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The Discourse of Body Politic in Thomas Hobbes' Leviathan

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This paper aims to analyze the occurrences of the metaphors of body politic and political disease in the treatise *Leviathan*, written by one of the most influential political theorist from the seventeenth century, Thomas Hobbes. The concept of the state as a body politic, the analogy between the afflictions of the body and the "afflictions" of the state, the actions of the political actors seen as "physicians" of the said state had witnessed widespread use in early modern English political thought, in support of a wide range of political outlooks, from John Fortescue's "constitutionalism" to more absolutist templates proposed by the likes of Stephen Gardiner and Edward Forset. In the first half of the seventeenth century, serious changes occurred both in political philosophy and medicine, with respect to the traditional view of the body of man. These changes had in turn echoes in political thought, influencing both the language employed and the substance of the new political templates, and one such treatise where the mingling of the new and old body politic occurs is Thomas Hobbes' *Leviathan*.

Mots-clés :

The seventeenth century was a period when multiple changes occurred in Europe in the field of political philosophy and in the field of medicine, changes which left their mark on the mindset of the people of those times. Apparently, there should be little connection between these two fields. Yet, in a certain context, they were intrinsically linked. First and foremost, it should be noted that the classical perception of medicine and its practitioners, as expressed by physicians such as Galen and assumed by their medieval and early modern continuers, was that the *medicus* should be a philosopher as well and his field of knowledge should extend in multiple directions, many which, from a modern perspective, would seem to have little connection with medicine per se. It is not our intention here to undertake an analysis of the "portrait" of the medieval physician, as it was understood at that time, but only to point out that this opinion regarding both his competences and his role would facilitate his appearance as a figure of speech in medieval and especially in early modern political language.

Yet regardless of how "universal" the knowledge of the physician was supposed to be, the connection between political and medical thought could not have been established without the existence of an all-encompassing paradigm of the human body as a microcosm which faithfully mirrored the universal macrocosm. If the human body was regarded as such, this logically led to the situation where the human political constructs

could in turn be considered analogous to the respective human body. The corporal analogy was understood to be valid in terms of organization, composition and functioning of both bodies. If the state could thus be described and explained in organic terms, then so could its "afflictions". In certain medieval and early modern treatises, but especially in those from early modern England, one could notice the use of medical principles and terminology in order to explain the difficulties one state might face and how to solve them.

A shift from the general medical outlook started to occur from the sixteenth century, shift which gained momentum in the seventeenth century, accompanied by a change in the outlook regarding the human body. At first, there was a certain distancing from Galen's anatomic model, by identifying and correcting some of its errors (in particular by Vesalius), but, initially, this process lacked vigour, the criticism expressed against Galen taking care not to downplay him too much. In the seventeenth century, though, William Harvey provides a new model of the circulation of blood, in direct opposition to Galen, while maintaining Aristotle's idea according to which the heart was the most important part of the body and staying faithful to the old analogy between macrocosm and microcosm (Conrad et al, 1998, 335-336). This transformation was accompanied by a change of paradigm in the natural philosophy, whose most important promoter was Réné Descartes. If Harvey limited himself to correcting Galen's anatomy, while staying faithful to Aristotle's outlook, Descartes delivers a powerful blow to the old idea of the body as a microcosm. What Descartes proposed was the so-called "mechanical model", according to which all the actions of the body must have a mechanical explanation (Conrad et al, 1998, 339). The new comparison is between the body as a machine designed by God and the machines devised by men, replacing Aristotle's old outlook of an universe composed of elements and qualities with that of an universe composed of particles in motion (Conrad et al, 1998, 339-342).

Hobbes' idea of body politic and the concept of artificiality

The changes in the medical paradigm of Western Europe and in the outlook of the corporal imaginary had an effect on the way the corporal metaphor manifests itself in the mid-seventeenth century. David George Hale speaks even of "a decay of meaning in the organic analogy", which is replaced for all intents and purposes by a social contract, noticing that there was a sharp decline regarding the quality and the quantity of the occurrences of the organic analogy, while its validity was subjected to explicit attacks (Hale, 1971, 127). At first sight, there are numerous similarities between the occurrences of this metaphor in the political theory of that period and those from the Tudor's age. Thomas Hobbes (1588-1679), in *Leviathan*, work published in 1651, makes repeated references to the concept of "body politic" and the organic analogies of the Commonwealth. He even devotes an entire chapter to the metaphor of political disease and those social, economic or political issues which could have troubled the functioning

of the Commonwealth, for which Hobbes uses the term “infirmities”.

Thomas Hobbes lived during a time when England underwent radical political and religious transformations and, consequently, both his career and his works bear the mark of those changes. Hobbes spent a great deal of his youth outside England, where he devoted himself to the study of classical Greek and Latin writers, activity which resulted in a translation of Thucydides’ *History of Peloponnesian War,* in English, published in 1628. Also during this period, Hobbes devoted significant time to the study of physics and the motion of human body, which had a great influence on his concept of body politic depicted later in *Leviathan*, as it moved away from the typology of his forerunners within the doctrinal trend of the body politic. Hobbes returned to England in 1637, but the political struggles which were taking place in his country during that period forced him to seek refuge again on the European continent. It is possible for this exile to have been caused by the writing in England of a treatise called *The Elements of Law, Natural and Politic*, which argued that the state was not necessarily formed through the consent of those subjected to government – an opinion which could not have drawn the Parliament’s favour. In Paris, Hobbes wrote and published *Leviathan, or the Matter, Forme and Power of a Common Wealth, Ecclesiastical and Civil*, after which he returns to England, where he submits to the new regime and he is allowed to retire to private life.

In *Leviathan,* the way Hobbes distances himself from the tradition of his forerunners, under the new medical and philosophical influences of the seventeenth century, is by declaring the Commonwealth “an artificial man”, in contrast with the exclusively natural character of the body politic until that time. What is to be understood by “artificial”, Hobbes explains himself in his introduction to *Leviathan:* it is not about “artificiality” only because this Commonwealth (or body politic) represents a human creation, but it is also about the imagining of this body politic as a machine, a combination of gears and springs:

“Nature (the art whereby God hath made and governes the world) is by the art of man, as in many other things, so in this also imitated, that it can make an artificial animal. For seeing life is but a motion of limbs, the beginning whereof is in some principall part within, why may we not say that all automata (engines that move themselves by springs and wheeles as doth a watch) have an artificiall life? For what is the heart, but a spring; and the nerves, but so many strings; and the joynts, but so many wheeles, giving motion to the whole body, such as was intended by the Artificer? Art goes yet further, imitating that rationall and most excellent worke of Nature, man. For by art is created that great Leviathan called a Commonwealth, or State (in Latin, Civitas), which is but an artificiall man; though of greater stature and strength than the naturall, for whose protection and defence it was intended” (Hobbes, 1904, XVIII).

Hobbes follows thus the model of paradigm transformation which occurred during the seventeenth century and which consisted in the abandonment of the old outlook of the man as a microcosm mirroring on a lesser scale the universal macrocosm. A machine is no longer a natural given, an immutable order of nature which has to be preserved in

order to avoid the fatal consequences of breaching it: the result was that the order existing within this body politic was no longer an immanent characteristic of that body, but was dictated exclusively by reason. Thus, Hobbes will constantly stress the artificiality of the state. For him, the agreement of men which led to the creation of the Commonwealth "is by covenant only, which is artificiall" (Hobbes, 1904, 118), while the government of the state is provided in the same manner, through "artificiall chains, called *Civil Lawes*" (Hobbes, 1904, 149). The consequence of being artificial is that the civil law can be changed by the sovereign power, a monarch or an assembly, which is thus not subjected to it; that makes a sharp contrast to the opinions of John Fortescue, who considers that the sovereign (in Fortescue's case, the king) cannot alter the laws without the subjects' consent or against their will (Fortescue, 1949, 30-33). For Hobbes, though, only the natural laws are immutable and eternal; civil laws, "the commands of the Commonwealth", are not and the sovereign is free from their bonds. Here, Hobbes' opinion runs contrary not only to Fortescue's tradition, but also to the typical English legal thought from the first half of the seventeenth century when insisting that the laws "are to be signified by sufficient signs" (Hobbes, 1904, 189) and constantly stressing their creation as an act of will of the sovereignty, while in England "the law in force was a customary one and… unwritten custom remained the paradigm of a good law" (Burgess, 1993, 126). It certainly serves Hobbes' opinions on the rights of the sovereignty to avoid a discussion of the common law: while civil law was more than willing to consider the adequacy of its codes through the prism of the natural law (and thus be changed accordingly), something which Hobbes does, common law, with its emphasis on tradition and historicity, could have been regarded as immune to the altering power of the sovereign. According to J.P. Sommerville, "common lawyers believed that customary law was not *made* by any man and […] they limited royal power", while a famous jurist like Edward Coke argued that "rational custom imposed limitations upon rulers, whatever the means by which their ancestors had gained power" (Sommerville, 1986, 105-106). Civil law, on the other hand, authored by the sovereign, could be bent to the sovereign's will. Hobbes' preference for civil law was certainly made easier by what Glenn Burgess calls "the destruction of the hegemony of common law language" (Burgess, 1993, 224), in the years leading to the English civil war, through the actions of Charles I[1], whose flouting of the law to achieve his goals undermined the confidence of the Englishmen in the capability of the common law to protect their liberties.

If the corporal template proposed by Hobbes brings about a significant innovation by this shift from the model of the microcosm to a mechanical model, in other regards he falls in line with the tendencies expressed by his predecessors. First and foremost, it is about the extremely important role granted to the soul within the body politic. If other authors of political treatises where this corporal metaphor shows up equate the soul with the laws, for Thomas Hobbes, this immaterial element of the body is associated to the similarly abstract concept of sovereignty – which Glenn Burgess considers to have been for Hobbes, just as for Bodin, "not a normative recommendation, but an analytic characteristic of all stable polities" (Burgess, 1993, 123). According to the typical corporal template, the soul is the element which grants life, but, for Hobbes, this notion

also has a tangible result, the motion: existence, for Thomas Hobbes, is first and foremost a movement. It is necessarily though to take into consideration another fundamental difference between "the soul of the body politic", as it appears in *Leviathan,* and its previous versions, from John Fortescue to Edward Forset: the consequences of Hobbes giving up on the equivalence between the macrocosm and the body politic. The macrocosm is a natural *datum*, a divine creation, whose order is dictated by the divinity; the human body was in turn a microcosm, thus a natural element, and this quality implicitly reflects, by analogy, upon the body politic and its composing parts. In the end, it was not meaningless that the medieval and early modern political theorists depicted any attack against the body politic as an attempt against the natural order. By imagining the body politic as a mechanical creation, though, its soul is no longer a natural element, but it is explicitly proclaimed as being artificial. The role of the divine *logos* in the creation of man is overtaken (in the creation of the Commonwealth) by what we could call a "social contract" and which Thomas Hobbes calls the "pacts and covenants" leading to the joining of the parts within a single body politic:

"And in which the soveraignty is an artificiall soul, as giving life and motion to the whole body; the magistrates and other officers of judicature and execution, artificial joynts; reward and punishment (by which fastned to the seate of the soveraignty, every joynt and member is moved to performe his duty) are the nerves, that do the same in the body naturall; the wealth and riches of all the particular members are the strength; salus populi (the peoples safety) its businesse; counsellors, by whom all things needfull for it to know are suggested unto it, are the memory; equity and lawes, an artificiall reason and will; concord, health; sedition, sicknesse; and civill war, death. Lastly, the pact and covenants, by which the parts of this body politique were at first made, set together, and united, resemble that fiat, or the Let us make man, pronounced by God in the Creation" (Hobbes, 1904, XVIII-XIX).

Hobbes often uses, as well, the term "sovereign", but one must take notice not to consider this reference as meaning an individual person, because the author makes it explicitly clear that the sovereign is the one granted, through an original covenant, the power to rule and "represent" the Commonwealth. The distinction is important, because not just the monarch can possess sovereignty. This feature can be found in other types of governments, which Hobbes, even though he considers them less appropriate than the monarchy (Hobbes, 1904, 131-133), acknowledges that they exist. Hobbes' opinion regarding the importance of the sovereignty falls easily within the common consensus of the traditional theory of the corporal metaphor and within the consensus of the English political thought in the first half of the seventeenth century: the dissolution of the sovereignty meant the dissolution of the state and no disagreement could emerge over this issue (Hobbes, 1904, 426-427). But a major rift appears with regard to how Hobbes envisions this sovereignty: "Power unlimited is absolute soveraignity" and "therefore no other can be representative of any part of them [the subjects], but so far forth, as he [the sovereign] shall give leave" (Hobbes, 1904, 159). The problem here was that, in English political thought, "absolute soveraignty" did not mean at all "power unlimited": it meant a power which could not be resisted, but upon which there were

still placed restraints (such as the coronation oath). Absolute power was not “subject to appeal”, true, but “it existed within limits that were defined by law, limits the transgressions of which could be policed by the law” (Burgess, 1996, 31). Hobbes will translate this concept of “absolute” into the idea of a sovereign above the law and that was something which ran contrary to the commonly accepted tenets of the English political thought.

In like fashion, the idea of artificiality could have had additional important consequences for the theories of government, especially if one recalls the context when *Leviathan* was written, that of the English civil war. First and foremost, an artificial element is no longer as indispensable as a natural one, and it can be replaced. The theory of political thaumaturgy until that time implied that the application of any remedy was obviously a procedure full of pain and suffering and, most importantly, avoided to provide a solution if the ruling element of the body – the sovereign, usually associated with the head or heart – was himself afflicted2, preferring to focus on prophylaxis. The theoretical justification of this attitude was based on the fact that the ultimate remedy – the complete removal from the body – could not be applied to the main part of the body (head/heart) without causing the destruction of the whole. The idea of artificiality no longer implies such restrictions, but, as we will see, Hobbes does not fully exploit the possibilities which this innovation provided.

Following a pattern inaugurated by John of Salisbury during the twelfth century, Hobbes ascribes a role within the body politic to categories such as “magistrates and officers”, but, at the same time, he displays a much greater propensity than any of his predecessors for the inclusion in this template of some non-individual elements, which are not parts of the body politic, but features: such are memory, health, strength or harmony. Also following the old template, Hobbes establishes the same link between the relationships existing among the parts of the body and its health. This *topos* of the corporal metaphor remained basically constant from the twelfth century up until the seventeenth century: harmony means health, discord brings disease. Following the typical medical axiom, the more blatant the absence of unity, the more precarious the health of the body. In fact, the negative effect of the “discord” is so great it can destroy even those things which, theoretically, should not have been able to destroy, such as the “soul of the Commonwealth”. The concept of soul implies the idea of immortality, so it would naturally be expected for the sovereignty to be immortal as well, if this analogy is followed to the letter. Yet, despite that immortality was the intent of the original covenant which created a particular Commonwealth, sovereignty is still vulnerable, not only to “forreign war”, but also to “the ignorance and passions of men, it hath in it, from the very institution, many seeds of a naturall mortality, by intestine discord” (Hobbes, 1904, 156). The subjects owe obedience to the sovereignty, as set by the initial covenant of the Commonwealth, because this obedience is what enables the sovereignty to fulfil its main task, which is the protection of the body politic. A break in this relationship is akin to a rupture in the relationship between the body and its soul – with fatal consequences, as “once [the soul] departed from the body, the members doe no more receive their motion from it” (Hobbes, 1904, 156).

The use of abstract concepts to identify the parts of the Commonwealth with, which Hobbes started when he referred to the “soveraignty” as its soul, is continued at a lower level of this pyramid of power. The traditional corporal template of the English political thought was rather simple: the king was the supreme organ, as head or heart, his subjects were the parts. Yet, Hobbes identifies a new element of the Commonwealth, which was previously absent: the so-called “systemes”, which were “any number of men joined in one interest or one businesse”, regarded as analogous to the “muscles of a body naturall” (Hobbes, 1904, 158). And the originality of Hobbes’ thought becomes once more apparent, because these “systemes” are often associations, which can also be termed as “bodies politic” – something which Hobbes does not hesitate to do, therefore creating a body politic within the greater body politic of the Commonwealth. Yet, since these systems can be either lawful, or unlawful, having thus a negative effect upon the realm, a conundrum is reached: how can both be named as “muscles” of the Commonwealth, if the former put the body politic into motion, while the latter hinder it? Hobbes tried to solve this dilemma by doing a sharp turn with regard to the terms he ascribed to each of them: after providing an explanation for each kind of system, only the lawful one retained their analogy with the muscles of the body, while the unlawful ones became the “wens, biles and apostemes”, which, in another bow to Galen’s theory of humours, are “engendred by the unnaturall conflux of evill humours” (Hobbes, 1904, 170).

A constant of the corporal analogy is the presence of the king’s officials, whom are obviously parts of the Commonwealth, but ones with a much greater responsibility, as elements supposed to help the king preserve the Commonwealth. Fifty years before, Forset went as far as to ascribe to them the role of physicians of the realm, albeit subordinate to the king (Forset, 1973, 74-75). In the template proposed by Hobbes, they are associated with the idea of motion, as “nerves and tendons that move the several limbs of a body naturall” (Hobbes, 1904, 171). Yet, here, Hobbes displays a certain inconsistency when describing the structure of the Commonwealth by analogy with the human body, because not all the types of sovereign’s agents are compared with a part of the human body. Those who “have a general administration” are “the nerves and tendons”, while those entrusted with the power to judge and teach are “the voice”, those tasked with enforcing the judgements and “acts tending to the conservation of the peace” are “the hands”, someone sent to another country to explore its strength “may be compared to an eye”, while those appointed to receive petitions and information from the people are “the ears” (Hobbes, 1904, 171-174). A good number of state officials are left without a specific analogy – doubtless, because there are many more of them than of any body parts, thus the extent of the analogy, if one writer wants to go deep into it, is naturally limited. Nevertheless, an important part such as the heart is left without any element of the Commonwealth being associated with it. The reason for this omission probably resides in the old importance of the heart, which was so often regarded as the chief part of the body. Since the heart played such a significant role in the nourishment of the Commonwealth – “veins receiving the bloud from the severall parts of the body, carry it to the heart; where being made vitall, the heart by the arteries sends it out again, to enliven, and enable for motion all the members of the

same”3 (Hobbes, 1904, 180) –, associating it with a subordinate part of the body was risky: it could have created the possibility of an authority which could challenge the sovereign. A solution could have been for Hobbes to establish a multiple analogy, in the manner of Edward Forset4, where the sovereign was not just the soul, but also the heart, yet the author avoids the issue altogether.

The diseases of the artificial body politic

Just as it was the case with many of the writers making use of the corporal analogy, a metaphor of the political disease develops in *Leviathan* as well. We have already seen several references made by Hobbes to the potential dissolution of the Commonwealth if some unfavourable conditions were met. “Discord” was chief among them, but, as we will see, it was not the only one, as the author devotes an entire chapter, 29, to the description of the “diseases of the Commonwealth”, with their causes and effects.

In making his case, Hobbes remains many a times faithful to the traditional vision of the political pathology. For him, the Commonwealth can collapse as a result of such an affliction which originates inside itself or as a result of an external aggression or an infiltration from the outside, whatever kind it might be. These internal afflictions of the Commonwealth can be caused either by the imperfect institutions, Hobbes using in this regard, in order to illustrate his opinion, examples belonging to the history of medieval England and the Greek and Roman antiquity, or by the “poison of those seditious doctrines”. Within the initial template proposed by Thomas Hobbes in his introduction to *Leviathan*, the law (together with equity) was equated to the reason and the will of the human body: the law, together with those entrusted with its enforcement, had the role of an arbiter of good and evil. Accordingly, one of the most dangerous afflictions of the body politic was the tendency of the individual members not to submit to it anymore: “From this false doctrine, men are disposed to debate with themselves, and dispute the commands of the Commonwealth, and afterwards to obey, or disobey them as in their private judgments they shall think fit” (Hobbes, 1904, 234). But the traditional outlook is followed by Hobbes not only in regard to the matter of obedience, but also with respect to the attitude about the division of the power: “There is a sixth doctrine, plainly, and directly against the essence of a Commonwealth, and it is this, that the soveraign power may be divided. For what is it to divide the power of a Commonwealth, but to dissolve it; for powers divided mutually destroy each other” (Hobbes, 1904, 236).

The issue of the relationship between the monarch and the law can be found as well among those “seditious” doctrines which the authors strives to fight against. The subject was approached as early as twelfth century, by John of Salisbury, and the opinions on this issue were always quite divided. The only consensus was that the sovereign was arguably subject to divine and natural law (which sometimes were considered as covering the same area, while other times they were regarded at least partially distinct), but the relationship between him and the human law was much more

complex. The opinions of all sorts of writers ranged from the idea that it was desirable for the sovereign to submit to the human law, but without being compelled to do so, to much more radical attitudes, such as that expressed by John Fortescue, who argued that a prince could not change the laws without the consent of the subjects (Fortescue, 1949, 30-31). Hobbes tends to be more absolutist than most of his contemporaries in this regard: "A fourth opinion, repugnant to the nature of a Commonwealth, is this: that he that hath the soveraign power is subject to the civill lawes. […] Which errour, because it setteth the lawes above the soveraign, setteth also a judge above him, and a power to punish him; which is to make a new soveraign; and again, for the same reason a third to punish the second; and so continually without end, to the confussion, and dissolution of the Commonwealth" (Hobbes, 1904, 235). Hobbes considered thus that the sovereign was not subject to those laws whose author was himself, because the existence of a law presupposed the existence of punishments if said law was broken. The laws being the "reason and will" of the Commonwealth, one could not guarantee the functioning of the body politic if the inviolability of the law could not be guaranteed as well. But a penalty against the sovereign meant also his demotion from his own privileged position, the transformation of the body politic in an abnormal construct – the danger of "monstrosity", as the medieval writers would have put it, who feared a similar possibility, that of the "bicephalous body", when they were arguing in favour of the oneness of power – or, more likely in case of the "artificial" template proposed by Hobbes, the creation of a self-destructive *perpetuum mobile,* where a sovereignty was constantly replaced by another, up to the disappearance of the body. Hobbes' opinion in this regard was not a popular one among his fellow political thinkers from England, because it raised the matter of the *arbitrary* rule, where "every transgression of a law seemed to threaten the integrity of all laws" (Burgess, 1996, 48). The English political thought prior to the civil war believed it had found a solution to this dilemma by establishing that the king could not be punished for breaking the law, but his agents who fulfilled a command contrary to the law could actually be brought to justice. Yet, the events after 1642 showed the limitations of this doctrine and a king was actually put on trial for his alleged transgressions. Hobbes' solution was to declare the sovereign unbound by the civil law, yet such statements drew answers such as Matthew Hale's in *The Prerogatives of the King*, that "the Laws also in many cases bindes the Kinges Acts, and make them void if they are against Lawe", in essence implying that illegal acts of the royal prerogative could be ignored by the courts and the king's agents in such matters, prosecuted (Burgess, 1996, 138-140).

Leviathan identifies also, by using a much more direct medical terminology, a series of political diseases which afflict the Commonwealth, without the author resorting though to an analogy of a similar extent to that employed by Thomas Starkey in *A Dialogue between Reginald Pole and Thomas Lupset.* Such is epilepsy, Hobbes understanding by that the conflict between multiple authorities, of the "canons against lawes", between the spiritual and civil authority: "As there have been doctors, that hold there be three soules in a man; so there be also that think there may be more soules (that is, more soveraigns) than one in a Commonwealth; and set up a supremacy against the soveraignty; canons against lawes; and a ghostly authority against the civill" (Hobbes,

1904, 237-238). We see here reflections of the ancient medicine – the theoryexpressed by Galen in *De Locis Affectis* asserting the existence of three spirits within the man, the vital, rational and natural spirit (Dolan, Adams-Smith, 1978, 48-49) –, borrowed later by the medieval medicine, and of the political and religious struggles of that period, when the civil authority opposed the religious one. It is worth noticing that Hobbes was the first author who approached this matter: the conflict between the monarch and the pope was never regarded in the Middle Ages as an opposition between the secular and the spiritual, but an issue of jurisdiction, including over the spiritual aspects of power wielding. Even in the case of the Anglican Reformation in the sixteenth century, it was done in a similar manner, an equivalence between the Commonwealth and the Church being established, as could be seen at Richard Hooker5. Thomas Hobbes, though, seems to set against each other the spiritual power and the one which he calls "civil power". In medieval and early modern medicine, great importance was granted to the relationship between bodily and spiritual health and to the way the latter influenced the former. Accordingly, the diseases of the Commonwealth were also, many of them, regarded in a similar manner, and the healing action of the sovereign was expected to have not just a mundane finality, but an eschatological one as well. Hobbes, though, brings about a radical innovation in this regard, separating the two powers and concluding that only the civil authority was responsible for the functioning of the Commonwealth. Even more, the replacement of the civil authority by the ecclesiastical authority is compared to a very serious affliction such as epilepsy, because "spiritual power" was not considered adequate to fulfil this role. If the members of the clergy constituted an important part of the body politic in many of the previous corporal templates of the political organization, Hobbes seems to be even hostile to their involvement in the government of the state:

"And this is a disease which not unfitly may be compared to the epilepsie, or falling-sicknesse (which the Jews took to be one kind of possession by spirits), in the body naturall. For as in this disease there is an unnaturall spirit or wind in the head that obstructeth the roots of the nerves and, moving them violently, taketh away the motion which naturally they should have from the power of the soule in the brain and thereby causeth violent and irregular motions (which men call convulsions) in the parts; insomuch as he that is seized therewith, falleth down sometimes into the water, and sometimes into the fire, as a man deprived of his senses; so also in the body politique, when the spirituall power moveth the members of the Commonwealth, by the terrour of punishments and hope of rewards (which are the nerves of it), otherwise than by the civill power (which is the soule of the Commonwealth), they ought to be moved" (Hobbes, 1904, 238-239).

The unusual ideas professed by Thomas Hobbes would bring him charges of atheism, which the author fiercely denied: but whatever the reality was, it cannot be disputed that his assertions regarding the "spiritual power" are significantly different from those of his predecessors.

Hobbes expresses reticence also regarding the concept of the mixed monarchy. He accepts the reality of the existence of such forms of government, but he concludes that

they were not particularly beneficial for the Commonwealth. The idea of a triple soul in the natural body was not a new one: it had been expressed by Galen, who theorized the existence of a one vital, one rational and one natural soul, and it showed up during the Middle Ages as well, both in the Galen-inspired medicine, and in theology, at Thomas Aquinas, with the model of a vegetative, a sensitive and a rational soul. Hobbes resumes this concept, by acknowledging the possibility of the main three powers in the Commonwealth being granted each to a different element of the body politic: the power of "levying money", of "conduct and command" and of "making lawes", associated with the "nutritive", "motive" and "rational faculty", (Hobbes, 1904, 239). If this template of power sharing seems to be acceptable from a modern perspective and even some of the previous writers showed sympathy for some of its forms6, Hobbes considers that it does not represent anything else than a division of power – and not a multiplication of the same, as supporters of the concept of "mixed monarchy" might choose to assert, in order to avoid the danger implied by the existence of several sovereignties –, which, according to the traditional outlook, could lead only to the dissolution of the body politic.

Just like Thomas Starkey more than a century earlier, albeit in a less elaborate form, the list of the diseases which afflicted the body politic according to Hobbes is one dominated by pragmatism: the issues of effective government of the Commonwealth are what concerns the author first and foremost and less the abstract matters related to dogma. In this regard, Hobbes follows Starkey's model, rather than the one of Gardiner or Hooker, more predisposed to see the afflictions of the body politic from a theological perspective. The financial issues constitute one of the first listed diseases, described in quite a detail, with references to the medical concepts of that time, where influences of William Harvey's new discoveries can be glanced once again. When one reads the opinions of Thomas Hobbes in this regard, he must keep in mind the fact that, during the seventeenth century, the financial power of the state influenced the most its capacity to sustain military efforts: the human factor was less important at that time, at least compared with the modern times, when the situation will turn on its head – the potential human losses turning into the main deterrent against any military adventures. The matter of taxation and the financial burden of war possessed, during the seventeenth century, the greatest capacity to cripple a state, regardless whether it was an absolutist monarchy, such as France, or one where royal power had to face many challenges, such as the English monarchy. And these difficulties were acutely felt in England, which had a more lenient fiscal policy than many other European countries, and the king's capacity to raise funds depended on the Parliament's approval. Charles I tried to cope with the situation by imposing many unpopular taxes, and the economic difficulties had been one of the factors, besides those connected to religious matters and the disputes with respect to the limits of royal authority, which contributed to the start of the civil war. The way Hobbes describes how this disease manifests itself within the body politic faithfully mirrors the financial history of the reign of Charles I, who "struggles with the people by stratagems of law to obtain little summes", a situation which leads to what Hobbes called "the death of the Commonwealth", in other words, the civil war:

"As first, the difficulty of raising mony for the necessary uses of the Commonwealth;

especially in the approach of warre. This difficulty ariseth from the opinion that every subject hath of a property in his lands and goods exclusive of the soveraigns right to the use of the same. […] Insomuch as we may compare this distemper very aptly to an ague; wherein, the fleshy parts being congealed, or by venomous matter obstructed; the veins which by their naturall course empty themselves into the heart, are not (as they ought to be) supplyed from the arteries, whereby there succeedeth at first a cold contraction and trembling of the limbes; and afterwards a hot and strong endeavour of the heart to force a passage for the bloud; and before it can do that, contenteth it selfe with the small refreshments of such things as coole for a time, till (if nature be strong enough) it break at last the contumacy of the parts obstructed, and dissipateth the venom into sweat; or (if nature be too weak) the patient dyeth" (Hobbes, 1904, 240).

As mentioned already, the pattern of blood circulation which can be noticed here is no longer the one inspired by Galen's theories, which dominated the medical thought until the seventeenth century, but the one devised by William Harvey in *De Motu Cordis* in 1628, according to which the blood passed from veins to heart, and from there, into the arteries.

Another disease of the Commonwealth is the pleurisy, whose physiological symptoms Hobbes identifies quite accurately, which suggests once more that he must have been familiar with the medical knowledge of his time. Pleurisy is an inflammation of the membrane which surrounds the pulmonary cavity, and Hobbes associates this affliction with too great a concentration of the state resources in the hands of just several individuals: "that is when the treasure of the Commonwealth, flowing out of its due course, is gathered together in too much abundance, in one, or a few private men, by monopolies, or by farmes of the publique revenues; in the same manner as the blood in a pleurisie, getting into the membrane of the breast, breedeth there an inflammation, accompanied with a fever, and painfull stitches" (Hobbes, 1904, 241). Hobbes pays less attention to this disease than he had to the previous ones, probably considering it less dangerous. With a certainty, the effects of this disease could have been easier removed, as its origins could be found in just several members of the body politic. Even if the endogenous diseases were typically regarded as posing a much greater risk for the Commonwealth – Richard Hooker providing, fifty years earlier, an explanation for this opinion, related to the insidious nature of those afflictions (Hooker, 1969, A3) –, this disease associated with the pleurisy presents the advantage that it did not necessarily involve an organ which was essential for the existence of the body politic. Consequently, the remedies – including the amputation of the afflicted element, in order to avoid the spreading of the "corruption" within the whole organism – could also have been much easier applied.

Quite telling for the relationship the people of the Middle Ages and the early modern period established between spiritual and physical health is the usage by Thomas Hobbes of an analogy whose comparing element was no longer part of the healing responsibilities of the physicians. This affliction of the body politic shows up most naturally in Hobbes' list: it is the threat which too popular an individual could pose to the Commonwealth or its sovereign (notions which, most of the times, merged into one

another in this regard – a danger for the sovereign meant also a danger for the Commonwealth, the opposite being true as well). Antiquity, first and foremost, but also the Middle Ages, provide plenty of examples in this regard, and Hobbes himself referred to Caius Caesar in his text in order to justify his opinion. The existence of such individuals within the Commonwealth was considered by Hobbes as an affliction – but the second term of the analogy which the author sets up is "witchcraft", whose remedies were not in the hands of the physician, but in the hands of the cleric:

"Also, the popularity of a potent subject (unlesse the Commonwealth have very good caution of his fidelity) is a dangerous disease; because the people (which should receive their motion from the authority of the soveraign), by the flattery, and by the reputation of an ambitious man, are drawn away from their obedience to the lawes to follow a man of whose vertues and designes they have no knowledge. And this is commonly of more danger in a popular government, than in a monarchy; because an army is of so great force and multitude, as it may easily be made believe they are the people. […] And this proceeding of popular and ambitious men is plain rebellion; and may be resembled to the effects of witchcraft" (Hobbes, 1904, 241).

This problem of a too powerful member of the Commonwealth is not limited though just at an individual level, but it can be extended to territorial and administrative elements of the realm. Hobbes refers to "cities" and "corporations", which could have become a threat, either by expanding their military and political strength up to becoming capable of maintaining their own army, or through their excessive numbers. Obviously, such a situation could have led to the impossibility of governing – in order words, using the corporal terminology, to the impossibility of a proper functioning of the body. Within the traditional paradigm, each member had strictly defined provinces; particularly in the first scenario depicted by Hobbes, aspirations of rebellion and autonomy could appear: "Another infirmity of a Commonwealth is the immoderate greatnesse of a town, when it is able to furnish out of its own circuit the number and expence of a great army: as also the great number of corporations; which are as it were many lesser Commonwealths in the bowels of a greater, like wormes in the entrayles of a naturall man" (Hobbes, 1904, 241).

A quite surprising idea of Hobbes is the awareness of the fact that excessive territorial expansion could have damaging effects for the state. One century before, Starkey, for instance, expressed regret about the loss by England of its possessions from Europe (Starkey, 1989, 57) and, overall, military conquest would have been a reason for pride. Hobbes wrote this more than 150 years before the classic example of his idea (Napoleon's empire), but it is possible for him to have been determined to make such an assertion by the Spanish example – the expansionist tendencies, especially of Philip II, and the encountered failures had led to the financial ruin of Spain and to a decline of its power: "We may further adde the insatiable appetite, or bulimia, of enlarging dominion; with the incurable wounds thereby many times received from the enemy; and the wens, of ununited conquests, which are many times a burthen, and with lesse danger lost than kept" (Hobbes, 1904, 241).

Conclusions

The corporal model around 1650, as it appears in *Leviathan*, represents a mixture of innovation and traditionalism. The abandonment of the outlook regarding the man as a microcosm and the assumption of the new principle of the body as a machine, the principle of the circulation of blood proposed by William Harvey in *De Motu Cordis* can be found together with already existing concepts, such as the influence of humours, the principle of the oneness of power or the importance of obedience. David Hale even considers that, within the context of the emergence of Newton's physics, "a serious acceptance of the concept of an organic society was difficult if not impossible", even though the analogy kept being employed, albeit without having the same imagological impact as it had in the past (Hale, 1971, 131). Still, the body politic of Thomas Hobbes represents a paradoxical construct: it is declared an artificial product, but, at the same time, it is afflicted by organic or even spiritual diseases. At a time when a new philosophy gained more and more ground, this metaphor of the disease preserved the organic nature of the body politic in *Leviathan.*

1 Such was Charles I's willingness to invoke the royal prerogative which gave him the right to extract financial resources from his subjects without the consent of the Parliament. According to this prerogative, the king could, legally, impose an extraordinary tax on his subjects if necessity demanded it, but abusing this privilege undermined the confidence in the rectitude of the king and his willingness to obey the law and came into conflict with a principle of English constitutionalism, that no king should be able to tax at will, in order for the liberties of the Englishmen not to be endangered. Charles I made use of the respective prerogative in the case of the "Forced Loan" and the "Shipmoney" taxes, which were deeply unpopular and attracted significant parliamentary opposition.

2 An exception to this is John Ponet during the sixteenth century, who proposed a medical amputation of the king (viewed as the head of the body politic), but his opinion was obviously self-interested, as he needed to justify his own rebellion against the queen Mary Tudor (Ponet, 1972, D7).

3 One can notice in this paragraph the influence of Harvey and De Motu Cordis, such as regarding the passage of the blood from the veins, through the heart, into the arteries (Whiterridge, 1971, 129-132). At the same time, the remnants of Galen's old doctrine can still be seen, such as the statement that, when reaching the heart, the blood was made "vitall" – a bow to Galen's notion of the "vital spirit", which could be found in the heart, from where he directed life and heat towards the parts of the body (Dolan, Adams-Smith, 1978, 48-49).

4 In A Comparative Discourse between Bodies Natural and Politique, Edward Forset established a threefold analogy between the king and the most important parts of the body: the king is, at the same time, the soul, the head and the heart of the Commonwealth (Forset, 1973, 2-3, 26-30).

5 In his Of the Lawes of Ecclesiastical Politie, Richard Hooker employs a binomial corporal metaphor, referring both to a corpus mysticum, which possesses a spiritual and a terrestrial side, and the body politic, put in motion and governed by the law of reason. The corpus mysticum is the church of Christ, which could not "be sensible discerned by any man", as it included all the faithful who have ever lived, and the body politic, visible and tangible, was the terrestrial church, in Hooker's case the Church of England (Hooker, 1969, 126). In this template, "membership of the Commonwealth and the Church was identical; Church and State were two complementary aspects of the same society" (Christopher Morris, 1969, XI).

6 Thomas Starkey, for instance, suggests a type of government following the Venetian model, with a council and a constable which were supposed to moderate the power of the prince, in order to avoid the danger of the tyranny (Starkey, 1989, 121).

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