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Arbitrary Truths: A Structural Analysis of the Philosophical Foundations of Realism, Liberalism, and Constructivism

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Arbitrary Truths: A Structural Analysis of the Philosophical Foundations of Realism, Liberalism, and Constructivism

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Graphical abstract

	Hobbes	Locke	Rousseau
State of Nature	State of war	State of law	Not static
Human Nature	Individual	Individual	Constructed
Systemic evolution?	×	√	√
Internal evolution?	×	×	√
Natural Law?	×	√	×
Divine Entity?	×	√	×
Higher Purpose?	×	×	√
Social Contract?	√	√	×
Human Rights?	×	√	×
IR School	Realism	Liberalism	Constructivism
	Rationalism		Utopianism

I. Introduction

"Whereas recognition of the inherent dignity and of the equal and inalienable rights of all members of the human family is the foundation of freedom, justice and peace in the world," the United Nations Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) declares loftily in the first sentence of its preamble (Assembly 1948). Ever since the Vienna World Conference on Human Rights in 1993 at the very latest, there is not a single state left in the world that dares to challenge this peculiar statement openly. This fact in itself seems peculiar also though, as every member of the human family endowed with the ability to rational thinking should be able to notice the odd peculiarity of the Declaration's preamble instantly. If there really was such a thing as *inalienable rights* for every individual member of our human family, why should there be a need for the *recognition* of these rights? Sir Isaac Newton's famous apple did not need to formally recognize Newton's law of gravity before it started falling to the ground. Neither does a stone have to ask if gravity applies to it as well before it follows it. Should a *universal* law, to say it in Kantian terms, not force its objects *categorically*, like a universal moral law would? Talking about *universal* laws, does not nature itself violate the individuals' inalienable right to life most shamelessly? If we have a natural, unalienable right to live, *why do we die?* It seems like nature either has not read or does not recognize the UDHR. However, who is to punish nature for this offense? If it is so easy and indeed logically compulsory to realize that there is a certain oddity, or even an analytical inconsistency attached to the UDHR's claim to universality, why does it seem that most people are almost epistemologically incapable of seeing this?

Of course, it is an overstatement to say that no one ever noticed this before, at least in theory. While the discourse, in other words, is unquestioned among common people and constantly reinforced through society's institutions and mainstream media's PC-dictates, it has indeed been quite fashionable among IR scholars for some time to call this cognitive implant into question, though the high times of human rights critique seem to have passed by now (e.g. Bielefeldt 2000; Donnelly 2007; Mc Neilly 2016; Mutua 2013). A very elaborate volume taking a sort of middle ground tracking

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somewhat relative and yet universal human rights back to their Roman, Western, Confucian, and Indian roots is to be found in *Universal Human Rights in Theory and Practice* (Donnelly 2013). What this paper will argue, somewhat following and somewhat contradicting Donnelly, is that what we understand to be universal human rights indeed is a mere social construct historically enforced through scriptural doctrine. Furthermore, it will argue that the unquestioned belief by which the concept is met today is discursive and not coercive in nature. It will close with an outlook on political dynamics between the ideological poles of sense making.

II. Fragmentation and Reunification

That human rights are socially constructed does not mean that they do not exist in any form of existence whatsoever. As a social construct following the transcendental ideal of 'life' or 'liberty,' they do exist. Thus, they can be approached as a social function, building up a society. Hence, the universal inalienability of human rights can be detached from its definition and substituted for the claim of human rights' universal *social* utility. In this view, human rights keep their universality not as a natural given, but as a social end.

However, this definition loses its validity if it can be shown that individual well-living towards death and decay is not the only ideational end state to which the social can attempt to modify the natural. Of course, every possible ideational end as an immaterial object needs some sort of reasonable justification according to the most fundamental natural law of cause and effect. In other words, individual human rights could not be substituted for anything if there was no alternate social end according to which logic they could be substituted. Accordingly, it is not sufficient to show that human rights are void of substantial, universal validity. Also, this chapter will attempt to prove that there is an ideational alternative to strip them of their universal social validity. I admit, in other words, that both material nature and human nature strictly limit the set of possible social ends. Human rights regimes, generally speaking, indeed do have a strong claim in attempting to enforce the prerequisites to human happiness as a normative end, which is termed 'human dignity,' once again derived from an immaterial soul.

However, there is a natural shortcoming in the claim of human rights based social models. According to the intrinsic deficit of human rights' normative claim, a second stream of political thought can be identified by employing the Hobbesi an, or more generally speaking realist, analogy of the individual and the state (Hobbes et al. 1996a; Mearsheimer 2001). While liberal and constructivist theorists have long anticipated the advent of a future world state, the citizens living under this state have invariably remained single and individual in theory (Wendt 2004, 2003). Displaying rational empiricism's inherent contradictions, one can identify 'utopian collectivism' as its logical counter part analytically derived from the dynamic interplay of nature and human nature; the dichotomous all of perception and the basic conflict that constitutes consciousness or human existence.

The line of consciousness's stagnancy between the self and the world, here, is the ultimate element of ideational divergence. One could also say that progress, or the quest for freedom, can substitute individual happiness in revolutionary-thought based social models. This chapter, and indeed pretty much all following it, will discover both the philosophers of and the theorists of the *revolutionary* in intellectual history and attempt to account for the fact that the world seems to have forgotten about them in these high days of material conservatism. Ultimately, I will also venture to explain their compulsive failures. This thesis will argue that while rational materialism's logic is intrinsically flawed, utopian collectivism's approach fails practically. It is, so to say, practically flawed. Naturally, I realize that it is a very awkward thing to say, philosophically speaking, that something is practically flawed *on general terms*. The practical, it would seem, can only refer to particular situations. If the theory is sound, differently put, there must be a way to fix shortcomings in its practical application; no matter how screwed the current attempt might be.

However, what I will argue is that there is no method to *force* a leap of consciousness or a 'meta-system transition' to a higher order of organization (Heylighen 2014; Turchin 1977). Accordingly, the revolutionary collective is doomed to fail in its application every time it is attempted. Equally, it is doomed to re-appear in history due to the analytic lack of rational materialism resting on spiritual leftovers. On the other side of history, which is best understood as waves rolling over the ocean of time according to this picture, rational materialism grows as revolutionary spirit declines. However, I do not intend to stop here. While I admit that revolutionary collectivism must fail practically when consciously attempted, I also dare to suggest that the revolutionary collective is predicting something that it cannot accomplish but that might eventually materialize organically in the natural course of social events.

Tendency-orientated argumentation, it will turn out, is anything but trivial though. Considered in an epistemological way, every discipline of science after all derives its theories from empiricism. As a starting point into my main thesis, I will employ Alexander Wendt's argument about teleology in political thought to make matters more intelligible (Wendt 2003). The main observation I intend to display, however, is that matter and especially life display an undeniable tendency to move from simple structures to the formation of more complex structures, as already the Jesuit priest Pierre

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Teilhard de Chard in observed in the mid 20th century (Teilhard de Chardin, Pierre 2011). Thus, it is argued that the history of culture is ultimately a history of unification. Matter and spirit, as two sides of one bilaterally constitutive process, share this tendency in a dynamic manner. Ultimately, the natural and the cultural thus drive each other in a pre-determined way, despite their alleged opposition. What will be theorized is, therefore, the process of mankind's natural fragmentation to create complexity and of its cultural reunification to employ this complexity on an emergent, higher cybernetic level.

III. Natural Laws and Cultural Claims

One of the most principle and fundamental contrastive pairs in philosophy is the distinction between 'nature' and 'culture' (e.g. Loy 1995). This distinction is analytically categorical in structure; meaning that there is not and cannot be anything left over that does not fall into either of the two basic categories. Also, there is nothing to be found that is in between or both. Everything that exists in the world is either to be found in it naturally or it is a product of human work and imagination. Culture, of course, refers to the uniquely human ability to shape the outer world according to the ideas of our mind about how it should be. Hence, we are not only talking about physical objects here. The objects of the world also include all of the abstracts that order social reality or ideas about the physical world; for instance social rules and regulations, ideological beliefs and norms, etc. Indeed, there is a certain hierarchical dynamic between these two types of immaterial, abstract objects to be noted here that will become important later on.

There are principles of social order and ideas about the physical world. If there was no abstract idea of a higher order, mankind would not be able to come up with social measures to modify the natural state of affairs. 'Ideology,' in other words, come first. For the purpose of the present study, it shall simply be defined as a normative idea of how the world is constituted. Therefore, it by needs entails a practical imperative of how society should be made. Simply put, one could say that it is the definition of 'good' and 'evil' according to an ontological assumption. Practically then, good has to be promoted in society while evil has to be prevented. Ideological beliefs, accordingly, analytically predate social rules, as the latter are utilitarian applications based on the former. Those beliefs, it follows, have to be seen as the starting point of the social or culture. Without them, mankind would simply stay in the natural state since all social change can only follow from a concept of a presumably superior state of affairs to be achieved through the application of cultural modifications. Anything else would be an effect without a cause, which is a physical impossibility within the empirical realm, as nothing can contradict natural law, just as you cannot choose whether gravity applies to you or not.

A state without an ideology, hence, would not be able to act, as it were missing the mandatory maxim on which principles to base its actions on. It follows that all states have an ideology. According to this logic, to safeguard the human pursuit of happiness and to ensure the absence of suffering for the largest possible number of individuals would be only one possible ontological premise. Looking at medieval society for instance, divergent assumptions seem possible. However, a divergent concept on which to base the social on would have to function according to an ontological belief system that makes ultimate *sense* as well, since there cannot be an effect without a cause. At the present state of affairs, alternate belief systems are being regarded as outdated spiritual superstitions at best though.

However, the question that is finally at stake here of course is this one: are individual human rights a product of nature or are they a product of culture? To answer this question, let us first briefly elaborate on our excurse into basic philosophical theory to understand both its implications and its importance. The part of the 'cultural' that deals with the laws according to which human beings live together in a community is called the 'social.' The first and major point to understand here is that social laws are changeable. Hence, they are not to be treaded as a natural given. In contrast, nothing can change natural or physical laws: apart from revealed but doubtful examples of divine intervention–which should never be the object of science–all material objects must always follow the gravitational pull. Positive laws, to turn back to the object of interest, are socially constructed and founded on beliefs about the world though. These beliefs themselves, in extension, are products of culture as they touch what is beyond and hence not to be found in nature; i.e. in material/physical reality. In philosophy, this realm of ideas about the world that reaches beyond what can be proved rationally or empirically is called 'metaphysics.'

For now, let me conclude that the social does not force categorically. It only obligates under certain social, constructed circumstances. This point, however, is not to be taken lightly. Let us take the time to turn back to the UDHR for a moment here. It talks about "the inherent dignity and of the equal and inalienable rights of all members of the human family" (Assembly 1948). However, the cultural can never yield the "inherent" or the "inalienable." Only nature can endow objects with these qualities. For example, gravity also applies on a deserted island or when stately order breaks down. Human rights, if they are culturally constructed, would cease to exist in those contexts though. Wherever there was nobody to punish a human rights offender, nothing would be *ethically* wrong with violating human rights. As

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we have seen, social laws are by definition potentially subject to change. If human rights are social, therefore, mankind *cannot* carry them intrinsically and/or inalienably. Norms like the equality of all (rational) individuals before the law or the right of all (rational) individuals to political representation, hence, would have to be seen as mere ordering principles. Moreover, the human individual rights to "life" and "liberty" would have to be seen as mere ordering principles in lack of substantial validity. Inconceivable as this claim seems at first sight, it does seem obvious that historically there have been plenty of alternate models to human rights regimes. A very elaborate discussion of divergent cultural and historical regimes can be found in Jack Donnelly's piece on "The Relative Universality of Human Rights," for instance (e.g. Donnelly 2007, 2013).

However, the present work is not concerned with the particularities. Instead, let us turn from philosophical principles to theory proper at this point. To test the validity of the UDHR's claim, we need to check how much of human rights are given naturally. Hence, we need to turn to what political philosophers have traditionally referred to as the 'state of nature:' the condition of being that has not been altered by culture or the social, and thus functions entirely according to the inherent and inalienable principles of natural laws. Once in this thought-experiment state of mind, one can test how much of human rights' validity remains.

IV. Hobbes of Malmesbury: the Mind, Matter in Mechanical Motion

In traditional, mostly Early Modern, contractualism, the state of nature equals the state of anarchy; i.e. the state of affairs characterized by the absence of stately control. In other words, whenever there is no force to sanction the violation of social norms, we are de facto in the state of nature. Political realists hold this somewhat outdated picture until today. As a prelude to the following discussion, let us just briefly mention that a whole tradition of cultural criticism spanning the entire 20th century starting from Nietzsche and extending all the way to current IR constructivists has successfully challenged this view. Norbert Elias brilliant theory of the process of civilizing social mechanisms proves that the famous sword of justice becomes obsolete through the gradual indoctrination of cultural norms in a society (Elias 2005). To a degree, so does Michel Foucault's work on social institutions, arguing that adult human beings would not fall back into the state of nature under the absence of stately control (Foucault 1975, ©1973). Also, Pierre Bourdieu's work shows that adult individuals taken out of society would not even act interchangeably (Bourdieu 2010a, 2010b). Moreover, Alexander Wendt attacks the realist notion of the state of anarchy altogether by arguing that "threats are constructed, not natural" and that "society would be impossible if people made decisions purely on the basis of worst-case scenarios" (Wendt 1992, pp. 405; 404).

As for right now, we are only talking about the basic nature of individual human rights here in regard to whether they are social or natural though. This has nothing to do with whether and under which circumstances people would kill each other in the state of nature or in a state of anarchy. In other words, one can easily admit that life in the state of nature does not by needs have to be "solitary, poor, nasty, brutish, and short [spelling modernized by author]," as Hobbes famously put it (Hobbes et al. 1996a, p. 89). Still, this by no means proves the existence of universal human rights as well.

Let me provide a brief example here to illustrate this. Two individuals are having a heated discussion about universal (individual) human rights outside of the sphere of sanctioned punishment (i.e. state or society). In our laboratory situation, this could be a deserted village where nobody lives and no one would ever go. Individual A happens to be of significantly weaker physical condition than individual B. Individual A argues that she possesses inherent dignity tied to an inalienable human right to life. Individual B argues that she does not. Individual B, in the absence of any fear of punishment, makes the decision to prove individual A wrong once and for all. She kills individual A. Rationally speaking, individual B thereby indeed and unmistakably proved individual A wrong empirically. Obviously, individual A's universal right to life failed to materialize. Now there might well be internalized social norms and morals that keep individual B from factually applying this practical proof. However, her ability to do so alone logically proves B right and A wrong.

This is what Thomas Hobbes' thought experiment of a 'state of nature' proved in 1651 and the argument is still valid today. In the philosopher's words, "covenants without the sword are but words and of no strength to secure a man at all [spelling modernized by author]" (Hobbes et al. 1996a, p. 117). This quote encapsulates the very core of Hobbesian philosophy: *You have a right to do whatever you can do because you can do it.* And rationally speaking, how could matters be any different? Who is to prove you wrong if you can legitimize your actions by ability? When Hobbes speaks of the "fear of punishment," hence, he does not mean that laws against murder, theft, etc. in the state of society magically start to exist in the ontological sense of (individual) universal human rights that the UDHR implies (Hobbes et al. 1996a, p. 98). What is meant is simply that there is a "power to keep them all in awe [spelling modernized by author]" (Hobbes et al. 1996a, p. 88). This, indeed, is the reason why Hobbes argues for a totalitarian state. In Hobbes's logic, whenever a state is weak all hell will break loose again simply because people will regain the ability to disobedience. To prevent this state of nature at all costs, individuals

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enter a "social contract." However then, were does the awkward picture of universal human rights derive its philosophical legitimacy from? Let me turn to a more pleasant, but less convincing theory now.

V. Locke of Somerset: A Metaphysical Deus ex Machina

In the year 1690 AD, the English gentleman, politician, and slave trader John Locke anonymously publishes his *Second Treatise on Government* to defend the Glorious Revolution of 1688 (Locke, Laslett 1988b). While the now largely forgotten *First Treatise* had been a refutation of Robert Filmer's vindication for absolute monarchical rule (Filmer 2017), the *Second Treatise*–even though initially ignored by the world for almost an entire century–should become the ultimate justification for both the American Revolution of 1776 and the current human rights regime as stated in the UDHR. The implied but never openly addressed adversary of the book is Thomas Hobbes, who had supported a monarch's right to absolute rule just like Filmer, who is explicitly addressed especially in the first one of the *Treatises* (Filmer 2017). Unlike long-forgotten Filmer, the undeclared but obvious atheist Hobbes had argued on purely rational terms though.

As we have seen, it seems almost impossible to attack Hobbes's strikingly convincing 'ability-equals-right' logic on rational terms. However, let us look at Locke's attempt in a little more detail in the following. The most fundamental difference between Hobbes and Locke is that Locke's state of nature knows a *natural* "law of nature" that dictates the "preservation of mankind" (Locke, Laslett 1988b, §§ 2.6). In other words, there is a law of nature protecting human rights even in the condition of being that has not been altered by culture and the social and thus functions entirely according to the inherent and inalienable principles of natural laws. For Locke therefore, the categories of 'just' and 'unjust,' or of 'good' and 'evil,' exist regardless of all external circumstances. Since justice, hence, exists as a natural absolute, human rights become universal in the sense of inalienable attributes analytically derived from every individual's inherent dignity–just like the UDHR demands.

As Hobbes says, though, justice without the "sword of punishment" is no justice at all (Hobbes et al. 1996a). On the logical contrary, it is the very definition of injustice when the evil-doer gets away with his evil deed unpunished. In other words, who redeems the slain girl from the thought experiment displayed? Who is it that brings justice and sanctions the evil-doer? Locke's answer is an idea that is nowhere to be found in the physical world. At the end of the day, his argument rests on metaphysical and therefore indemonstrable assumptions. The "preservation of mankind" follows from the fact that Locke defines human beings as God's property: "But though it is a state of liberty [the state of nature], yet it is not a state of license, […], for men being all the workmanship of the omnipotent, and infinitely wise maker" (Locke, Laslett 1988b, §§ 2.6). If you violate somebody else's natural rights, hence, you transgress God's law of nature. If you transgress God's "law of nature," in turn, you are sure to get properly sanctioned for your offense. However, this does not by needs happen on this side of heaven: "Where there is no judge on earth, the appeal lies to God in heaven" (Locke, Laslett 1988b, §§ 3.2.1). However, even in those cases punishment is categorically implemented in the after-life, which makes Locke's "law of nature" a proper example of a universal, individual human rights conception.

The same holds true for violations of other parts of an individual's property. This, in extension, is defined as a person's life, liberty, and estate (Locke, Laslett 1988b, § 2). As this list surely sounds familiar, let us briefly turn to the possibly most influential copy-and-paste work in the history of mankind (Smith 2018).[1] The *United States Declaration of Independence* from 1776 states in the first sentence of its introduction:

> We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal; that they are endowed by their Creator with inherent and inalienable Rights; that among these, are Life, Liberty, and the pursuit of Happiness; […]. (Jefferson 2002)

The sentence nicely encapsulates the very core and the very weakness of Lockean philosophy. If someone argues that a truth is "self-evident," it actually means nothing else than that this person admits that she cannot prove her claim rationally. To make this point clear, Locke's argument for the universality of human rights *only* works if you concomitantly accept the existence of God and the after-life, which cannot be proven scientifically or rationally. If you are not willing to accept the latter, you automatically fall back to Hobbes's theory–at least as far as human rights are concerned. Locke's premise, in other words, is extremely demanding and, actually, a no-go in science as it is generally understood today. However, it is important to learn from it that the rationalist dogma we live under today actually relies on spiritualist leftovers in its core convictions; not on scientific reasoning. Without these leftovers, I believe, today's regime would actually not be stable at all due to the void in its philosophical center.

VI. New Conclusions

To conclude Hobbes's theory and how Locke mixed his labor with it to make it his own theory, human

[1] It is certain that Jefferson had read the *Second Treatise* and that he was referring to it when drafting the *Declaration*. The *Norton Anthology of American Literature* even claims that he used the original Lockean definition of property in his original draft. However, responding to the doubts of several members of the revolutionary committee, he changed "estate" to "the pursuit of happiness" in the final version. See Levine et al. 2017.

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rights are socially enforced and discursively constructed following a certain belief system resting on metaphysical assumptions. These convictions have no natural, objective reality ontologically predating their social enforcement. They are not a natural given. Hence, there can be ideological counter-models resting on alternative convictions following from alternate assumptions. However, there is still one more way in which universal individual human rights can be saved in theory. We can accept that human rights can only be proven to apply as analytical universals in a categorically imperative sense if we simultaneously accept the existence of an indemonstrable, metaphysical, transcendent assumption. True enough, we live in an age of reason and our commonly accepted understanding of science is that it should work scientifically. Accordingly, we have to give up on the claim to human rights' universality in the sense of a natural law as stated in the UDHR. Having detached the category of inevitability from the concept and deduced its underlying structure from its social practice, however, we can still work with what is left.

That human rights are socially constructed does not mean that they do not exist in any form of existence whatsoever. As a social construct they certainly do. We lost the Lockean-Jeffersonian claim that human rights exist as inalienable attributes analytically derived from every individual's inherent dignity. Still, we can yet make a point for their universality in a positivist sense (Donnelly 2007, 2013). If every society eventually comes up with some sort of metaphysical assumption in order to enforce human rights as a social ordering principle, human rights would exist in a way that is more than arbitrary. We still would not be able to prove the ontological existence of any of those transcendent assumptions, of course. However, we would be able to make a decently strong case for the existence of individual human rights as a universal idea. The metaphysical assumptions on which these are founded could be interpreted as merely functional then.

Indeed, according to Norbert Elias theory of the civilizing social these assumptions could even become obsolete eventually, after their norms have been internalized in a society (Elias 2005). And in fact, we see that some of the most outspoken human rights advocates, ironically, are atheists today. Admittedly, this would still not endow human rights with the ontological stability that John Locke and the UDHR call for. However, it would give them a sort of social substantial validity. It would show that human rights are a natural mechanism of the social. Like contracts, they still would not posses any objective validity in the state of nature, as they could be violated at all times. Like contracts, however, they would have to be regarded as a structural principle of society as such. In other words, it would not prove that human rights *have* to be enforced. Still, it would yield a strong argument that they *should* be enforced. This way, human rights might not be a natural given. However, they would be a social must. Still, to prove human rights' universality this way, individual human rights would have to be the sole structural end to which societies are originally instituted.

Even Hobbes seems to suggest this in a way when he starts out by defining human beings as equal, desire and aversion driven individuals. As has been stated at the beginning of § 5, nature, at the end of the day, is the biggest human rights violator of them all. No serial killer, dictator, or mass murderer compares to nature. So let us say every state in the world ratifies the UDHR. Let us say discursive determination makes every individual in the world recognize the UDHR, as well. Is nature going to care? Is nature now also going to read and recognize the UDHR? Are individuals going to cease to die? A universal human rights regime that gets proven wrong every minute obviously has its structural deficits. Hence, there seem to be alternate ends to society, both in theory and in history. If these countercurrents are also universal ideas springing from the human head though, it is very unlikely that the current regime will endure in perpetuity.

VII. Rousseau, Citizen of Geneva: A Revolution in the Mind

For Jean-Jacques Rousseau, Hobbes's social contract is only part of the natural development of mankind in the state of nature. He addresses the situation Hobbes describes as the 'social contract' directly in the *Discourse on the Origin of Inequality (Rousseau, Cress 2013)*. His fictional figures in the case of the natural corruption of mankind come to the point where they regard Hobbes's contract as necessary:

In short, instead of turning our forces against ourselves, let us gather them into one supreme power that governs us according to wise laws, that protects and defends all the members of the association, repulses common enemies, and maintains us in eternal concord. (Rousseau, Cress 2013, p. 69)

He therefore openly admits that Thomas Hobbes traced back human development to a point which "was, or should have been, the origin of society and laws" (Rousseau, Cress 2013, p. 70). This comment, as a matter of fact, interestingly shows that Rousseau, contrary to Locke, seems to have been well aware of the fact that Hobbes never claimed that this is what *really* happened historically in the course of events. The difference between the two is that Rousseau believes that Hobbes only realized a fraction of the whole truth about human development–and therefore human nature. For Rousseau, Hobbes and Locke, just like humans at this stage of the state of nature, are two of the "crude, easily seduced men," who "ran to chain themselves, in the belief that they secured their liberty" but ultimately only "destroyed natural liberty" and

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"established forever the law of property and of inequality"2 without escaping the state of nature through doing so (Rousseau, Cress 2013, p. 70).

Mankind, for Rousseau, did not originate with the "idea" of possessions of any kind. He writes that the "idea of property, depending on many prior ideas which could not have arisen successively, was not formed all at once in the human mind" (Rousseau, Cress 2013, p. 60). This statement already makes clear one of the basic differences between Rousseau and Locke or Hobbes. For Rousseau it does not matter how humans are born in the first place. What is important and the foundation of his theory is how humans originated. Deeply influenced by the description of the origin of evil in the world displayed in the Genesis of the Old Testament, Rousseau's state of nature must not be understood as the state in which mankind would live according to their nature if they were not in an artificial state of being; i.e. in a state. It is the state of being from which the journey of mankind to consciousness began and continues in a natural development within the state of nature all the way to Rousseau's social contract, which has not taken place yet. As a positive, or idealized, state his first state of nature is the state of being before self-realization, before the discovery or "idea" of individuality, before the "idea" of individual necessities and desires:

The first person who, having enclosed a plot of land, took it into his head to say this is mine and found people simple enough to believe him, was the true founder of civil society. What crimes, wars, murders, what miseries and horrors would the human race have been spared, had someone pulled up the stakes or filled in the ditch and cried out to his men: "Do not listen to this impostor. You are lost if you forget that the fruits of the earth belong to all and the earth to no one!" (Rousseau, Cress 2013, p. 60)

But there is no way to turn back self-realization. Wherever humans, great apes, dolphins, or octopus look into the mirror, they will recognize themselves. Wherever human beings can recognize themselves in the mirror they will demand that they have a natural right to their pursuit of happiness. Locke's claim, that this right to property is one of the constituents of an individual's freedom becomes the force, which destroys men's freedom in Rousseau's theory. The second striking feature to observe in this passage is that there is a founding and a founder of "civil society" without a contract. But how can there be society without a contract? And even more importantly, how can this civil society exist in the "final stage in the state of nature" (Rousseau, Cress 2013, p. 60)? What would be an impossible contradiction in Locke's and Hobbes's theories seems to be perfectly consistent in Rousseau's conception of the state of nature. The reason for this is that in Rousseau's theory the state of nature is the natural development of mankind, which precedes the social contract in which humans will get rid of the evils, which tear them apart. These evils are "the ideas" which develop over a long time "from one age to another" when humans make "great progress" and "acquire much industry and enlightenment" (Rousseau, Cress 2013, p. 60). In Rousseau's social contract, which accordingly refers to a concept entirely different from Hobbes's and Locke's understanding of the social contract, mankind abandons individuality and possessions, as he writes in *On the Social Contract*:

These clauses [the ends of the social contract], properly understood, are all reducible to one single one, namely the total alienation of each associate, together with all of his rights, to the entire community. (Rousseau, Cress 2013, p. 148)

Knowledge for Rousseau does not play a positive role in the development of mankind. It is what displaced us from the state of paradise in the first place. Different levels of self-awareness thus lead to different stages of corruption. These different stages are different mental states. The 'original sin' therefore for Rousseau is the moment of self-realization. From this moment, humans start to value their needs and wants higher than the needs of their fellow human beings. It is the discovery, the "idea," of individual desires. This moment ultimately leads to the "final stage of nature." This "final stage of nature" is called the stage of "civil society" and consists of "crimes, wars, murders, […] miseries and horrors" (Rousseau, Cress 2013, p. 60). It is crucial to notice the fundamental difference to Hobbes here, in whose theory life before the introduction of civil society is "solitary, poor, nasty, brutish, and short" (Hobbes et al. 1996b, p. 76). This miserable state of being, which Hobbes calls the "state of nature," is ended by the "social contract," or more concisely, by the introduction of civil society. This basic line of argumentation is the same for Hobbes and Locke. Locke's practical conclusions, however, have tendencies towards Rousseau's state when he demands "the Consent of the Majority" for decisions or declares that "it is necessary that the Body [state] should move that way whither the greater force carries it, which is the *consent of the majority*" (Locke, Laslett 1988a, pp. 362; 332). Locke's conception as a whole remains entirely different though.

For Rousseau civil society is the worst stage in the "state of nature." In order to get out of this miserable state of being in a civil society, humans will form a "first convention" and join the "social contract" (Rousseau, Cress 2013, p. 147). Hobbes's and Locke's great "Leviathan" state is for Rousseau nothing but slavery, the worst stage of existence imaginable and part of the state of nature, since "there will always be a great

[2] It is interesting to observe here that Hobbes at times indeed might have lived in a situation which was not too different from the state of nature responsible for the founding of civil society described by Rousseau–the English Civil Wars of the 1640s. See Sorell 1996.

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difference between subduing a multitude and ruling a society" (Rousseau, Cress 2013, p. 147). Rousseau, it appears clearly, is calling for a revolution, a revolution in the *mind*, which will liberate human beings from their *internal* chains, which is the collectives, or ideas, that constitute their personality structures. To achieve this revolution in the mind that will regain human unity beyond the selfish I, which is the root of all transgression against the common good, however, there must first be an external, material revolution against the system that is constantly reinforcing mankind's internal chains through its institutions in every new generation anew. In the naive interpretation of Rousseau that let to the Great, or Jacobin, Terror that started when the revolution set out to devour its own children, the two revolutions where originally thought happen simultaneously: the external liberation frees the internal mind as well. This work will go on to argue that this logic is always flawed, not merely in Rousseau, but equally in all revolutionaries of the mind. Like the French Revolution turned bloody in the Great Terror, Mao's revolution turned into a Cultural Revolution to liberate the mind, after people yet internally chained refused to be free.

Rousseau's "social contract," however, is thus not designed to change the conditions under which the individual lives. It is designed to "alienate" the individual from itself and thereby take back the alienation of human being's fragments among each other. Rousseau thus wants to take back original sin; i.e. the moment where human degeneration started or the moment of self-realization. He wants to change the individual's mental state, the state of mind, not only the conditions under which the individual lives, but the individual itself. His aim is to destroy individuality and thereby transform individuals into "citizens" (Rousseau, Cress 2013, p. 149). Mankind's perception of its selves has to become the perception as one "indivisible part of the whole" unity of its pre-alienated self again (Rousseau, Cress 2013, p. 148). All their thoughts and considerations have to be made from the perspective of a part of the whole and therefore for the good of the whole. Thereby human being "resumes his natural liberty, while loosing his conventional liberty, for which he renounced it" (Rousseau, Cress 2013, p. 148). Individuals thus re-enter the state of being before the beginning of corruption. They free themselves from the illusion of individual needs and wants, the longing for which held them as slaves before. Thus they liberate the body of the portion of mankind involved in the contract, which was stuck in a terrible condition of war of its own parts with each other before. To make this strange way of thinking more reasonable it might be helpful to imagine Rousseau's "citizens" as beings who think of themselves as members of an assembly in whatever they think or enact:

> At once, in the place of the individual person of each contracting party, this act of association produces a moral and collective body, composed of as many members as there are voices in the assembly, which receives from the same act its unity, its common self, its life and its will. (Rousseau, Cress 2013, p. 148)

That Rousseau speaks not only of a "collective" but also of a "moral body" makes already clear where his theory of good and evil, of right and wrong lies. As mentioned before, there is no way to turn back self-realization. And so, although the contractors re-enter a state of being before the fall and become "citizens", they also stay aware of their individuality. They exist as "public and [as] private individuals" (Rousseau, Cress 2013, p. 149). Problems, therefore, arise because a person's "private interest can speak to him in an entirely different manner than the common interest" (Rousseau, Cress 2013, p. 150). But since the state is the "moral person," only acting and thinking as a "public individual"3 is moral acting and thinking. If somebody should insist on his individuality she therefore has to be "forced to be free" (Rousseau, Cress 2013, p. 150). In other words, 'good' is acting for the "moral and collective body," and 'evil' is to act as an individual.4

VIII. Conclusion

Since Rousseau's conceptions seem totally foreign to us it seems pretty obvious that, according to his theory, we still live in the "final stage of the state of nature."5 Society is a product of the state of nature. It is a product of the natural degeneration of mankind. The only way to get out of it is to change mankind itself. Locke and Hobbes look at humans in the artificial state of society and follow from human nature how life would be in a state where they could life accordingly to it without any limitations, i.e. in the "state of nature," and derive from this state of being why society originated and how an ideal society should look like in order to serve the natural needs and desires of the individuals this society consists of best. It is crucial in order to understand the contrast to Rousseau to understand that this self-perception is the outcome of a strain of modern philosophical thought. Thomas Hobbes, at the earliest beginnings of the Enlightenment, was the first to promote the view that all humans are individuals, who are equal in their desires and abilities and therefore also

[3] This term must *not* be confused with what we understand as an 'individual' today.

[4] The term 'mankind' is used here to show to which concept of self-perception Rousseau wants to get back to. This shift, however, includes only the participants of the social contract. Those, for practical reasons, might have been imagined by Rousseau as a rather small number.

[5] It is a subject of endless discussion in how far small societies in which people can vote directly on prepositions like, perhaps not accidentally, Switzerland today are similar to the society Rousseau imagined. Rousseau's Europe, as well as the vast majority of European states today, was certainly "the final stage of the state of nature" for him though. See Cohen, Fung 2004.

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equally valuable.6 In other words, Hobbes came from a system that *did not share this belief yet.* John Locke mixed his labor with the concept by introducing a thought which should become central for our modern conception of morality–that this equality also entitles every individual to certain "inalienable" individual rights. Modernity was born. However, it relies philosophically on the social mode predating the enlightenment in its forgotten premises to its core convictions.

Rousseau's theory is entirely different; as different as the foregoing form of being in the world. While Hobbes's and Locke's social contracts want to change the conditions under which humans live, Rousseau wants to change their nature itself by changing mankind's state of mental being or being of mind. It is important to note here that Hobbes and Locke are part of an enlightened strain of thought and therefore much more familiar to us than Rousseau. While the Enlightenment largely shapes our perception today, Rousseau was part and indeed one of the earliest members of a different strain of thought which should ultimately fail in its attempt to change human self-perception and disappear, although neither without leaving any traces nor without reoccurring again and again in political and social movements at various instances in and before the 20th century. Humans for Locke and Hobbes are naturally individuals. For Rousseau individuality is only an "idea" which "arose" in the course of events. For Hobbes, humans are born as free individuals but that does not give them a right to their freedom. Neither does it give them a right to their lives or their estates–at least no more than everybody else has a right to take these away from them. If everyone has a right to everything, this obviously means the same as to say that nobody has a right to anything. These conceptions seem strange to us. When we hear Hobbes's ideas without Locke's additions to them, we automatically feel a natural desire to disagree with them. Rousseau is so far from our self-perception and our way of looking at the world that most people are not even able to fully grasp his ideas.

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[6] How far his conception was removed from the traditional view taught at Universities at Hobbes's time becomes clear in his strong disagreement with Aristotle's idea that humans are naturally "political animals." This theory and Aristotle's fundamental view that humans are neither equal nor equally valuable display very well how far removed Hobbes's indeed was from earlier ways of looking at the world and philosophical theories. See Annas 1996.

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