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**The Analysis of the Relationship between God, Religion and Politics in
Thomas Hobbes's *Leviathan* and *De Cive***

*Tanrı-Din ve Siyaset İlişkisinin Thomas Hobbes'un Leviathan ve De Cive
Kitapları Işığında İncelenmesi*

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The Analysis of the Relationship between God, Religion and Politics in Thomas Hobbes's *Leviathan* and *De Cive*

Abstract: Thomas Hobbes (1588-1679) was a significant political theorist who could be regarded as the founder of social contract theories. Hobbes's philosophy is worthy of attention in the history of political thought due to his definition of natural state, the reasons of the formation of civil society, authorization and political obligation. Specifically, he focused on the rationalization of political obligation to the sovereign in order to strengthen monarchy in the given era. Meanwhile, he could not exclude the concept of God due to the conditions of the century. Therefore, he preferred integrating the concept of God into his political philosophy by means of moral laws and moral obedience after he had introduced the idea of social contract theory. Furthermore, in contrast to previous thinkers, he gave God a secondary role in the maintenance of political and social order. Excluding the idea of God and the obedience of unwritten laws gave rise to discussion about Hobbes's rejection of the existence of God although he did not accept these accusations. In this paper it is argued that, Hobbes was an atheist and he used religion only as a political instrument for the sake of the social order. In other words, this paper clarifies the idea that Hobbes used religion and the fear of God as a tool in order to force individuals to obey written laws under a sovereign. In order to indicate the rightness of this argument, his main ideas stated in *De Cive* and *Leviathan* are analysed and the place of religion and God in his theory is examined in this paper.

Summary: Thomas Hobbes had lived in the seventeenth century England in which the social and political order was under threat and the obligation to the sovereign was in need of justification. The developments in natural science and the alterations in philosophical thought that made rationalization significant, led to question the power of the sovereign and free will of the individuals in the given period. Therefore, the questions concerning God, religion and political obligation had been emerged.

The prevalent philosophy of Hobbes was to reject Aristotelian teleology, and he aimed to replace it with a mechanistic view. His insistence on modern natural science made him to defend that political philosophy also should be grounded in mechanistic approach. Briefly, he eliminated the preliminary role of God from his political philosophy. However, he did not reject the existence of God while arguing this.

In his books that are analysed in this paper; *De Cive* and *Leviathan*, Hobbes stated that individuals were important as parts of the society but naturally they were not political beings. Therefore, they needed to enter into a political association in order to survive. In other words, the weakness of humankind necessitated the establishment of political society. Although a human being was not naturally political, a political association was not against to human nature. Hobbes insisted that a civil society as an artificial product needed to be established for the sake of the individuals. In the absence of civil law and a common authority namely a coercive power, human beings were under threat. Under these conditions, a human being was in need of focusing on his/her self-preservation alone and she/he would try to achieve it at all costs. Therefore, in order to prevent such a state of war, individuals chose to leave their unlimited freedom and enter into a society under a sovereign.

Actually what provided human security was not the existence of a political society; rather it was a coercive power. For Hobbes, coercive power was a requirement to make individuals live in a peaceful environment. Put another way, individuals needed to be frightened from a power to form a society firstly and to keep the society alive secondly. Without the concept of fear, Hobbes would have never been successful in finding a ground for coercive political power in his political theory since the element of fear is required when private interests of the individuals conflict with the common good. At this point, he used the concept of God in his theory. In this paper it is argued that the concept of obligation to make selfish human beings ideal subjects was left incomplete without the role of religion in Hobbes's theory. The subjects chose to enter into political establishment due to fear and the need for security. Such a need, for Hobbes, should have been supported with the fear of God. However, he did not use the fear of God and the existence of moral obligation in the state of nature. Rather, he inferred the

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existence of God, when he needed to find a solid basis for political obligation to maintain the political order.

Hobbes clarified natural laws, moral laws and divine laws in his books. For him, natural laws were moral laws, and they could be considered as the divine laws as well. Therefore, all were same and all were given by God since God gave reason to every human being and people could derive those laws through their reason. Till that point, there was room for moral obligation both in state of nature and in civil society. However, Hobbes surprisingly added that human beings in the state of nature did not have moral conscience and they were not obliged by moral laws. For Hobbes, natural laws/ moral laws or God's laws whatever we call them, could become laws if and only if they were commanded by a civic sovereign. Although he had accepted that there would be moral laws in the state of nature, he added that there could not be moral obligation before human entered into a society.

When there was a coercive power that pushed human beings to keep the covenant, natural laws as the commands of God turned to be obligations. This means that moral principles were meaningless without a political power. Moreover, it could be stated that the dictates of reason and God's laws were distinct for Hobbes and this idea make us think that Hobbes was not a believer at all. However, he needed the power of religion for providing a basis for obligation. That is the reason why he aimed to use God as an instrument in his theory. He also seemed to limit the absolute power of the sovereign and form a basis for obligation theory. In other words, rather than making a religious justification of God's existence, he led the sovereign to use religion as an instrument for political and social order. What Hobbes tried to do was to indicate that Leviathan is made up of the individuals, and people had to obey the sovereign due to their authorization and consent. He based his political theory on the will of the subjects rather than God. People entered into a civil society and refrained of their freedom in order to get protection from the sovereign. Therefore, they needed to obey the sovereign since they gave consent to be a part of it. In other words, obedience of the subjects is justified through the power of the sovereign which was limited by God at the same time.

It is argued in this paper that, Hobbes tried to restrict the sovereign by introducing Divine Will, while in fact he guaranteed the absolute power of the sovereign without making it accountable, neither to an earthly nor to a divine power. In order to defend this, his arguments in De Cive and Leviathan were analysed in detail.

Keywords: Philosophy of Religion, Sociology of Religion, Moral Laws, Natural Laws, Thomas Hobbes.

Tanrı-Din ve Siyaset İlişkisinin Thomas Hobbes'un *Leviathan* ve *De Cive* Kitapları Işığında İncelenmesi

Öz: Thomas Hobbes (1588-1679) toplum sözleşmesi teorisinin kurucusu olarak kabul edilen önemli bir siyaset kuramcısıdır. Hobbes'un doğal durumu tanımlaması, toplumun oluşmasındaki nedenleri belirtmesi, yetkiye ve siyasi yükümlülükler dair fikirleri siyasi düşünce tarihinde dikkat çeker. Düşünür, özellikle yaşadığı yüzyılda monarşiyi güçlendirmek adına siyasal itaati meşrulaştırmanın gerekliliği üzerinde durmuş, dönemin koşullarından dolayı Tanrı fikrini tamamıyla dışlayamamıştır. Bu yüzden toplum sözleşmesi fikrini temellendirdikten sonra ahlaki yasalar ve yükümlülükler aracılığı ile Tanrı kavramını teorisine dahil etmeyi seçmiştir. Bununla birlikte, kendisinden önceki düşünürlerin aksine Tanrı'ya siyasal ve toplumsal düzeni sağlama hususunda ancak ikincil bir görev vermiştir. Tanrı kavramını ve yazılı olmayan kuralların yükümlülüğünü dışlaması, söz konusu dönemde Hobbes'un ateist olduğuna dair tartışmalara yol açsa da, kendisi bunu kabul etmemiştir. Bizim kanaatimiz, Hobbes'un aslında bir ateist olduğu ve Tanrı fikrini sadece toplumun düzenini sağlamak için siyasi bir araç olarak kullandığı yönündedir. Bir başka deyişle, argümanımız; Hobbes'un dini ve Tanrı korkusunu, bireyleri yazılı yasalara uymaları yönünde zorlamak için kullandığı şeklindedir. Bu argümanın haklılığını gösterebilmek için makalemizde Hobbes'un *De Cive* ve *Leviathan* kitaplarındaki argümanları analiz edilmiş ve geliştirmiş olduğu kuramda dinin ve Tanrı'nın yeri incelenmiştir.

Özet: Thomas Hobbes, İngiltere’de sosyal ve siyasi düzenin tehlike altında olduğu ve egemen gücün meşrulaştırılması gerektiği bir dönem olan onyedinci yüzyılda yaşamıştır. Doğal bilimlerdeki ilerlemeler ve felsefik düşünce yapısındaki değişimler, rasyonaliteyi önemli kılarak, söz konusu dönemde egemenin gücünün ve bireylerin özgür istencinin sorgulanmasına olanak vermiştir. Bu yüzden, Tanrı, din ve siyasi yükümlülükler ile ilgili sorunlar da yeni bir boyut kazanmıştır.

Hobbes’un esas felsefesi Aristoteles teleolojisini çürütmek ve sonrasında da onu mekanik yaklaşım ile değiştirmektir. Hobbes’un modern doğal bilimlere olan yaklaşımı, siyaset felsefesini de mekanik bir yaklaşımla temellendirmeye itmiştir. Bu sebeple, Tanrı’nın birincil rolünü siyaset felsefesinden çıkarmış, ama bunu yaparken de Tanrı’nın varlığını inkar etmemiştir.

Hobbes’un bu makalede tartışılan kitapları; *De Cive* ve *Leviathan*’da, bireylerin toplumun önemli parçaları olduğundan ama doğal olarak siyasi birer varlık olmadıklarından bahsedilir. Hobbes’a göre bireyler hayatta kalmak için siyasi bir kurumun altına girmek durumundadırlar. Bir başka deyişle, insanın zayıflığı, siyasi toplumun kurulmasını gerekli kılmıştır. İnsan doğal olarak siyasi bir varlık olmasa dahi, siyasi bir kurum altında yaşamak insan doğasına aykırı bir durum değildir. Hobbes’un üzerinde durduğu temel nokta, sivil toplumun yapay bir ürün olsa dahi bireylerin refahı için gerekli olduğudur. Yazılı yasaların ve bir otoritenin, kısacası zorlayıcı bir gücün olmaması halinde, insanlar tehlike altında olacaktır. Bu koşullar altında, bir kişinin kendisini koruması için ne gerekiyorsa yapacağı şaşırtıcı bir durum değildir. Böylesi bir savaş durumunu engellemek için, kişiler doğal durumdaki sınırsız özgürlüklerini bırakarak, egemen bir gücün altında yaşamayı tercih edeceklerdir.

Aslında Hobbes’a göre, insanın güvenliğini sağlayan siyasi toplumun varlığı değil, zorlayıcı bir gücün varlığıdır. Bu güç, insanların barış içerisinde yaşamaları için gereken koşuldur. Bir başka deyişle, bireyler önce toplumu oluşturmak için sonra da o toplumun devamlılığını sağlamak için bir güçten korkmalıdırlar. Korku kavramı olmadan Hobbes’un bahsettiği siyasi güce bir temel bulmak zor olacaktır çünkü korku faktörü bireylerin kişisel çıkarları ile toplumsal iyinin karşı karşıya geldiği durumlarda, bireyi korkutarak siyasi güce uymayı zorlayacak ve böylece toplumsal refahı sağlayacaktır. Bu noktada, Hobbes’un kuramına Tanrı kavramı dahil olur. Bu makalede, Hobbes’un kuramında dinin rolü olmadan siyasi yükümlülük kavramının eksik kalacağı tartışılmıştır. Bireyler birbirlerinden korktukları için ve güvenliğe ihtiyaçları oldukları için bir toplumun altında yaşamayı tercih ederler. Hobbes’a göre bu ihtiyaç Tanrı korkusuyla desteklenmelidir. Fakat, Hobbes ne Tanrı korkusunu ne de ahlaki yasaların varlığını doğal durumda kullanmıştır. Bunun yerine, sonrasında siyasi düzen için gerekli olan yükümlülükler için bir temel bulmak için, Tanrı kavramını kullanmayı seçmiştir.

Hobbes, burada analiz edilen kitaplarında doğal yasalar, ahlaki yasalar ve ilahi yasalar kavramlarını açıklar. Ona göre, doğal yasalar ahlaki yasalardır ve aynı zamanda ilahi yasalar olarak da adlandırılabilirler. Bu yüzden üçü de aynı görünür ve hepsi de Tanrı tarafından verilir. Tanrı her bireye akıl verdiğinden, herkes bu yasalara akılları aracılığı ile ulaşabilir. Hobbes’un kuramında bu noktaya kadar, sadece sivil toplumda değil, doğal durumda da ahlaki yükümlülüklerin olmasına imkan veriliyordu. Fakat, Hobbes insanların doğal durumda ahlaki bilinçlerinin olmadığını ve ahlaki yasalara uymak zorunda olmadıklarını söyler. Ona göre doğal yasalar, ahlaki yasalar ya da Tanrı’nın yasaları, adına her ne dersek diyelim, yükümlülük yaratan yasalar olmaları için bir sivil otoritenin yaptırımında olması gerekir. Her ne kadar da doğal durumda ahlaki yasaların varlığından söz etse de, söz konusu yasaların insanların toplum altında yaşamaya geçmeden önce yükümlülüğe yol açmadığını da ekler.

Doğal yasalar sadece insanları toplum altında birleştirmeye zorlayacak bir güç olması halinde, Tanrı’nın buyrukları olarak zorunluluğa dönüşürler. Bu demektir ki; ahlaki ilkeler siyasi bir güç olmadığı sürece anlamsızdırlar. Hobbes’un felsefesinde aklın buyrukları ve Tanrı’nın yasaları iki farklı kavram olarak ortaya çıkar; bu durum da bizi Hobbes’un aslında Tanrı’ya inanmadığını savunmaya kadar götürülebilir. Halbuki, Hobbes’un yükümlülükleri meşrulaştırmak için dinin gücüne ihtiyacı vardır. Bu sebeple, Tanrı’yı bir araç olarak kullanmayı seçmiştir. Böylece, egemenin mutlak gücünü de sınırlamış ve yükümlülükler için de bir

temel bulabilmiştir. Bir başka deyişle, Tanrı'nın varlığının dini açıdan meşrulaştırmasını yapmak yerine, egemen gücün eline dini ve Tanrı'yı siyasi ve sosyal düzene ulaştırmak için bir araç olarak vermiştir. Hobbes'un göstermeye çalıştığı, Leviathan diye adlandırdığı toplumun bireylerden oluştuğu ve bu bireylerin egemen güce biat etme sebeplerinin, kendilerinin vermiş olduğu rıza ve yetki olduğudur. Kısacası, Hobbes siyaset felsefesinin temelinde Tanrı'yı değil, öznelerin özgür iradelerini koyar. Bireyler doğal durumdaki sınırsız özgürlüklerinden feragat ederek bir egemen altında yaşamaya rıza göstermişlerdir, çünkü karşılığında güvenliklerini sağlayacaklardır. Bu anlaşma gereği egemene itaat etmeyi kabul ederler. Böylece siyasal olarak bireyin bağlı bulunduğu yükümlülükler Tanrı kavramı ile sınırlandırılmış olan egemenin gücü ile meşrulaştırılmış olur.

Bu makalede, Hobbes'un egemenin mutlak gücünü ilahi irade olan Tanrı ile sınırlandırmış olduğu gösterilir. Aslında Hobbes'un yapmaya çalıştığı, egemenin gücüne mutlakiyet sağlayarak, onu ne dünyevi ne de ilahi bir güce karşı sorumluluk altına sokmaktır. Bunu nasıl başardığı ise bu makalede, Hobbes'un *De Cive* ve *Leviathan* kitaplarının analiz edilmesi ile detaylı olarak gösterilmiştir.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Din Felsefesi, Din Sosyolojisi, Ahlak Yasası, Doğal Yasa, Thomas Hobbes.

INTRODUCTION

Seventeenth-century England that Thomas Hobbes was living in was a period of political instability. Therefore, the social and political order was under threat and the obligation to the sovereign was in need of justification. Jonathan M. Wiener indicated the political situation as follows:

"The king had been executed, the House of Lords abolished, and Cromwell declared head of the new Commonwealth; the new government's first task was to persuade moderate and hostile groups that the revolution was really over. That is, Cromwell needed a theory of political obligation which could persuade Presbyterians and Royalists to abandon their sworn obligations to protect the life of the king, take the oath of allegiance to the Commonwealth, and obey what they considered to be a usurping power".¹

Apart from the political situation, the prevalent philosophy had been facing an alteration which would lead other problems arise. Till the seventeenth century, it was believed that Aristotelian theology would give answers to many social, political and natural concerns. However, the improvements in philosophical thought indicated that medieval world could no longer provide a complete understanding of political and social life in the given period.

For Hobbes, "political philosophy in the seventeenth century had to be grounded in modern natural science, with its mechanistic approach, rather than in outdated Aristotelian teleology".² Since Aristotelian philosophy was considered as inadequate, Hobbes wanted to replace it with mechanistic theory of nature. A positivistic reading of modern science and a new way of looking at society became necessary in the conditions of the given century. However, his mechanistic view and his premises emerged from it let me argue that God does not have a role in his political theory.

Although Hobbes tried to prove the existence of God in his works and insisted on indicating himself as a believer, I argue that there are inconsistencies in his political philosophy which led me to assert that he was an atheist. In the following sections, the details in his works *De Cive* and *Leviathan* are analysed and the inconsistencies regarding religion and God are clarified.

¹ Jonathan M. Wiener, "Quentin Skinner's Hobbes", *Political Theory*, 2/3 (1974): 252.

² Andrzej Rapaczynski, *Nature and Politics: Liberalism in the Philosophies of Hobbes, Locke and Rousseau* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1987), 28.

1. THE REASONS WHY HUMAN BEINGS CHOSE TO BE PARTS OF A POLITICAL SOCIETY

In order to investigate the place of God in Hobbes's theory, it is required to examine the state of nature firstly to grasp the necessity of a political society. As mentioned above, Hobbes was opposed to Aristotelian way of thought and tried to destruct him in natural, political and social arenas. According to Aristotle, "man was by nature social, since only a beast or a God could live alone".³ This also meant that society as a whole is more significant than the subjects as individuals. Whereas for Hobbes, individuals are important as a part of the society but naturally they are not political beings. The lives of human beings are naturally "solitary, poor, nasty, brutish, and short",⁴ therefore they need to enter into a political association in order to survive. In brief, the weakness of humankind necessitates the establishment of political society. Although a human being is not naturally political, a political association is not against to human nature. What Hobbes insisted that a civil society as an artificial product needs to be established for the sake of the individuals.

Hobbes, in his works, had frequently used "for the sake of the individuals" to rationalize the necessity of a political establishment. Since he defined the nature of human beings in a negative way, he had to infer the need of a political society secondly. Humankind in state of nature is equal and has the capacity to destroy each other. They have natural equality of strength and other faculties,⁵ and this led them to have willingness and courage to hurt each other.⁶ In *Leviathan* he also stated that "NATURE hath made human so equal in the faculties of body and mind",⁷ and "there is not ordinarily a greater sign of the equal distribution of anything than that every man is contented with his share".⁸

Their individual interests differ from the common good and since they are all equal they would be in competition for honour and dignity. Such a state of nature could only be a state of war which was summarized by Hobbes that; homo homini lupus [a human being is a wolf to another human being]. The only judge in the state of nature would be the intention and consciousness of the agents.⁹

In the absence of civil law and a common authority namely a coercive power, human beings are under threat. It is not surprising that a human being is in need of focusing on his/her self-preservation alone and she/he would try to achieve it at all costs. Therefore, in order to prevent such a state of war, individuals choose to leave their unlimited freedom and enter into a society under a sovereign. In Hobbes's political philosophy they could live and enjoy a peaceful life under security if and only if they accept the common authority and its power under a political establishment.

Actually what provides human security is not the existence of a political society; rather it is a coercive power. In other words, it is the political obligation which leads these ego-centric and aggressive human beings to be good and social. In order to achieve self-preservation directly, and social and political order indirectly, human beings have to obey political power. At this point, fear becomes the main motive in maintaining the society. Since humankind has fear of losing their lives, they enter into a political establishment and afterwards they obey the coercive power as they are frightened of that power. In *De Cive* Hobbes stated that

³ Aristotle, "Politics" in *The Complete Works of Aristotle*, trans. and ed. Jonathan Barnes (Princeton, N. J.: Princeton University Press, 1984), 1253a.

⁴ Thomas Hobbes, *Leviathan*, ed. Richard Tuck (Cambridge; New York: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 26.

⁵ Thomas Hobbes, *De Cive, or on The Citizen*, eds. Richard Tuck, and Michael Silverthorne (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 31.

⁶ Hobbes, *De Cive*, 25-26.

⁷ Hobbes, *Leviathan*, 86.

⁸ Hobbes, *Leviathan*, 87.

⁹ Hobbes, *De Cive*, 54.

"fear is what guarantees that people perform their obligations"¹⁰. Both in the formation of the society and keeping the society alive, fear is the main basis in Hobbes's theory. According to Alan Ryan, a scholar of Hobbes, in *Leviathan* Hobbes tried "to persuade readers to keep their eyes on the object of fear as the main motive to keep covenant"¹¹. Similarly for Johann P. Sommerville, Hobbes uses fear to "denote a reasonable, well-grounded fear"¹², to justify his theory of obligation.

2. THE ROLE OF RELIGION AND GOD

In the light of these facts, Hobbes easily justified the absolute and repressive character of the political power. Without the concept of fear, he would have never been successful in finding a ground for coercive political power in his political theory. As he clearly defined the state of nature, he concluded that those human beings are in need of a political power which could be regarded as a tyrannical power in order to live in a secure environment.

In *De Cive*, he clarifies the need of the fear of punishment through common power with these words: "No accord or association based on agreement can give the security required for the practice of natural justice, without some common power to control individuals by instilling a fear of punishment".¹³ He also stated that the element of fear is required when private interests of the individuals conflict with the common good in order to direct human to the latter for maintaining peace among society.¹⁴ Similarly in *Leviathan* he added his famous sentence regarding the repressive power of the sovereign; "covenants, without the sword, are but words and of no strength to secure a man at all".¹⁵

Absolute monarchy or tyranny with a forcible power is a scope of another paper; what I want to focus on now is the nature of obligation in a society and the absence of God's role within this theory. I argue that the concept of obligation to make selfish human beings ideal subjects was left incomplete without the role of religion in Hobbes's theory. If, as Hobbes stated that, there is God, then there should be moral obligations in the state of nature. As seen above, Hobbes justified the formation of the society by means of fear and the need for security. However, such a need would had been supported with the fear of God in order to make human beings socially good. Put another way, let us ask; if fear is the main motive for human beings and they are naturally aggressive and self-interested, why Hobbes did not infer the necessity of God's existence and the unwritten moral laws in order to rectify the nature of human beings?

While there are some authors like Howard Warrender who considers God as the only basis of both moral and political obligation in Hobbes's theory,¹⁶ I argue that Hobbes did not give attention to moral theory and ignore human beings as the moral beings when he was trying to construct his political philosophy on fear and justify political obligation for the sake of the English establishment. For David Gauthier, Hobbes's mechanistic point of view prevents him from dealing with the metaphysical side of human existence.¹⁷ On the other hand, there are other scholars like Richard Tuck, Crawford B. Macpherson and Frederick S. McNeilly

¹⁰ Hobbes, *De Cive*, 38, 84. See also, Vicente Medina, *Social Contract Theories: Political Obligation or Anarchy?* (Savage: Md.: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 1990), 18.

¹¹ Hobbes, *De Cive*, 71-72. See also, Alan Ryan, "Hobbes's Political Philosophy" in *The Cambridge Companion to Hobbes*, ed. Tom Sorell (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 225.

¹² Johann P. Sommerville, *Thomas Hobbes: Political Ideas in Historical Context* (Basingstoke: MacMillan, 1992), 33.

¹³ Hobbes, *De Cive*, 72.

¹⁴ Hobbes, *De Cive*, 71.

¹⁵ Hobbes, *Leviathan*, 117.

¹⁶ Howard Warrender, *The Political Philosophy of Hobbes, His Theory of Obligation* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1957).

¹⁷ David P. Gauthier, *The Logic of Leviathan: The Moral and Political Theory of Thomas Hobbes* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1969), 95.

who argue that morality is possible in Hobbes's theory despite his mechanism and psychological egoism.¹⁸ No matter there is room for morality in Hobbes's theory, still the role of God is problematic and could not find place in Hobbes's theory of obligation despite the fact that his attempt in providing an extremely powerful theory of obligation.¹⁹

Let us examine what he introduced as God's laws to analyse what moral obligation meant in his theory. In *De Cive*, Hobbes clarified natural laws, moral laws and divine laws in detail. For him, natural laws are moral laws,²⁰ and they could be considered as the divine laws as well. Therefore, all are same and all are given by God since God gives reason to every human being and people could derive those laws through their reason. Till that point, there is room for moral obligation both in state of nature and in civil society. However, Hobbes surprisingly added that human beings in the state of nature do not have moral conscience and they are not obliged by moral laws. For Hobbes, natural laws/ moral laws or God's laws whatever we call them, could become laws if and only if they are commanded by a civic sovereign. Although he had accepted that there would be moral laws in the state of nature, he added that there could not be moral obligation before human entered into a society.

Warrender argues that Hobbes's state of nature is a "moral vacuum" and God's laws turned to be obligatory after the formation of the civil society.²¹ Human beings do not obey natural laws as the laws of God but as the laws of the sovereign. In other words, there are moral principles in the state of nature like in civil society but they do not create obligations for human beings in the absence of coercive power. It becomes clear in Hobbes's following words: "Law of Nature gives rise to an obligation in the internal court [in foro interno] or in conscience always and everywhere; but in the external court [in foro externo] it gives rise to obligation only when it can be kept with safety".²²

Actually, when there is a coercive power that pushes human beings to keep the covenant, natural laws as the commands of God turned to be obligations. Warrender interpreted this situation and introduced that moral principles have suspended obligations in the state of nature and they turned to be full obligation through the force of the sovereign.²³

Besides the discussions of moral obligation and the question of God's role regarding it, another problem about the infants and non-believers had emerged in Hobbes's theory. In *De Cive*, Hobbes defined natural laws as the laws which God gives human by natural reason.²⁴ It could be inferred that human beings have natural laws innately and they must exist in infants as well. However, he asserted that infants are not born with moral sense. Regarding non-believers he stated that, although human knows that God exists by their natural reason, if there would be some people who still did not believe in God, then God will punish them.²⁵ As was mentioned above the laws of nature could be known through reason, yet they are regarded as the laws of God as well. Since Hobbes did not make a distinction between believers and non-believers regarding obedience, it could be asserted that for him, the laws of nature do not have any connection with God; rather they are merely the products of reason. This point could also be regarded as the proof of Hobbes's irreligious views.

¹⁸ Richard Tuck, "Hobbes's Moral Philosophy" in *The Cambridge Companion to Hobbes*, ed. Tom Sorell (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 187; Frederick S. McNeilly, *The Anatomy of Leviathan* (New York: St. Martin's Publications, 1968) and C. Brough Macpherson, *The Political Theory of Possessive Individualism: Hobbes to Locke* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1962).

¹⁹ Steve Beackon and Andrew Reeve, "The Benefits of Reasonable Conduct: The Leviathan Theory of Obligation", *Political Theory*, 4/4 (1976), 424.

²⁰ Hobbes, *De Cive*, 55.

²¹ Warrender, *The Political Philosophy of Hobbes*, 5.

²² Hobbes, *De Cive*, 54.

²³ Warrender, *The Political Philosophy of Hobbes*, 44.

²⁴ Hobbes, *De Cive*, 156.

²⁵ Hobbes, *De Cive*, 164.

Hobbes tried to destruct the medieval thought in different ways. In fact, natural laws as the laws of God to make human beings achieve moral and social order were a medieval thought. Hobbes had reformed this idea and defined laws of nature as the laws of reason in *Leviathan*.²⁶ Although it seemed to be necessary in seventeenth century philosophy to use natural laws and God's laws interchangeably, they appeared to be different in Hobbesian sense. For Gauthier, "[w]hat is important to Hobbes's moral and political theory is natural law qua dictate of reason, not qua command of God".²⁷ That is to say, the dictates of reason and God's law are distinct for Hobbes and this idea make us think that Hobbes is not a believer at all.

In addition to this, Hobbes had eliminated the possibility of a prior obligation before a political one by stating that there was no moral obligation in the state of nature. For some critics like Warrender, it could be stated that moral obligation to obey the civil law after the formation of the society would be impossible if there had not been a moral obligation before the institution of civil law.²⁸ Clearly, moral obligation to sovereign or moral obligation alone means that there is moral obligation in the state of nature. Otherwise, civil laws would not be effective as laws of nature or laws of God are the complementary of the civil law.²⁹ Likely Sommerville argues that political obligation in Hobbes's system necessarily presuppose a prior obligation.³⁰ As Stuart Brown says, obligation after the formation of the society would be meaningless without the existence of such a prior covenant.³¹ For these critics, political obligation could not be guaranteed without introducing moral obligation in the state of nature.

On the contrary, Gauthier and Michael J. Oakeshott defended Hobbes that obligation for keeping a covenant does not necessitate any prior obligation like a moral one existing in the state of nature.³² In order to support Hobbes, Oakeshott suggested using rational obligation instead of moral obligation in Hobbes's theory. In state of nature, he thought that the obligation could be seen as a rational one rather than a moral one. In state of nature;

"A man may be prevented from willing a certain action because he perceives that its probable consequences are damaging to himself. Here the impediment is internal, a combination of rational perception and fear, which is aversion from something believed to be hurtful. In a sense, such a person is obliged, but this is a case of fear and reason limiting his power and not a moral obligation".³³

No matter Hobbes used obligation as the rational one or not, still the absence of obligation in state of nature is problematic in his system. Since this means that, neither the idea of God nor the natural laws could be considered as the source of obligation. The sovereign was left as the only source and this makes it an absolute and repressive power which attracted criticisms even in the seventeenth century England.

Another point that drew the attention to the role of God in Hobbes's theory is his materialist arguments regarding the existence of God. In *Leviathan*, Hobbes asserts that;

"Curiosity, or love of the knowledge of causes, draws a man from consideration of the effect to seek the cause; and again, the cause of that cause; till of necessity he must come to this thought at last, that there is some cause whereof there is no former cause, but is eternal;

²⁶ Hobbes, *Leviathan*, 111.

²⁷ Gauthier, *The Logic of Leviathan*, 70.

²⁸ Warrender, *The Political Philosophy of Hobbes*, 7.

²⁹ Warrender, *The Political Philosophy of Hobbes*, 150.

³⁰ Sommerville, *Thomas Hobbes*, 54.

³¹ J. Roland Pennock, "Hobbes's Confusing "Clarity" - The Case of "Liberty"", *The American Political Science Review*, 54/2 (1960), 434.

³² Gauthier, *The Logic of Leviathan*, 42. Michael J. Oakeshott, "Introduction to Leviathan" in *Leviathan* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1946), lx.

³³ Oakeshott, *Introduction to Leviathan*, lx.

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which is it men call God. So that it is impossible to make any profound inquiry into natural causes without being inclined thereby to believe there is one God eternal; though they cannot have any idea of Him in their mind answerable to His nature".³⁴

God as the first cause was a prevalent proof in medieval thought. However, his proof of God has no basis except being introduced as the first cause since Hobbes believed that human beings could not have an idea or image of God. What people can infer through reason is that, God must exist as the first cause, but God could not be understood. At this point it would be helpful to quote Hobbes again;

"Whatsoever we imagine is finite. Therefore, there is no idea or conception of anything we call infinite. No man can have in his mind an image of infinite magnitude; nor conceive infinite swiftness, infinite time, or infinite force, or infinite power. When we say anything is infinite, we signify only that we are not able to conceive the ends and bounds of the thing named, having no conception of the thing, but of our own inability. And therefore the name of God is used, not to make us conceive Him (for He is incomprehensible, and His greatness and power are unconceivable), but that we may honor Him".³⁵

Human beings could have idea about anything through their senses; human beings could not comprehend anything which is not subject to senses.³⁶ Since God could not be perceived by sense, human beings could not have the idea of God. To clarify, Hobbes added that sense impressions are the movements in the organs of sense which are caused only by external objects, and they lead movements in brain which are called ideas.³⁷ Therefore, we could infer that Hobbes could be an atheist as Gauthier states that "[i]t is impossible to know that something is without knowing what it is".³⁸ Agreeing with him, Samuel I. Mintz also argues that Hobbes is irreligious since his system that was based on the nominalist account of knowledge and a materialistic account of the universe necessarily makes him sceptic about God.³⁹

Nonetheless, another proof of Hobbes's irreligious attitude is that; he constructed his theory on the foundations of fear and self-preservation. He also added that self-preservation is a duty and humankind need to enter into a society to secure themselves. However, if self-preservation is regarded as a duty, then whose duty is that? The answer could only be God. Regarding self-preservation as a duty and using it to justify the entrance to political obligation without admitting it as the command of God have arisen an inconsistency in Hobbes's system. In brief, fear or self-preservation solely could form the basis of obligation in his system, and so he did not need the existence of God. That is the reason why he aimed to use God as an instrument in his theory to strengthen it, not to be considered as an atheist and most importantly to limit the absolute power of the sovereign.

3. RELIGION AS A TOOL IN THE HANDS OF THE AUTHORITY

Hobbes attacked medieval thought by weakening the religious ground of political obligation. Still it could not be argued that Hobbes completely disregarded the importance of religion in his political system. Rather he considered religion as a tool for the authority to maintain the society and also he used it to defend himself against the arguments of absolute power. According to Andrzej Rapaczynski, Hobbes did not provide religious justification for

³⁴ Hobbes, *Leviathan*, 74.

³⁵ Hobbes, *Leviathan*, 23.

³⁶ Hobbes, *Leviathan*, 13.

³⁷ Hobbes, *Leviathan*, 13.

³⁸ Gauthier, *The Logic of Leviathan*, 179.

³⁹ Samuel I. Mintz, *The Hunting of Leviathan; Seventeenth-Century Reactions to the Materialism and Moral Philosophy of Thomas Hobbes* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1962), 23.

the maintenance of the society but he made the sovereign to use religion as an instrument to achieve this goal.⁴⁰

Figure 1. Frontispiece of *Leviathan*.⁴¹



Figure 1 shows how *Leviathan* was depicted in 1651. The sovereign King made up of individuals who are looking towards him as it is clear in Hobbes's following words; "A multitude of men, are made one person, when they are by one man, or one person, represented; so that it be done with the consent of every one of that multitude in particular."⁴² The sovereign has a sword in one hand and a crosier in the other. The sword represents the civil laws and the elements below the sword signify monarchy. A crosier in the other hand is to depict unwritten or God laws and the elements on the right depict the church. The name Leviathan is taken from Hebrew Bible by Hobbes.⁴³ It is a giant creature in the Book of Job, and Hobbes

⁴⁰ Rapaczynski, *Nature and Politics*, 28.

⁴¹ Thomas Hobbes, *Leviathan*, accessed: 18 November 2019, https://books.google.com.cy/books?id=v54TEXoypd4C&printsec=frontcover&dq=leviathan&hl=tr&sa=X&ved=0ahUKewjoq5yqg_TIAhWMHxQKHZSjCZwQ6AEIMjAB#v=onepage&q=leviathan&f=false

⁴² Hobbes, *Leviathan*, 16.

⁴³ John E. Hartley, *The Book of Job*, (Michigan: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing, 1988).

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may have used this word to define absolute power of the sovereign. Leviathan, this mortal God, took his authority both from his sword and crosier and it is able to oblige people to achieve social and political order by using them. This picture also clarifies the idea of Hobbes which denies the existence of moral obligation prior to a common power. Both laws, civil and moral ones derive their authority from the absoluteness of the coercive power.

The point needs attention here is that; for Hobbes the sovereign's power alone is significant. Put in another way sovereign is more powerful than God. His aim was not to justify obedience of people by using moral laws and the fear of God. What he tried to do is to indicate that Leviathan is made up of the individuals, and people had to obey the sovereign due to this fact. Since he insisted on explaining the importance of authorization and consent of the individuals, he based his political theory on the will of the subjects rather than God. People enter into a civil society and refrain of their freedom in order to get protection from the sovereign. Therefore, they need to obey the sovereign since they give consent to be a part of it. In other words, obedience of the subjects is justified through the power of the sovereign that was given by the subjects before.

By giving religion a secondary role in his system, Hobbes guaranteed the absolute power of the sovereign. Church, Bible or any other elements of religion could not have independent power from the sovereign. Therefore for some critics it could be concluded that, Hobbes's system had atheistically consequences.⁴⁴ Apart from inferring consequences for atheism, Hobbes could be regarded even as an atheist.

CONCLUSION

Hobbes defined state of nature, gave reasons of the formation of the civil society and finally made sovereign touchstone in his political theory. Based on the negative picture of the state of nature, he rationalized both the entrance to an establishment and the absolute power of the sovereign. Human beings had to obey the sovereign at all costs because everyone wanted to preserve their lives. Actually, people had duties toward the sovereign as it protected their lives. Yet, the sovereign was not under any obligation. In the conditions of the century, this meant that sovereign has absolute power, clearly even God could not limit the power of the sovereign.

Hobbes, being aware of this fact, stated that sovereign was subject to the laws of nature which were divine,⁴⁵ and tried to eliminate the criticisms on that point. However, this statement is another version of saying sovereign is accountable to natural laws. Being subject to laws of nature and being subject to God are two different arguments since Hobbes never said that natural laws were originated from God. If these laws were not considered as the laws of God, sovereign power could not be accountable to God. It could be limited by natural laws solely.

At this point, he tried to preserve both religion and God's power for the sake of the establishment. It is argued in this paper that, Hobbes used religion only as a political instrument. He gives the power of religion to the sovereign to strengthen its power. At the same time, he defended himself against the possible criticisms regarding the unlimited power of the sovereign. Yet, Hobbes's sovereign was limited by the natural laws directly and it was not under any obligation from God. To make it more clear, this paper was to argue that Hobbes tried to restrict the sovereign by introducing Divine Will, while in fact he guaranteed the absolute power of the sovereign without making it accountable, neither to an earthly nor to a divine power. Despite the fact that he defined religion as the fear of invisible but true power in *Leviathan*,⁴⁶ what Hobbes did was to use religion as a tool for providing stability in a political society. That idea could be interpreted as an attempt of secularisation but neither the

⁴⁴ Sommerville, *Thomas Hobbes: Political Ideas in Historical Context*, 167.

⁴⁵ Hobbes, *Leviathan*, 224 and Hobbes, *De Cive*, 82.

⁴⁶ Hobbes, *Leviathan*, 42.

conditions of the seventeenth century nor the conditions of England specifically was suitable for secularisation. Put another way, the developments in natural science, the emphasis of rationalization, the success of England in international arena, the increasing power of the Anglican church which provided a solid basis for secularization in the English Enlightenment had not been happened that period. Therefore, the absolute power of sovereign in his theory, and the inconsistencies between the concepts of natural law, God, and obligation in political and moral spheres could be interpreted as giving a secondary role to God, clearly decreasing the role of God and introducing both religion and fear of God as political instruments for the sake of the constitution. Briefly, Hobbes appeared as an atheist in the light of the arguments stated in *De Cive* and *Leviathan*.

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