

A COMPARATIVE STUDY OF THE POLITICAL THEORIES OF THOMAS AQUINAS AND THOMAS HOBBS

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Abstract

Thomas Aquinas' political theories (like Aristotle's) took off from the basic point of 'natural law' as an objective order gotten from the eternal law and then promulgated into some human positive law for the aim of organizing the human society. On the other hand, Thomas Hobbes' political philosophy had 'natural right' as an absolutely justified subjective claim which, far from being dependent on any previous law, order, or obligation, is itself the origin of all law, order, or obligation. Such contrasting understandings between both great thinkers on how the state comes into being and is ordered, make for some quite interesting comparative study between the two political theories. For instance, while Aquinas does not believe in the absoluteness of some earthly sovereign ruler, Hobbes posits that the sovereign, produced from the social contract that formed the state, is absolute and beyond injustice. However, whereas the two theories have quite a number of contrasting points, they also have some similarities between them like in their adoption of monarchy as the best form of government. So, this work aims at a critical study of both philosophies to sieve out the parallels and the meeting points between them.

Keywords: Natural law, Eternal law, Sovereign, Injustice, Social contract,, Monarchy

Introduction

It is indeed interesting and rewarding to make a comparative study of the political theories that differed one from the other in their basic premises concerning the nature of man. While Aquinas maintains that man is by nature a political animal, Hobbes rejects such claim. It is from this basic conviction that they set up their political structures and drew their conclusions.

Thus, in order to make a clear comparison, I have chosen first of all to write separately the respective political theories of Aquinas and Hobbes. This will be followed by a consideration of the dissimilarities and similarities that exist between them. Then the evaluation and conclusion will bring this comparative study to an end.

Thomas Aquinas' Political Theory

a) The Natural Origin of Human Society and Government

Aquinas maintains, just like Aristotle, that the state is a natural institution founded on the nature of man. That is to say that the state originated or rather came into existence because of the nature of man. His argument takes its bearing from the natural end of man. He argues that everything has an end: but whereas other creatures attain their ends instinctively and necessarily, man, on the other hand, attains his end by reason. Every man, however, cannot single-handedly attain his end even though he is endowed with reason. The power of reason simply enables him to work in close collaboration with his fellows to attain his end. And it is possible to achieve this, that is, to work with others, because man is a political animal, a being born to live in community with others.

For Aquinas, man by nature needs society much more than animals for whereas nature has provided the latter with the materials and conditions for survival and attainment of their ends, man is left only with reason. In his words: "For all other animals, nature has prepared food, hair as a covering, teeth, horns, claws as a mean of defense or at least speed in flight, man

alone was made without any natural provisions for these things(Thomas Aquinas,4). Aquinas argues that since man has not been provided with these basic things, it is exigent that he should use his reason to provide them for himself through co-operation with others. Another important and obvious sign that demonstrates that man is more suited to form society than other creatures and that the 'state's origin is derived from the nature of man is the fact that man is endowed with a faculty of communicating his ideas by means of language. While other animals express themselves through signs, man does the same through signs and language. This shows that he is naturally more fitted to form society than other animals such as bees and ants.

Aquinas believes that as society or state (living together) is natural to man, so is government natural to society. He argues that wherever there is a society of men in which the individuals are left to pursue their self-interest that society will soon break up into shreds. For him, there must be a central government that harmonizes and works for the common good of all. He boosts his argument with an analogy. In making the analogy, he asserts that the human body or animal body would disintegrate if there were no unifying force within the body to hold it together (6). In man, for instance, the principal unifying part is the head. For the body, it is the soul that governs it. In the soul, the irascible and concupiscible parts are ruled by reason. In the universe as a whole, it is the superior bodies that rule the inferior ones. Aquinas concludes therefore that if this is true of the entire universe, and of man as an individual, it must necessarily be true of the human society. Thus, there must be government in a society or state.

b) The Supernatural Origin of Human Society and Political Authority

That the human society and political authority have a supernatural origin that is willed by God follows from the fact that Aquinas has already proved that they have a natural origin on account of the fact that they are prefigured in the nature of man. The justification of the supernatural origin of the human society and government can be put in this way: The human society and government are natural because they are prefigured in human nature; this human nature was created by God. Therefore, God wills human society and government.

Aquinas does not subscribe to Augustine's view that the existence of human society and government became necessary as a result of original sin and its consequences.(Stumpf, 185) He argues that even if no one ever committed sin, and that the state of innocence had continued, there would still be need for authority to direct the common good. The only difference that may be obvious is that some of the social institutions we have now may be absent in the state of innocence. Aquinas' argument runs as follows: Man is by nature a social animal. In the state of innocence, man could have lived in society because a common social life of many individuals cannot be achieved unless there is someone in control to attend to the common good.(Thomas Aquinas Summa, 1a 964). Furthermore, in the state of innocence, people may not be equally talented; some may be more efficient in one thing than another. Some may be more gifted in knowledge than others. One cannot have a gift and at the same time not have the opportunity to exercise it for the common good. Therefore, it is the will of God that there should be human society and government.

c) Relationship between the Church and the State

Aquinas does not take the extremist position with regard to the relationship between the Church and the State. He does not regard the Church as the Super-state to which the State depends. On the contrary, he considers the state as a perfect society with all the means at its disposal for the attainment of its end, which is the common good of its citizens.(Thamos Aquinas,Summa, 1a, 90,2) The state is instituted to provide these necessary conditions of the

common good. The state should also ensure that the obstacle to common life such as the invasion by foreign enemies is averted and the destabilizing action of crime is curbed. Aquinas adds that the ruler of a state has all the necessary means at his disposal such as the armed forces and the judiciary to arrest the obstacles. (Stumpf, 186). With regard to the Church, Aquinas asserts that it has supernatural end, an end that is higher than the end of the State. Hence, the Church is a society superior to the State. The State must therefore subject itself to the Church in matters bearing on the supernatural end of man. To say this does not mean as, Stumpf rightly explains, that the Church is a super-state, it simply means that the State as an autonomous entity has its legitimate functions and at the same time should subordinate itself to the Church especially in matters that pertain to the promotion of the supernatural end of man. (186). It must co-operate with the Church to promote whatever that leads to supernatural happiness and remove all obstacles that can veer people away from reaching it.

d) Relationship between the State and the Individual

In *Summa Theologiae*, Aquinas holds that the part is related to the whole as an imperfect to the perfect. (Thomas Aquinas, *Summa* 1a, IIae, 90.2) Thus he argues that in the society the law should aim primarily at the common good than the good of the individual. The individual is only an imperfect part of the society. The society is a whole and it is perfect. Indeed it is clear that Aquinas is speaking about the primary focus or orientation of the law but it does appear he is saying that the individual should be subordinated to the society of which he is a part. Indeed the application of this principle that a whole is greater than a part is the main reason, for instance, why Aquinas asserts that the ruler has the right to exterminate the life of a citizen who has committed a grave crime. (Thomas Aquinas, 1a, IIae, 65&65. 1). From this it appears that Aquinas subordinates the individual completely to the state. This may not be totally true for he also insists that he who seeks the common good seeks his own good for one cannot attain his own good unless the common good is attained.

e) The Law

Aquinas defines a law as “an ordinance of reason, for the general good made by whoever has care of the community and promulgated.” (1a, IIae, 90.4) There are four types of law: eternal law, natural law, human positive law and divine law. Man, more than any other creature, shares more profoundly in God’s planning, that is in God’s eternal law. Man’s participation or sharing in the eternal law is called natural law. Aquinas states it this way: the “distinctive sharing in the eternal law we call the natural law, the law we have in us by nature. For the light of natural reason by which we tell good from evil (the law that is in us by nature) is itself an imprint of God’s light in us.” (1a IIae, 91.2). In other words, that law which is in human nature, which is a participation in the eternal law of God, is a natural law. The premise of the natural law is that good is to be done and evil avoided. It is on this that all other injunctions of the natural law are based. An example of a natural law is that it commands whatever preserves human life and opposes whatever opposes or destroys it. But the natural law is like a universal law. It stipulates for instance that murder is forbidden. But it does not define what murder is or provide appropriate sanction for it. It is the function of human positive law to define what natural law is and make it explicit. In effect, the human positive law is based on natural law. Thus, the human law is true only insofar as it is based on the natural law. If the human law is not derived from a natural law, it is no longer a law but a perversion of it. (1a IIa, 95.2).

It is the duty of the legislator to derive human positive law from the natural law. The ruler should not promulgate law that is contrary to the natural law. The authority of the ruler is from

God and he is responsible to him. Hence, he should not promulgate laws that are against the natural laws. With regard to the ruler obeying the law, Aquinas says: "Heads of state are exempt from the coercive power of their own laws since people cannot coerce themselves and there is nobody else who pass sentence on them if they act illegally." (1a, IIae, 95.5). Aquinas adds that the ruler should submit himself voluntarily to the control of the law. According to him, in God's judgement the ruler is not exempt from obeying the law. Thus, the principal point is that the ruler must obey the law voluntarily and not by coercion. Hence, the ruler himself is subject to the law. He is not above it. He should keep it and should never bring his subject to do things that are incompatible with it. Aquinas holds that just human laws bind in conscience in virtue of the eternal law from which they are derived. A law may be unjust either because it is contrary to common good or it is promulgated to serve the selfish interest of the legislator or it unjustifiably imposes great burden on the people. Aquinas asserts that we are not obliged to obey an unjust law except when its disobedience will bring about scandal and disorder. (1a.IIae.96, 4.). The divine law is a law revealed imperfectly to the Jews but perfectly through Christ. Aquinas asserts that man needs divine law because he is destined to eternal happiness, which is above man's power of achievement. Furthermore, he argues that sometimes there may be conflicting human positive laws. Thus, there is need for divine law to serve as a guide for them. Again, the human positive laws do not legislate against what happens in men's minds and they are not detailed enough. As a result of this, certain wrongdoings go unpunished. Consequently, Aquinas affirms that we need in addition to human laws, "a law of God that could leave no wrongdoing unpunished." (1a. IIae. 96, 4.).

f) The Sovereign in Aquinas' Political Theory

Aquinas notes that there are different forms of government of which the good ones are monarchy, aristocracy and the republic. Of these three, Aquinas considers monarchy as the best. In order of goodness, aristocracy comes next to monarchy. Republican government is the last of these good forms of government. Each of these types of government, however, has its perversion: that of monarchy is tyranny; that of aristocracy is oligarchy; while that of republic is democracy. In the perverse forms of government, Aquinas takes tyranny as the worst. Aquinas prefers monarchy to other forms of government for it is a government of one man who rules with virtue for the realization of the common good. Aquinas' political theory as we have seen so far does not accommodate totalitarianism. The ruler who is also called sovereign does not possess absolute power. His rulership is said to come from God. And the ruler himself is under the law. A sovereign can become a tyrant, Aquinas accepts this fact. What happens then when a ruler becomes a tyrant? Aquinas does not subscribe to rebellion because of its unpleasant consequences. His argument is that if rebellion fails, the tyrant may become more tyrannical and if it succeeds, it may simply be a question of replacing one tyrant with another. However, for

Aquinas, the subjects have legitimate right to depose their ruler if they have the right to select for themselves another ruler. And he argues: "It must not be thought that such a multitude is acting unfaithfully in deposing the tyrant even though it has previously subjected itself to him in perpetuity because he has deserved that the covenant with the subjects be not kept, since, in ruling the multitude, he did not act faithfully as the office of a king demands." (Thomas Aquinas, Kingship, 27).

In order to avoid the attendant evils of rebellion, Aquinas says that it is preferable to make provisions which will ensure that a monarch does not become a tyrant than to have to put up with him once he has become one. Anyone that shows any sign of tyranny should not be allowed to assume power. Besides, he says that power should be shared between the ruler and

the people to make it impossible for the ruler to become a tyrant. Aquinas indeed speaks on how to deal with the tyrant in this way. "It is necessary that the man who is raised up to be king by those whom it concerns should be of such condition that it is improbable for him to become a tyrant...the government of the kingdom must be so arranged that the opportunity to tyranny is removed."(24).

Hobbes' Political Theory

a) Man's Condition in the State of Nature

Hobbes begins his political theory by painting a picture of a life in the state of nature. In pursuit of this objective, he claims that all men are equal in the state of nature. Explaining the reason behind this claim he says: "They are equal who can do equal things one against the other, but they who can do the greatest things namely, kill, can do equal things. All men therefore among themselves are by nature equal."(Thomas Hobbes, 144). In addition to the claim on the equality of men, Hobbes also holds that all men are equally rational in the state of nature. They use their rationality to attain their goals. And their goals are gain, self-preservation and honour. Now since men have the same goals and have equal feeling of ability and rationality to attain these ends there are bound to be always quarrels among them. This is because they seek for and fight over particular objects which inevitably they cannot enjoy at the same time. This kind of problem is further exacerbated, for, in the state of nature as Hobbes claims, there is no legitimate government to arbitrate between people. And so the life of man is "solitary, poor, nasty, brutish, and short."(Thomas Hobbes, Leviathan, 113). Other aspects of the life in the state of nature are the absence of the notions of right or wrong, justice and injustice. Where there is no ruler, according to Hobbes, there can be no law. And if there is no law, there will be no notion of justice and injustice.

Hobbes believes there are two things that induce men to come out of the state of nature. And these are: passions and reason. According to him, the most prominent passion that induces men to seek for peace instead of remaining in the insecurity of the state of nature is the fear of death. Reason helps them to articulate those principles that would lead to the attainment of peace. These principles are what he calls the laws of nature.

b) Law of Nature and Natural Right

Hobbes begins the introduction of his social contract by making a distinction between 'right' from 'law'. For him, the natural right is that liberty, which an individual has, to use whatever that is at his disposal to defend himself. That is, that freedom to use that which, according to his judgement and reason, is the best way to guarantee his safety or need. This liberty implies the absence of impediments and hindrances to use one's reason in self-defense. The law of nature on the other hand "is a precept or general rule found out by reason by which a man is forbidden to do that which is destructive of his life or taketh away the means of preserving the same and to omit that by which he thinketh it may be best preserved."(117) Thus Hobbes distinguishes right as the liberty to do something while law is that which determines or binds one. In a nutshell, natural right refers to the liberty to do something in defense of one's life whereas a natural law refers to the obligation not to do something that is destructive to life either by omission or commission. In the state of nature the right of the individual is co-extensive with his power. He has the right to kill another if he considers it appropriate in order to secure his own safety. As this right is so extensive even to the elimination of the other, it follows that life in the state of nature will be characterized by total insecurity if every individual were to use it. But paradoxically, life of security is what each individual pursues. To solve this paradox, Hobbes says that a precept or general rule of reason states "that every man ought to

endeavour for peace, as far as he has hope of obtaining it; and when he cannot obtain it, that he may seek, and use all helps and advantages of war.”(117). For Hobbes, the first part of this quotation contains the fundamental law of nature while the second contains the right of nature which is the utilization of everything at one’s disposal to defend oneself. This means that in order to attain security, one should first and foremost follow the law of nature. But when this does not yield the expected dividend, one should rely on one’s natural right to defend oneself. This type of argument leads Hobbes to the theory of social contract.

c) Social Contract

Hobbes considers life in the state of nature as unsatisfactory, as it does not help man to achieve his goals; there is pervading atmosphere of insecurity in the state of nature. But the passions in man induce him to seek for peace. The power of reason with which he is endowed enables him to construct articles of peace or agreement. These articles of peace are, for Hobbes, the laws of nature. The first and most fundamental of these laws as we have seen is that man ought to seek for peace. This is something he has come to accept from reason as he cannot obtain security if he does not seek for peace. And the second of this law of nature states that a man be willing, when others are so too, as for peace and defense of himself he shall think it necessary to lay down this right to all things; and be contended with so much liberty against other men, as he would other men against himself.(118). This law is necessary for as long as men retain their extensive right of nature, peace will continue to elude them. And so, everyone must be ready to lay down their rights. This must be a unanimous decision. No one is obliged to lay down his or her rights when others are not willing to do the same. And to lay down one’s right means to divest oneself of the liberty of constituting oneself as an obstacle or danger to another. According to Hobbes, there are two ways by which one can renounce one’s right (1) by simply renouncing it; (2) by transferring it to another person. And when one has renounced his right, he becomes duty-bound not to be a hindrance to that other to whom the general rights have been conferred upon. To do otherwise is to commit an act of injustice. An individual renounces his right by word or actions but generally by both. For Hobbes, the word “contract” is used to designate the voluntary transfer of rights. As soon as the rights are laid down by words or actions or by both, the social contract is effected.

Hobbes observes that the formation of a social contract or covenant is not the end of the matter. People may voluntarily agree to a covenant, to observe the laws of nature but if there is no coercive force they renege. All laws of nature such as justice, equity, modesty, and doing to others as we would expect them to do to us would be violated if they are not enforced by an artificial “person”. He objects to the argument that coercive force is not necessary because bees and ants live and move together without any central government. He argues that their living together is natural to them; they are acting according to their instincts: they do not use reason to solve their problems. Man is quite different from these animals. The coming together by men is by agreement or contract: it is therefore artificial and not natural. Hence, there is the need to establish a common power or authority which will direct the actions of men to their advantage. When the individuals agree to give up the rights of governing themselves to a person or assembly of men, referred to as the sovereign, a commonwealth is formed.

d) The Rights of the Sovereign

The sovereign has unlimited power in Hobbes’ political theory. And this power of the sovereign limits public participation in government. The sovereign is said to represent the multitude. He makes judgments and decisions on behalf of the people. All his actions and decisions are valid. He is the embodiment of public reason. According to Hobbes, the sovereign

did not make any covenant with the people. The covenant to allow him to rule was made between the people themselves. They transferred their rights to him so that he can protect them and ensure peace to them. Therefore, the subjects are bound to obey him. According to Hobbes, the subjects have no right to depose their sovereign or transfer their allegiance to another. So, rebellion is forbidden. The sovereign has the right to censorship of books. Public opinions and discussions are forbidden. As Sorgi observes in Hobbes's political theory, there is no space either for the form of participation going under the name of public opinion. Hobbes reduces this to seditious opinions and condemns altogether, especially in *Behemoth*, any free debate of political and religious themes which at the same time was encouraged by universities and churches. (Sorgi, 85).

Hobbes allows that the sovereign can constitute a parliament but he is not bound by its decision. It is only a consultative body; it represents the people but not absolutely. It is just there to give advice to the sovereign. Hobbes does not allow the sharing of power between the executive, legislative and judiciary. For him, the sharing of power was responsible for the English Civil War; power at the time was shared between the king, the Lords and the Commons. And so in Hobbes' political theory, the sovereign is competent to make a law, and to enforce it. He can adjudicate justice between people. He cannot be accused of wrongdoing or injustice or be punished for misadministration. Hobbes argues that the sovereign is only a 'representative' person whether in one man or assembly of men. Whatever the sovereign does is the collective will of the subjects and thus is legitimate. This explains, for example, why it is the sovereign that appoints his successor. His choice is presumed to be the same as that of the subjects. As Bertrand Russell puts it "The part of the people, in Hobbes' system, ends completely with the first choice of a sovereign. The successor is to be determined by the sovereign...it is admitted that the sovereign will usually choose one of his own children, or a near relative if he has no children, but it is held that no law ought to prevent him from choosing otherwise." (Russell, 537).

The sovereign has the right to decide who among the subjects should be honored and who should be punished with ignominy or to be giving a necessary punishment for an offence. He has the right to decide when it is necessary to call out his subjects for war in defense of their territorial integrity. In Hobbes's theory, the subjects are forbidden to criticize the sovereign. Hobbes puts it this way, "They (the subject) ought to be informed, how great a fault it is to speak evil to sovereign representative, whether one man or an assembly of men; or to argue or dispute his power, or any way to use his name irreverently." (Thomas Hobbes, *Leviathan*, 327). The sovereign, as we have seen earlier, can be a man or assembly of men. Hobbes prefers monarchy to assembly of men. He has several reasons for this preference. Russell enumerates some of these reasons as follows. "...the total number of favourites is likely to be fewer under a monarch. A monarch can hear advice from anybody secretly; an assembly can only hear advice from its own members, and that publicly. In an assembly, the chance absence of some may cause a different party to obtain the majority and thus produce a change of policy...If assembly is divided against itself the result may be civil war." (536). As we can see from the above, the unlimited power of the sovereign limits the participation of the subjects in government. Now let us see the liberty of the subjects within this unlimited power of the sovereign.

e) The Liberty of the Subjects

From what has been said on the rights of the sovereign, one can easily wonder whether there is still any liberty left to the subjects. Indeed, Hobbes theory of transfer of rights to the sovereign has a lot of implication both for the sovereign as we have seen and also for the

subjects. The transfer of rights has conferred on the sovereign an unlimited power; it brings about the limited participation of the individual in governments. This is because whatever the sovereign does is said to be the actions and wills of the subjects who authorize him to represent them. Nevertheless, Hobbes grants that the subjects have the liberty (absence of impediments to do what one wants) to such matters on which the law is silent such as buying and selling, diet, raising of children, etc. Here, the subjects use their discretion to do what they want. However, the liberty of the subjects in these matters vanishes as soon as the sovereign makes any legislation on them. Hobbes grants that the subject has the right to resist or disobey the sovereign in defense of his life. He puts it this way “If the sovereign commands a man, though justly condemned, to kill, wound or maim himself, or not to resist those that assault him; or to abstain from the use of food, air, medicine, or any other thing without which he cannot live; yet hath that man the liberty to disobey.”(204). More so, Hobbes grants that the subject has the liberty not to divulge the crime he committed when being interrogated by the sovereign. He is free to reveal it only when he has been assured of pardon. This concession granted to the subject is consistent with Hobbes’ emphasis on the right to life. For the right to defend oneself is inalienable and is supreme. Hobbes has a sort of egoistic political theory; for he allows also that the subject out of timorousness can refuse to join in a war against the enemy. For him, this action is not unjust and should not be treated as treachery. (205).

There are other areas at which Hobbes allows liberty to the subjects. If the subject, for instance, becomes a prisoner of war, he is free to accept the conditions of the victor if that will ensure the safety of his life. Besides, in a given war where another subdues a sovereign, the subject has the liberty to show allegiance to the new sovereign and not to his former. Again the subject has the liberty not to be under the authority of the sovereign if he has been banished by the latter. According to Hobbes, “The obligation of the subjects to the sovereign is understood to last as long, and no longer as the power lasted by which he is able to protect them, for the right which men have to protect themselves, when none else can protect them, can by no covenant be relinquished.”(208).

In Hobbes, the liberty of the subjects is characterized by egoism; it is never altruistic; it is restricted to what concerns the individual himself. The subject has no liberty in public matters; he is not allowed to have a private opinion which is different from the public one. According to Hobbes, as Sorgi writes: “The citizen can have no private opinion, even of an ethical nature, nor can he have appeal to his own conscience, since the law is the public conscience, by which he had already undertaken to be guided.”(Sorgi, 85). Hobbes holds that the greatest liberty of the subjects is where the law is silent. (Thomas Aquinas, *Leviathan*,206)

Dissimilarities between Aquinas and Hobbes on Political Theory

There are indeed many disparities between Aquinas and Hobbes in their respective political theories. Their positions seem to be at the extreme poles and at parallels to each other. The pessimistic picture, which Hobbes has painted about life in the state of nature, was what made him construct a political theory that is asymmetrical to the traditions of Aristotle and Aquinas. This view is clearly brought out by Leo Strauss who holds, “Hobbes obviously starts, not, as the great traditions (Aristotle and Aquinas etc) did, from natural ‘law’ i.e. from an objective order, but from natural ‘right’ i.e. from absolutely justified subjective claim which, far from being dependent on any previous law, order, or obligation, is itself the origin of all law, order, or obligation.”(Strauss, 7). Thus, since Aquinas and Hobbes do not agree in the first premise their conclusions differ tremendously.

Aquinas holds that it is natural for man to form society for man is a political animal, a being that is meant to live with others. That man should form society is a fact that is derived

from his nature. He argues as we have seen that other creatures attain their ends necessarily or instinctively but man is endowed with reason to be used to attain his ends. He argues further that the fact that man has language as a medium of communication which other animals such as bees and ants do not have, shows that society is more natural to man than to these creatures. Hobbes, on the other hand, does not subscribe to this view. For him, man is essentially selfish. Thus, society is not natural to him. Society or state is something that is artificial. (Thomas Hobbes, *Leviathan*, 157). It is constructed by man as a way of escaping from the state of nature. Furthermore, and contrary to Aquinas position, Hobbes claims that society is more natural to animals than to man, for they do not need coercion in order to live together as is the case with man. Aquinas believes that God willed human society and political authority. He denies Augustine's position that the state is as a result of original sin. He affirms that if the state of innocence had persisted, human society and government would still exist for people need to have the opportunity to exercise their gifts for the common good. Hobbes does not subscribe to this view. His position is rather similar to that of Augustine except that he does not bring in the question of original sin. He holds that man is fundamentally selfish. The result of this selfishness is the war of all against all. The state exists to install peace, order and security which man searches selfishly and desperately in the state of nature.

It is the position of Aquinas that the state is a perfect society with its end, which is the common good of all. He, however, adds that in matters which pertain to supernatural end of man, the state is subordinate to the Church. On the other hand, Hobbes maintains that everything including religion is under the state. In Aquinas' political theory there is no totalitarianism. The ruler does not have absolute power. There are magistrates who share power with him in order to prevent him from becoming a tyrant. The ruler is under the law and must obey it voluntarily. On the contrary, in Hobbes' politics, the ruler has unlimited power. He is above the law such that he cannot be accused of breaking the law. He does not share power with anybody.

Aquinas and Hobbes differ in their notion of natural law. For Aquinas, natural law consists of that part of the eternal law, which is particularly suited for man; it is the participation of the rational creature in the eternal law. The idea of eternal law refers to the fact that Divine Reason governs the whole community of the universe. Law is here referred to as eternal because God's conception of his plan is eternal. Thus, the natural law can be said to consist of broad general principles that reflect God's intentions for man. On the other hand, Hobbes does not subscribe to the eternity of natural law. Natural law, for Hobbes, is a dictate of egoistic prudence. He believes that everyone instinctively pursues his self-preservation and security. However, he accepts that man is not simply a creature of instinct and impulse; man can pursue his self-preservation rationally. He affirms that it is rational self-preservation that leads men to form a commonwealth. Natural laws are laws that give the conditions for the establishment of society and government. They can be called articles of agreement according to Hobbes. Hence, for him the natural law is not derived from eternal law.

For Aquinas, as we have noted earlier, human law defines and explicates the natural law and it is just in as much as it is derived from it. There is perversion of justice if the human law is not drawn from the natural law. On the other hand, Hobbes does not believe that there is unjust law. He argues; "Because every subject is by this institution author of all the actions and judgments of the sovereign instituted: it follows, that whatever he doth, it can be no injury to any of his subjects; not ought he to be by any of them accused of injustice."(163) His argument is that when the sovereign is making a law, it is the entire people that are making it. And what the people, united in the sovereign, have agreed upon cannot be described as unjust. In Aquinas' political theory, the subjects have a hand in

choosing their king. And they are to choose someone who is not likely to become a tyrant. These same people who have the right to select have also the right to depose a king if he becomes a tyrant. Aquinas expresses this idea as follows: "If to provide itself a king belongs to the multitude, it is not unjust that the king be deposed or has his power restricted by the same multitude if, becoming a tyrant, he abuses the royal power." (Thomas Aquinas, kingship, 27) On the contrary, for Hobbes, the part the people play in choosing their leader ends with the election of the first sovereign. The subsequent leaders are to be chosen arbitrarily by the incumbent rulers.

In Hobbes' socio-political system, the absolute authority of the sovereign limits the right and liberty of the individuals. He believes that this type of political arrangement is for the good of the subjects. He has been criticized on this by D. Gauthier. The latter argues that the subjects under the Hobbesian sovereign do not indeed attain optimal outcome. (Gauthier, 163). He believes that the limited participation of the subjects in public issues makes the outcome of Hobbes' theory to be sub-optimal. Aquinas' account of politics, on the other hand, does not marginalize the subjects to such an extent as Hobbes has done. In his arrangement, the subjects have rights in public reason. They have right and liberty to elect magistrates to represent them. The magistrates do not simply represent the people but they share powers with the sovereign. Thus the subjects are involved in deciding their fate. And so there is a more optimal outcome in Aquinas political theory than in Hobbes.

In stressing the need for the existence of society, Aquinas affirms that there is inequality among men, which exists even in the state of innocence. Hence, there is need for a society so that those who are more gifted may have the opportunity to exercise their gifts for the common good. Hobbes does not subscribe to the idea of inequality among men. For him, all men are equal. He argues that they are equal who can do equal things to one another, namely, the ability to kill. Thus, all men are said to be equally rational and have, consequently, equal rights. This aspect of Hobbes' theory has been criticized by Leo Strauss. He argues that if all men are equally rational and with equal rights, what then is the criterion behind choosing one man and not another and conferring on him the unlimited powers of sovereign which limits the participation of the other equally rational men in public matters? (Strauss, 159).

Similarities between Aquinas and Hobbes on Political Theory

In spite of the many differences existing between Aquinas and Hobbes in their respective theories, there are certain points of view, which they share in common. Both of them subscribe to the idea of monarchy as the best form of government. But of course, they have different reasons for taking this position. For Aquinas, monarchy is preferred over other forms of government for it gives stricter unity and is more conducive to peace. Besides, it is natural for it bears analogy to the following: (1) Reason as it rules over others function of the soul (2) The heart as it assumes supremacy over other parts of the body (3) God as he governs creation. Hobbes, on his part, prefers monarchy because the number of favourites is not likely to be many and, besides, a monarchy can hear advice from anybody secretly. Both Aquinas and Hobbes commonly share the same opinion that laws bind in conscience but they have different arguments to sustain their position. Aquinas' argument is that the human law is a law that is derived from natural law and the latter is a portion of the eternal law, which refers to God's reason in the government of creation. For Aquinas, the human law must be obeyed except insofar as it is not derived from the natural law. Hobbes, on the other hand, has a different reason for calling for obedience to law. He argues that through social contract, men have submitted their rights and their wills to one man to obey him. It is unjust for one to renege on this contract.

Another point of view shared by both Aquinas and Hobbes is that they condemn the idea of rebellion. Aquinas speaks at length on the evils of rebellion. For him, rebellion can make a tyrant to become more tyrannical if it fails; if on the other hand it succeeds it may mean replacing one tyrant with another. He argues that the new ruler in order to install himself more properly against all possible oppositions may become more ruthless, more tyrannical than his predecessor. But Hobbes has completely different reason for discouraging rebellion against the monarch. According to him, the ruler did not make any covenant with the people. The covenant was made between the people themselves. They transferred their rights and wills to him so that he can ensure peace to them. Thus, the subjects are bound to him. Therefore, they have no right to depose or rebel against him since the contract was made not with him but rather among themselves. Both Aquinas and Hobbes subscribe to capital punishment. They accept that the state can deprive an individual his life for the sake of common good. They also recognize egoism in man. But whereas for Hobbes this egoism is total, for Aquinas it is not so since man is a political animal and thus has social tendency.

Evaluation and Conclusion

We have seen the respective political theories of Aquinas and Hobbes, their dissimilarities and similarities. While Aquinas constructed his theory with a view to satisfying both the temporal and supernatural ends of man, Hobbes does so simply for the temporal end. The merit of Aquinas is that some of his contributions to politics are still relevant today. The sharing of power between the ruler and the subjects is still relevant today. His allowance that the subjects can criticize the government is in line with modern and contemporary thinking, as well as preference for mixed constitution. However, Aquinas' problem is his belief that general good is above and better than the good of the individual. He makes this assertion within the context of his theory of law when he claims that no command stands to reason unless it serves the general good.(Thomas Aquinas Summa, 1a. IIae. 90.2.). Copleston observes the problem in this assertion when he says, "ambiguity shows itself in St. Thomas' doctrine of the relationship of individual to the state. It is true that he is trying to show simply that law is concerned primarily with the common good rather than the good of the individual, but he does speak as though the individual citizen were subordinated to the whole of which he forms a part."(Copleston,147). Verno Bourke makes similar observation when he says that in St. Thomas, the individual is obliged to sacrifice his own temporary interest where this is required for the public good; he is however, not free to subordinate his moral welfare and salvation to the public interest (Vernon, 229). In another context, Aquinas states clearly that since the good of the whole people comes first, political prudence has pre-eminence over the individual and family prudence.(Thomas Aquinas, Summa, 1a. IIae, 47.10.). Hence, it appears that in temporal matters the individual is lost in the whole. Kant will certainly disagree with this. For him, the individual is an end in himself. His principle of action otherwise known as categorical imperative is "So act as to treat humanity, whether in your own person or in that of any other, in every case as an end withal, never as means only."(Kant, 20) Kant believes that the good of the individual is supreme and prior to that of the whole or state.

Hobbes, on the other hand, not only that it is true he began his political theory with a pessimistic view of man and the life in the state of nature but he is said to have been influenced by historical circumstances like the English Civil War. He believes that this war took place simply because power was shared between the king, the Lords and the Commons. This historical fact, in addition to his pessimistic view of life in the nature, led him to construct a political theory in which power is concentrated in the sovereign. The authoritarianism which he advocated was seen in many countries at the time. Russell comments on the merits of

Hobbes theory especially his concentration of power at the hands of the sovereign as follows “In Germany, Italy, Russia and Japan, the government has had even more power than Hobbes thought desirable. On the whole...as regards powers of the state, the world has gone, as Hobbes wished, after a long liberal period during which, at least apparently, it was moving in opposite direction.”(Russell, 539). For Russell, however, Hobbes political theory, of course, has the problem of presuming that the interests of the individuals are the same.(540). This false presumption is clearly seen on his assumption that the interests of the monarch are identical with those of the subjects. The subjects obviously have different interests. Also, limiting the liberty and participation of the subjects in public issues by the unlimited power of the sovereign makes Hobbes’ political theory far less optimal. It is clear to us that individuals are gifted with several potentialities that can enhance the progress of the state when harnessed. To leave every decision on the progress of the state in the hands of the sovereign alone, in his whims and caprices, undermines development of such a state.

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