Howard Williams' Interpretation as an Example of the First Prevailing View that Hobbes' and Kant's Political Philosophies are Opposite

Howard Williams' *Kant's Critique of Hobbes* is a revealing example of the way that Hobbism leads to the conclusion that Hobbes' political philosophy is opposed to that of Kant (Williams, 2003). In *Kant's Political Philosophy* (Williams, 1983), Williams' portrayal of Hobbes as Kant's adversary draws attention to Kant's republican political philosophy and combines Kant's diffuse accounts in his political essays into a systematic account of 'a persuasive alternative to Hobbes's absolutist model of politics and international politics' (Williams, 2003, p. 3). Nonetheless, in taking on board the main Hobbist assumptions, Williams' conclusion can be said to have been predetermined from the outset. In his examination of Hobbes' conception of liberty, for example, it can be seen that Williams accepts the first claim of Hobbism, which depicts Hobbesian human nature as self-interested and deterministic. From this Hobbist reading, Williams contends that 'Hobbes takes a deterministic view of human freedom. He does not, in other words, believe that we are in a position wholly to choose for ourselves our purposes. He sees us as driven by wider forces of which the desire for self-preservation is the most compelling' (Williams, 2003, p. 71). Based on this Hobbist understanding of human nature, Williams goes on to concur with the second argument of Hobbism, contending that Hobbes' account of human nature leaves no room for moral choices. He declares that '[a]s Hobbes sees it, human individuals ultimately have no choice', for '[t]hey have to do what they do' (Williams, 2003, p. 73). For Williams, therefore, reason can play no role in a Hobbesian world because Hobbes 'cannot appeal to our reason as though we have the power to choose and then deny that power altogether' (Williams, 2003, p. 73). Due to his underlying Hobbism, Williams' understanding of Hobbesian politics unsurprisingly appears incompatible with Kantian republican politics.

To clarify, to argue that Williams' comparison is an example of Hobbism is not to say that Williams is unaware of the affinities between Hobbes and Kant.¹³ Neither do I mean that Williams does not think that this affinity is merely contingent. Rather, he claims that Kant's

political philosophy is Hobbesian in character by arguing that ‘Kant attempts to combine the freedom and consent of Rousseau’s *Social Contract* with the domination and absolute authority of Hobbes’s *Leviathan*’ (Williams, 2003, p. 161). However, while Williams acknowledges the affinities between Hobbes and Kant, he emphasises the differences between them in order to highlight Kant’s republicanism in his later work. The point here is that to legitimate this selective approach the subtleties of both political philosophies need to be taken more seriously than either Hobbism or Kantianism affords.

A. E. Taylor’s Interpretation as an Example of the Second Prevailing View that Hobbes’ and Kant’s Political Philosophies are Similar

For those commentators who recognise the affinities between Hobbes and Kant and regard these similarities as indicative of the existence of a close relationship between their respective political philosophies, the problem is that, having taken the assumptions of Hobbism for granted, they often end up sacrificing Hobbes’ moral psychology entirely or simply admitting that ‘Hobbes’s argument, compelling and sophisticated though it is, fails to justify its conclusion’ (Hampton, 1988, p. 189). The much-debated Taylor thesis provides a revealing example of this. By identifying ‘the imperativeness’ in Hobbes’ account of the laws of nature (Taylor, 1938, p. 411), Taylor argues that Hobbes’ ethical theory can be read as strictly deontological, ‘curiously suggestive ... of some of the characteristic theses of Kant’ (Taylor, 1938, p. 408). However, Taylor’s conclusion comes at the cost of sacrificing some of the central arguments in Hobbes, such as his psychological premise that being obliged is equivalent to being motivated by self-interest, or in other words, ‘the “selfish” psychology of human action’ (Taylor, 1938, p. 407).¹⁴ It can be argued, therefore, that Taylor’s interpretation is founded upon his unconditional acceptance of Hobbism’s claim that Hobbesian actors are motivated only by self-interest and are thus incapable of dutiful behaviour.

These interpretations have not been fully elaborated owing to limited space, but it has been shown that while they differ in their conclusions, they all implicitly presuppose, and are hence overshadowed by, Hobbism. Taking Hobbism for granted has generated interpretive difficulties. I will now move on to identify examples relating to Kantianism.

Examples of Kantianism: Howard Williams and A. E. Taylor

Howard Williams’ Interpretation as an Example of the First Prevailing View that Hobbes’ and Kant’s Political Philosophies are Opposite

Again, Williams’ *Kant’s Critique of Hobbes* illustrates the impact of the tendency to emphasise the centrality of Kantian ethics on comparative studies on Hobbes’ and Kant’s political philosophies. Williams is clear at the outset that the fundamental methodological premise of his analysis is that ‘[p]ractical philosophy stood at the centre of Kant’s philosophic concerns’ (Williams, 2003, p. 2). In identifying Garve ‘as an eighteenth-century representative of Hobbes’s views’ (Williams, 2003, p. 67), Williams contends that Kant opposes Garve’s argument for the ‘separation of the morality of the politician from the morality of the ordinary person’ (Williams, 2003, p. 59). In other words, Williams argues that Kantian ethics should apply not only to individuals in their ordinary life, but also to politics. Hence, in discussing Kant’s conception of political freedom, Williams claims that ‘[l]egal freedom does

not come into being in isolation. The concept of legal freedom cannot for Kant be separated from the understanding of freedom in its theoretical and practical contexts' (Williams, 2003, p. 92). In itself, this argument certainly appears valid and Kant's different conceptions of freedom should be considered consistent. However, while Williams claims that the above implies only that 'legal freedoms have to be seen as consistent with one another' (Williams, 2003, p. 92), he actually goes much further when he explicates Kant's conception of political freedom:

The 'moral dimension' of liberty means that the free individual must, even in making the most personal decisions about their external actions, take into account the categorical imperative and the rule of law in their state ... So virtue is not a secondary consideration in exercising our external or legal freedom, it is at the heart of it. Political freedom rightly allows scope for us to follow our inclinations, but its deeper moral implication is that it provides us with the scope to *become virtuous persons* (Williams, 2003, p. 96, emphasis added).

What is relevant here is that Williams' underlying Kantianism results in his conclusion that 'Kant contrasts his own understanding of the famous triad "liberty, equality and independence" with that of Hobbes' (Williams, 2003, p. 10). Again, to claim that Williams stresses the connection with Kantian ethics in Kant's political philosophy is not to say that he does not acknowledge the Hobbesian elements in it.¹⁵ Rather, it is simply because Kant's political philosophy has been understood through the lens of Kantian ethics that Hobbes' political system appears to lack these Kantian ethical ideas, and Hobbes' and Kant's political philosophies appear diametrically opposed.

A. E. Taylor's Interpretation as an Example of the Second Prevailing View that Hobbes' and Kant's Political Philosophies are Similar

A similar application of Kantianism is evident in some studies on Hobbes, as can be seen in A. E. Taylor's interpretation discussed above. When A. E. Taylor attempts to salvage Hobbes' ethical theory by tracing its affinities with Kant, he too has taken Kantianism for granted – that is, he has read Kant *exclusively* through the lens of Kantian ethics, regardless of whether Kant's political philosophy is related to Kantian ethics or instead has an independent concern. As noted earlier, the consequence of this Kantianism is that Taylor is compelled to sacrifice the theoretical consistency in Hobbes. Overall, overshadowed by Kantianism, both prevailing views are consequently unable to do justice to Kant, thereby distorting the relation between Kant's and Hobbes' political philosophies.

Thus far, I have shown *what* Hobbism and Kantianism entail and *how* they affect current studies. I have also demonstrated *why* these two ideologies should be taken seriously: they have led to a misunderstanding of Hobbes and Kant. By simply dismissing some explicit statements as irrelevant, they have generated interpretative difficulties that rule out alternative interpretations. Nonetheless, I have not yet discussed the phenomenon itself, namely, the tendency of modelling the relation between Hobbes' and Kant's political philosophies as incompatible. As the discussions above reveal, while it has been widely acknowledged by both prevailing approaches that Hobbes and Kant do share much in common, the commonalities remain underestimated. For commentators who argue the first view – that Hobbes' and Kant's political philosophies should be considered opposites – the similarities

between their accounts of politics are rendered incidental or irrelevant. For the commentators seeking to emphasise commonality between the two political philosophies, some essential parts in each political philosophy are airbrushed out to fit the argument. These sacrifices are required precisely because an antithetical relation between Hobbes' and Kant's political philosophies has been presumed at the outset. In other words, while the ideologies themselves play an essential role of over-simplifying their views, the ideologies are *strengthened* by the tendency of presuming the dichotomy between Hobbes' and Kant's political philosophies. Just like an axiom in mathematics, this presumed dichotomy between Hobbes and Kant as a model takes the shape of, and further strengthens, the existing studies on the relation between Hobbes' and Kant's political philosophies.

The main purpose of this article should now be clear. In addition to the ideologies evidenced in studies of Hobbes and Kant the article is also focused on the tendency to model them as antithetical. This tendency suggests an alarming predisposition for scholars of political philosophy both to take straw men for granted *unwittingly* – thereby commencing their interpretations from a flawed starting point – and also consequently to over-simplify the relation between the two philosophies. That is to say, once Hobbes is conceived as X, it self-evidently follows that Kant's reasoning must be non-X. Therefore, commentators who view Hobbes as advocating tyranny (a tenet of Hobbism), for example, very naturally regard Kant as advocating democracy *without exploring what Kant actually has to say on this subject*. In so doing, the complexities of what Kant actually says about Hobbes' position are dismissed.

To reveal further the nature and influence of such modelling, the following section draws on the commonly accepted understanding of Hobbes' and Kant's political philosophies *vis-à-vis* international politics, where I argue that what is constructed as a seemingly incontrovertible starting point should in fact be problematised.

A Dichotomised Model in Theories of International Relations

The dichotomous model of Hobbes' and Kant's approaches to international politics has had a significant impact on studies of international relations. Further, this dichotomy is accepted as a self-evident fact requiring no further examination such that it is here that the tendency to counterpose Hobbes and Kant in the realm of political theory finds its fullest realisation.

The essence of this dichotomised picture is this: there is a categorical opposition between the 'realist' Hobbesian world view, which depicts a perpetual state of war in which independent sovereign states are always ready to fight each other, and an 'idealist' Kantian world view, which envisages a perpetually peaceful order among nations by virtue of their mutual respect for cosmopolitan rights.¹⁶ While there are different views about the relative positions of Hobbes and Kant in the spectrum of international political thought, they all tend to polarise Hobbes and Kant.

To maintain that the understanding of the relation between Hobbes' and Kant's views on international politics has been modelled is not to say that the model itself is necessarily wrong. What is problematic here is that this modelling has been regarded as indisputable before Kant's and Hobbes' views are actually read. As a result, when Hobbes is understood as X, once again it seems plausible that Kant must represent something close to non-X, and therefore the complexities of their respective positions are unwittingly dismissed. The

consequences of this modelling can be illustrated through an examination of the prevailing views of both philosophies *vis-à-vis* normative international relations.

A common contention is that since the Hobbesian state of nature applies to states in international relations, it leaves no room for a functional international ethics because a Hobbesian state of nature is a state of war 'in which no state has an overriding interest in following *moral rules* that restrain the pursuit of more immediate interests' (Beitz, 1979, p. 14, emphasis added). More specifically, the Hobbesian model represents international politics as a state of war in which every sovereign state is completely *independent* of others in terms of its legal status. Therefore, since each state has absolute authority over its own domestic politics, this precludes legitimate interference in its domestic affairs by other states. Certainly, this view does not deny that there are many forms of intercourse between states, such as commercial acts and formal or informal political negotiations. However, so far as the domestic legal/juridical status of political issues is concerned, however strong the urge to engage in external interference may be, the state itself should still be seen as the supreme and independent judge of its own internal affairs. The principle of the autonomy of the state is the fundamental consideration in this approach to international affairs. In short, then, Hobbes appears to assert the primacy of the state and each state's independence in relation to other states.

It is at this point that the dichotomised model enters the frame. Based on the presumption that a dichotomy exists between Hobbes and Kant, since the central premise in Hobbes' theory is that international relations is a state of war, it seems logical that Kant proposes precisely the opposite to Hobbes. Additionally, Kant's famous political essay on perpetual peace appears to confirm this logical inference.¹⁷ In other words, the Kantian model has been understood as an endorsement of a universal community that extends across and beyond the boundaries of national states and to imply that such an arrangement is morally necessary. Kant's conception of cosmopolitan right is interpreted as indicative of his advocacy of a global international society. Modelled like this, the differences between the two philosophies are stark. Hobbes seems to argue that the pursuit of an international society is neither desirable nor feasible, a position that is apparently in direct opposition to the Kantian model of international relations. However, this understanding neglects the complexities within their arguments. On the one hand, if Kant constructs an argument that appears contrary to Hobbes, this neatly fits the widely accepted model, and the validity of the model is thus confirmed; on the other, if Kant makes a claim that is different from the understanding of the model, the claim must therefore be either irrelevant or misconceived.

Limited space prevents a probit analysis but the omission of key complexities in both philosophers' arguments should by now be obvious. On Hobbes' part, it is highly debatable whether a Hobbesian state of nature is necessarily a state of total war as the received view claims and so neither is the Hobbesian international realm. Rather, even in the Hobbesian state of nature, the possibility of peaceful interaction remains. Moreover, a Hobbesian state of nature does not equate to a lawless condition because laws of nature (as natural morality) do provide standards of judging right and wrong.

At the inter-state level this means that, first, Hobbes does not advocate limitless expansionism and imperialism, because such ambitions endanger human life. Since the laws governing nations in international relations are the same as the laws of nature in the

pre-civil state (Hobbes, 1994a, p. 233), states are subject to the same rules in the former condition as individuals in the latter: namely, those of peace and self-preservation. Hobbes explicitly contends that it is the sovereign's duty to avoid unnecessary wars by arguing that:

For such commonwealths, or such monarchs, as affect war for itself, that is to say, out of ambition, or of vainglory, or that make account to revenge every little injury, or disgrace done by their neighbours, if they ruin not themselves, their fortune must be better than they have reason to expect (Hobbes, 1994b, p. 177).

Even if aggression could attract some gains and advance a state's interests, Hobbes argues against it, stating that while '*military activities*, [were] once regarded as a gainful occupation ... we should not take enrichment by these means into our calculations. For as a means of gain, military activity is like gambling; in most cases it reduces a person's property; very few succeed' (Hobbes, 1997, p. 150, emphasis in original). Second, since it is possible for individuals to cooperate in a state of nature, it is possible for cooperation at inter-state level. Ultimately, contrary to the received view that there are no moral rules in the Hobbesian international sphere, Hobbes actually maintains that there is a standard for judging whether it is justified for a sovereign to make war: namely the fundamental right of self-preservation (Hobbes, 1971, p. 159).

Similarly, Kant's views on international relations are subject to inaccurate interpretation, particularly the tendency to discount Kant's emphasis on the autonomy of the state and what he actually writes about the ultimate solution to international politics – which is in fact very Hobbesian. While this article does not intend to deal with the exegetical problems in detail, there are at least two Hobbesian elements in Kant's view of international relations: Kant's description of inter-state relations and his account of agency in the international sphere. It is not that they have passed unnoticed,¹⁸ but they have not been explored in detail because they confound the model. With regard to the first Hobbesian element, Kant, like Hobbes, understands the inter-state condition as a condition of war which 'involves a constant threat of [wars] breaking out' (Kant, 1991, p. 98; 1996, p. 114). Since Kant considers a state as independent moral persons interacting with other states as natural persons living in a Hobbesian state of nature, it can be said that in common with Hobbes, war is an essential issue in Kant's theory of international relations. This can be seen clearly from Kant's accounts of the rights of states which consist 'partly of their right *to go to war*, partly of their right *in war*, and partly of their right to constrain each other to leave this condition of war and so form a constitution that will establish lasting peace, that is, its right *after war*' (Kant, 1996, p. 114, emphasis in original). With regard to the second Hobbesian element, the autonomy of states, again, like Hobbes, Kant considers states to be primary agents in international relations (Kant, 1991, p. 98; 1996, p. 114). Commentators who consider Kant to be advocating a universal human community are sometimes surprised by his emphasis on the role of sovereign states and criticism of the concept of world government as 'the greatest despotism'. In his essay on perpetual peace in his accounts of the Preliminary Articles Kant explicitly confers upon sovereign states a moral standing which prevents them from interference from other states (Kant, 1991, pp. 94–6). Unsurprisingly, this stress on state autonomy, however, invites the criticism that there is a tension between the Preliminary Articles and the Definitive Articles, because it appears that 'the primacy of the state ... as [an]

international actor' emphasised in the Preliminary Articles cannot easily be reconciled with 'the individual freedom' valorised by the Definitive Articles (Teson, 1992, p. 58).¹⁹ However, recalling the discussion on the interpretative difficulties that the ethical reading faces, the noteworthy point here is that it is only through Kantianism that Kant's accounts appear to encounter interpretative difficulties. If the Hobbesian elements in Kant's accounts are acknowledged on their own terms, Kant's privileging of the autonomy of states may be explained by his independent political concern, which is Hobbesian. This Hobbesian concern need not necessarily contradict Kantian ethics because for Kant a state as a civil union should be considered as a moral unit where individuals can be united 'through their common interest in being in a rightful condition' (Kant, 1996, p. 89). Put differently, stressing state autonomy is not necessarily incompatible with Kant's account of the autonomy of individuals because the former is one kind of moral union whose moral standing is based on individuals.²⁰ While the relation between Kant's ethical theory and his political philosophy remains disputable, the point here is that it is only through Kantianism that they appear *necessarily* incompatible. In sum, instead of emphasising the possibility of establishing a universal community as the received view claims, Kant's understanding of international relations is far more complex – and Hobbesian – than is usually thought.

The above is unavoidably sketchy, but sufficient to illustrate that not only Hobbism and Kantianism but also the presumed dichotomy between Hobbes' and Kant's political theories affect the study of international relations. The received view first reflects the simple version of their thought that either Hobbism or Kantianism provides and then applies the presumed dichotomy to the relationship between Hobbes' and Kant's theory of international politics. In the end it casually reaches the conclusion that their views about international relations are as incompatible as their supposed views on domestic politics.

This discussion of the received view in international politics not only reveals how the presumed dichotomy between Kant's and Hobbes' philosophies has predetermined the conclusions of current studies but also helps demonstrate the danger of modelling relations between complex theories. To seek coherent interpretations of complex theories, their complexities tend to be disregarded to achieve theoretical parsimony. However, as has been shown above, key omissions may result in distortion. But the danger of distortion lies not so much in the omission of particular content but, rather, in the tendency to incorporate simplified readings of (the relationship between) complex theories as taken for granted. It may be relatively harmless to omit or to emphasise one particular aspect of a political philosophy, so long as the decision can be justified for academic reasons. The tendency to construct simple and clear models, however, may prevent the reader from understanding the nature of a political philosophy in its own right.

It should be noted that while an awareness of the inherent weaknesses of Hobbism and Kantianism has emerged among both Hobbes and Kant scholars in recent years, the danger of modelling has not been addressed. On the one hand, some Kant scholars have begun reflecting upon their ingrained Kantianism.²¹ In their quest to ascertain what Kant actually states in his rather confusing political philosophy, those who advocate a political reading argue that Kant's political philosophy should be viewed as relatively independent of his ethical theory. The central tenet of this political reading, as Arthur Ripstein indicates, is that '[Kant's] opinions neither are nor can be justified and elucidated by using the principles to

which his moral philosophy commits him' (Ripstein, 2009, p. 2). However, the reflection is not comprehensive, because commentators still tend to accept unconditionally the received view that regards Hobbes as antithetical to Kant and are hence unable to arrive at any alternative understanding.

On the other hand, a tendency to refute 'a variety of interpretive orthodoxies concerning Hobbes' moral, political, and religious views' has emerged among Hobbes scholars (Murphy, 2000, p. 36). It has been argued that Hobbesian psychology should not be reduced to mere egoism (Gert, 1967) and that Hobbes' moral theory should be understood in its own right (Taylor, 1938; Warrender, 1957; 1965). Even the image of a Hobbesian tyrant has been questioned (Harvey, 1999). However, recalling the discussion on the Taylor thesis above, although Taylor aims to reconsider Hobbes' moral theory by highlighting its affinities with Kant, Taylor's intrinsic Kantianism leads him to attribute inconsistencies to Hobbes' political philosophy. The Taylor thesis demonstrates that in order to be able to apprehend Hobbes' and Kant's political philosophies in their own right, not only must the particular claims of Hobbism and Kantianism be reconsidered, but also the presumed dichotomy – the modelled relation *itself* – must be re-examined. In sum, while the content of both Hobbism and Kantianism has been considered to some extent in the literature, the presumed opposition between Hobbes and Kant has yet to be seriously cross-examined.

Concluding Remarks

This article has explored the nature and the consequences of the current tendency to take for granted a dichotomised image of the relationship between Hobbes and Kant. While there may be many other 'models' employed in the study of political philosophy, this article has focused on the presumed dichotomy between Hobbes and Kant: because of all the misrepresentations in the history of political philosophy, the misleading account of the relation between Hobbes and Kant has been so influential that it has been widely employed to construct explanatory frameworks for complicated political phenomena. This article has attempted to show that, although it might appear tempting to accept and even draw from this over-simplification in the pursuit of clarity, it is far from desirable if it is at the expense of legitimacy.

Finally, it is necessary to explain why we should avoid this sort of modelling in political theory. After all, such modelling seems to have the virtue of clarity especially in terms of reducing complexity.²² I cannot claim a complete answer to this question. However, careless modelling should be avoided because it is an obstacle to understanding the nature of political phenomena. Recalling Wittgenstein's prisoner, if interpreters want to draw on theoretical resources from the philosophies of Hobbes and Kant to capture the essence of international relations as a specific political phenomenon, they must stand back and (re-)understand what Hobbes and Kant meant in their political philosophies. This means understanding what philosophical questions they ask and what solutions they offer. To do this, interpreters should not be satisfied with 'what is supposed to be obvious about this' (Wood, 2000, pp. 5–6) but must take into account the subtleties and complexities in their theories to reach a fair understanding. Careless models can obstruct this process. This is why the tendency should be taken seriously. The initial purpose of modelling is to understand,

examine and reveal the nature of specific political phenomena in a systematic way. Instead, over-simplified modelling can only conceal.

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Notes

- 1 While comparison of Hobbes and Kant has been undertaken by commentators outside the English-speaking world, the issue has been only sporadically discussed among Hobbes and Kant scholars in anglophone countries; see Riley, 1982, chs 2 and 5; Taylor, 1938. This is due in part to the lack of interest in Kant's political philosophy in the English-speaking world; see Ludwig, 1990. As interest in Kant's political philosophy has been renewed among anglophone commentators (Ludwig, 1990, p. 404), interest in comparing Hobbes and Kant has also gradually increased. For more recent discussions, see Airaksinen and Siitonen, 2004; Riley, 2007; Slomp, 2007; Williams, 2003.
- 2 For an insightful discussion on this tendency to 'modelling', see Parkin, 2011.
- 3 While commentators expressing this view may differ on the extent to which and the senses in which Hobbes' and Kant's political philosophies should be considered opposed, commentators' depiction of them as divergent or even incompatible is largely the same; see, especially, Hunter, 2001; Murphy, 1994; Riley, 1982; Rosen, 1993; Williams, 2003.
- 4 This second view is much more complex than the first one because it includes two sub-types of thinking on Hobbes and Kant. Among Kant scholars, it has been argued that although Hobbes and Kant do share some undeniable affinities, they are merely contingent and do not affect the claim that the central principles in their political philosophies are incompatible. Among Hobbes scholars, it has been argued that drawing attention to the affinities between Hobbes and Kant helps to save Hobbes' ethical theory from materialist reductionism. While both these groups acknowledge the similarities between Hobbes' and Kant's political philosophies, they have not been systematically explained. For reference to the former, see Pogge, 1988; Rosen, 1993, p. 147; Waldron, 1996; Williams, 1983, ch. 8, and for the latter, see Taylor, 1938; Tuck, 1999.
- 5 For discussion on the original use of this term, see Lamprecht, 1940; Parkin, 1999; Skinner, 2002, pp. 268–70; Stanton, 2008, pp. 67–73.
- 6 For a similar point, see Tuck, 1999, p. 130.
- 7 The role of Hobbes' account of the laws of nature remains highly debated in Hobbesian scholarship; see Gauthier, 1969; 2001; Taylor, 1938; Warrender, 1957; Watkins, 1965.
- 8 To clarify, the 'Kantianism' that is referred to throughout this article is different in content from two established meanings of this term. The first established meaning refers to 'neo-Kantianism', the thinking of a specific school of German idealists whose motto is to 'understand and evaluate everything else in Kant by adopting the *transcendental method*' (*Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, available from: <http://plato.stanford.edu/entries/natorp>). It also differs from the Kantianism in most contemporary works, the aim of which is to 'develop Kant's basic insights, even to improve on his conclusions' (O'Neill, 2000, p. 65).
- 9 For criticism of Kantianism, see O'Neill, 2000; Ripstein, 2009, ch. 1.
- 10 By ethical reading, I mean the tendency to understand Kant's conception about politics chiefly through his conception of morality or the tendency to emphasise the strong connection between them; see Benson, 1987; Williams, 2003.
- 11 For discussions on this point, see Flikschuh, 2010; Ripstein, 2009, esp. ch. 1.
- 12 For the discussions on the interpretative difficulties of Kant's accounts of international relations, see Cavallar, 1999, ch. 8; Kleingeld, 2004; Wood, 1995.
- 13 While in *Kant's Critique of Hobbes*, Williams argues for an opposition between the two thinkers, he does acknowledge the apparent affinities between them in his early work *Kant's Political Philosophy*. In the discussion on Kant's account of property, Williams indicates the affinity between Hobbes and Kant that 'Kant places the same value on the security of property as Hobbes ... For Hobbes, as with Kant, to strike at the institution of property is to strike at the heart of man's very existence and the existence of society'. In other words, Williams considers that for both Hobbes and Kant, '[a] common, settled, social life rests on the recognition and acceptance of our own right, and the right of others, to hold property' (Williams, 1983, p. 79). I thank three anonymous referees for helping me to clarify this point.
- 14 See also Hampton, 1988, p. 206.
- 15 See Note 13 above.
- 16 See Beitz, 1979; Bull, 1977, pp. 23–6; 1981; Covell, 2004, ch. 2; Wight, 1991, ch. 1. While Kant's view of international politics is itself controversial, there is a consensus that Hobbes' view of international politics is antithetical to his.
- 17 While there are different views on what a Kantian ideal picture of international politics should be (a world republic or a federation of nations) (see Note 18 below), the moral imperatives that Kant is said to advocate are supposed to lead to 'the highest political good, perpetual peace' (Kant, 1996, p. 124), the direct opposite of a Hobbesian international state of war.
- 18 The highly debated dispute about whether Kant sincerely advocates a federation of sovereign states rather than a world government in some sense reflects the conflict between the received understanding of a Kantian ideal of international relations and what Kant actually states. For the view that favours a world republic, see Axinn, 1989, pp. 224–9; Bull, 1977, p. 25; Carson,

- 1988; Cavallar, 1999, ch. 8; Kleingeld, 2004; Williams, 1983, pp. 254–7; Wood, 1995. For the view that favours a federation of nations, see Geismann, 1996, pp. 265–319; Mullholland, 1987, pp. 25–41; Pogge, 1988.
- 19 See also Gallie, 1979, pp. 9–10; Hinsley, 1986, p. 69.
- 20 For an insightful interpretation on this, see Ripstein, 2009, esp. chs 7 and 8.
- 21 In recent years Katrin Flikschuh has published many papers on this implicit Kantianism and has developed her 'relational reading' of Kant's political philosophy; see Flikschuh, 1997; 2000a; 2000b; 2002; 2007; 2010. See also Höffe, 1989; 1992; Pogge, 1988; Ripstein, 2004; 2009.
- 22 I thank the anonymous commentators for helping me to clarify this point.

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