A Brief Life of Thomas Hobbes, 1588-1679

by John Aubrey

The writers of the lives of the ancient philosophers used to, in the first place, to speak of their lineage; and they tell us that in process of time several illustrious great families accounted it their glory to be branched from such or such a Sapiens. Why now should that method be omitted in this Historiola of our Malmesbury philosopher? Who though but of plebeian descent, his renown has and will give brightness to his name and family, which hereafter may arise glorious and flourish in riches and may justly take it an honour to be of kin to this worthy person, so famous, for his learning, both at home and abroad.

Thomas Hobbes, then, whose life I write, was second son of Mr Thomas Hobbes, vicar of Charlton and Westport next to Malmesbury, who married Middleton of Brokenborough (a yeomanly family), by whom he had two sons and one daughter. Thomas, the father, was one of the ignorant 'Sir Johns, of Queen Elizabeth's time; could only read the prayers of the church and the homilies; and disesteemed learning (his son Edmund told me so), as not knowing the sweetness of it. As to his father's ignorance and clownery, it was as good metal in the ore, which wants excoriating and refining. A wit requires much cultivation, much pains, and art and good conversation to perfect a man.

His father had an elder brother whose name was Francis, a wealthy man, and had been alderman of the borough; by profession a glover, which is a great trade here, and in times past much greater. Having no child, he contributed much to or rather altogether maintained his nephew Thomas at Magdalen Hall in Oxford; and when he died gave him a mowing ground called the Gasten ground, lying near to the horse-fair, worth £16 or £18 per annum; the rest of his lands he gave to his nephew Edmund.

Edmund was near two years older than his brother Thomas, and something resembled him in aspect, not so tall, but fell much short of him in his intellect, though he was a good plain understanding countryman. He had been bred at school with his brother; and could have made theme, and verse, and understood a little Greek to his dying day. This Edmund had only one son named Francis, and two daughters married to countrymen in the neighbourhood. This Francis pretty well resembled his uncle Thomas, especially about the eye; and probably had he had good education might have been ingenious; but be drowned his wit in ale.

Westport is the parish without the west gate (which is now demolished), which gate stood on the neck of land that joins Malmesbury to Westport. Here was before the late wars a very pretty church, consisting of a nave and two aisles, dedicated to St Mary; and a fair spire-steeple, with five tuneable bells, which, when the town was taken (about 1644) by Sir W. Waller, were converted into ordnance, and the church pulled down to the ground, that the enemy might not shelter themselves against the garrison. The steeple was higher than that now standing in the borough, which much adorned the prospect. The windows were well painted, and in them were inscriptions that declared much antiquity; now is here rebuilt a church like a stable.
Thomas Hobbes of Malmesbury, philosopher, was born at his father's house, being that extreme house that points into, or faces, the Horse-Fair; the farthest house on the left hand as you go to Tewbury, leaving the church on your right. To prevent mistakes, and that hereafter may rise no doubt what house was famous for this famous man's birth, I do here testify that in April 1639, his brother Edmund went with me into this house, and into the chamber where he was born. Now things begin to be antiquated, and I have heard some guess it might be at the house where his brother Edmund lived and died. But this is not so, as I here deliver it. This house was given by Thomas, the vicar to his daughter, whose daughter or granddaughter possessed it when it was there. It is a firm house, stone-built, and tiled, of one room (besides a buttery, or the like, within) below, and two chambers above. It was in the innermost where he first drew breath.

The day of his birth was 5 April 1638, on a Friday morning, which that year was Good Friday. His mother fell in labour with him upon the fright of the invasion of the Spaniards.

At four years old he went to school in Westport Church, till eight; by that time he could read well, and number four figures. Afterwards he went to school to Malmesbury, to Mr Evans, the minister of the town; and afterwards to Mr Robert Latimer, a young man of about nineteen or twenty, newly come from the University, who then kept a private school in Westport, where the place broad is, next door north from the smith's shop, opposite to the Three Cups (as I take it). He was a bachelor and delighted in his scholar's company, and used to instruct him, and two or three ingenious youths more, in the evening till nine o'clock. Here Mr T.H. so well profited in his learning, that at fourteen years of age, he went away a good school-scholar to Magdalene Hall in Oxford. It is not to be forgotten that before he went to the University, he had turned Euclid's Medea out of Greek into Latin iambics, which he presented to his master.

Mr H. told me he would fain have had them, to have seen how he did grow; and twenty odd years ago I searched all old Mr Latimer's papers, but could not find them; the oven (pies) had devoured them. I have heard his brother Edmund and Mr Wayte (his schoolfellows) say that when he was a boy he was playsome enough, but within a while he had then and he thought himself entirely in contemplative melancholiness; he would get himself into a corner, and learn his lesson by heart presently.

This Mr Latimer was a good Graecian, and the first that came into our parts since the Reformation. He was afterwards minister of Malmesbury, and from thence he preferred to a better living of £100 per annum or more, at Leigh Delamere within this hundred.

At Oxford Mr T.H. used, in the summer time especially, to rise very early in the morning, and would tie the leaden counters (which they used in those days at Christmas at 'post and pair') with packthread, which he did besmirch with birdlime, and bait them with pieces of cheese, and the jackdaws would spy them a vast distance up in the air, and as far off as Osney Abbey, and strike at the bat, and so be haried in the string, which the weight of the counter would make cling about their wings. He did not much care for logic, yet he learned it, and taught himself a good disputant. He took great delight there to go to the bookbinders' shops and lie gaping on maps.

After he had taken his bachelor of arts degree, the then principal of Magdalen Hall (Sir James Hussey) recommended him to his young lord when he left Oxford, who did believe that he should profit more in his learning if he had a scholar of his own age to wait on him than if he had the information of a grave doctor. He was his lordship's page, and rode hunting and hawking with him, and kept his privy purse. By this way of life he had almost forgotten his Latin. He therefore bought him books of an Amsterdam print that he might carry in his pocket (particularly Caesar's Commentaries), which he did read in the lobby, or ante-chamber, whilst his lord was making his visits.

Before Thucydid's time, he spent two years in reading romances and plays, which he has often repented and said that these two years were lost of him-wherein perhaps he was mistaken too, for it might furnish him with copy of words.

The Lord Chancellor Bacon loved to converse with him. He assisted his lordship in translating several of his essays into Latin, one, I well remember, is Of the Greatness of Cities. The rest I have forgotten. His lordship was a very contemplative person, and was wont to contemplate in his delicious walks at Gorhambury, and dictate to Mr Thomas Bushell, or one of his other gentlemen, that attended him with ink and paper ready to set down his thoughts. His lordship would often say that he better liked Mr Hobbes's taking thoughts, than any of the others, because he understood what he wrote, which the others did not understand, and lie gaping on maps.

1634: this summer I remember it was in venison season (July or August) ~ Mr T.H. came into his native country to visit his friends, and amongst others he came then to see his old schooldmasters, Mr Robert Latimer, at Leigh Delamere, where I was then at school in the church, newly entered in my grammar by him: here was the first place and time that ever I had the honour to see this worthy, learned man, who was then pleased to take notice of me, and the next day visited my relations. He was then a proper man, brisk, and in very good habit. His hair was then quite black. He stayed at Malmesbury and in the neighbourhood a week or better; 'twas the last time that ever he was in Wiltshire.

He was forty years old before he looked on geometry; which happened accidentally. Being in a gentleman's house, Mr Euclid's Elements lay open, and 'twas the forty-seventh proposition in the first book. He read the proposition. 'By G,' said he, 'this is impossible!' So he reads the demonstration of it, which referred him back to such a proof; which referred him back to another, which he also read. Et sic deinceps, that at last he was demonstratively convinced
of that truth. This made him in love with geometry. I have heard Sir Jonas Moore (and others)
say that it was a great pity he had not begun the study of the mathematics sooner, for such a
working head would have made great advancement in it. So had he done he would not have
lain so open to his learned mathematical antagonists. But one may say of him, as one says of
Jos. Scaliger, that where he errs, he errs so ingeniously, that one had rather err with him
than hit the mark with Clavius. I have heard Mr Hobbes say that he was wont to draw lines on
his thigh and on the sheets, abed, and also multiply and divide. He would often complain that
glazing (though of great use) was too much admired, and so followed after, that it made men
not contemplate and consider so much the nature and power of lines, which was a great
hindrance to the growth of geometry; for that though algebra did rarely well and quickly in
right lines, yet it would not bite in solid geometry.

Memorandum: after he began to reflect on the interest of the King of England as touching his
affairs between him and the parliament, for ten years together his thoughts were much, or
almost altogether, unhinged from the mathematics; but chiefly intent on his De Ovo and after
that On his Leviathan... which was a great putback to his mathematical improvement, which
N.B. – for in ten years’ (or better) discontinuance of that study (especially) one’s mathematics
will become very rubiginous.

Memorandum: he told me that Bishop Manwaring (of St David’s) preached his doctrine: for
which, among others, he was sent prisoner to the Tower. Then thought Mr Hobbes, it is time
now for me to shift for myself, and so withdrew into France, and resided at Paris. As I
remember, there were others likewise did preach his doctrine. This little MS breviate grew to
his book De Ovo, and at last grew there to be the so formidable Leviathan. I think the manner
of writing of which book (he told me) was thus: He walked much and contemplated, and he had
in the head of his cane a pen and ink-horn, carried always a note-book in his pocket, and as
soon as a thought darted, he presently entered it into his book, or otherwise he might
perhaps have lost it. He had drawn the design of the book into chapters etc so he knew
whereabout it would come in. Thus that book was made.

During his stay at Paris he went through a course of chemistry with Dr Davison; and he there
also studied Vesalius’ Anatomy. This I am sure was before 1648; for that Sir William Petry
(then Dr Petry, physician) studied and dissected with him.

In 1650 or 1651 he returned into England, and lived most part in London, in Fetter Lane,
where he wrote, or finished his book De Corpore, in Latin and then in English; and wrote his
lessons against the two Savilian professors at Oxford.

He was much in London till the restoration of his majesty, having convenience not only
of books, but of learned conversation, as Mr John Selden, Dr William Harvey, John Vaughan
etc. I have heard him say, that at his lord’s house in the country there was a good library, and
that his lordship stored the library with what books he thought fit to be bought; but he said,
the want of learned conversation was a very great inconvenience, and that though he
conceived he could order his thinking as well perhaps as another man, yet he found a great
defect.

Amongst other of his acquaintance I must not forget our common friend, Mr Samuel Cowper,
the prince of limners of this last age, who drew his picture as like as art could afford, and one
of the best pieces that ever he did; which his majesty, at his return, bought of him, and
conserves as one of his great rarities in his closet at Whitehall.

1659. In 1659, his lord was and some years before—at Little Salisbury House (now turned to
conserves as one of his great rarities in his closet at Whitehall.

1659. In 1659, his lord was and some years before—at Little Salisbury House (now turned to

In 1650 or 1651 he returned into England, and lived most part in London, in Fetter Lane,
where he wrote, or finished his book De Corpore, in Latin and then in English; and wrote his
lessons against the two Savilian professors at Oxford.

He was much in London till the restoration of his majesty, having convenience not only
of books, but of learned conversation, as Mr John Selden, Dr William Harvey, John Vaughan
etc. I have heard him say, that at his lord’s house in the country there was a good library, and
that his lordship stored the library with what books he thought fit to be bought; but he said,
the want of learned conversation was a very great inconvenience, and that though he
conceived he could order his thinking as well perhaps as another man, yet he found a great
defect.

Amongst other of his acquaintance I must not forget our common friend, Mr Samuel Cowper,
the prince of limners of this last age, who drew his picture as like as art could afford, and one
of the best pieces that ever he did; which his majesty, at his return, bought of him, and
conserves as one of his great rarities in his closet at Whitehall.

1659. In 1659, his lord was and some years before—at Little Salisbury House (now turned to

In 1650 or 1651 he returned into England, and lived most part in London, in Fetter Lane,
where he wrote, or finished his book De Corpore, in Latin and then in English; and wrote his
lessons against the two Savilian professors at Oxford.

He was much in London till the restoration of his majesty, having convenience not only
of books, but of learned conversation, as Mr John Selden, Dr William Harvey, John Vaughan
etc. I have heard him say, that at his lord’s house in the country there was a good library, and
that his lordship stored the library with what books he thought fit to be bought; but he said,
the want of learned conversation was a very great inconvenience, and that though he
conceived he could order his thinking as well perhaps as another man, yet he found a great
defect.

Amongst other of his acquaintance I must not forget our common friend, Mr Samuel Cowper,
the prince of limners of this last age, who drew his picture as like as art could afford, and one
of the best pieces that ever he did; which his majesty, at his return, bought of him, and
conserves as one of his great rarities in his closet at Whitehall.

1659. In 1659, his lord was and some years before—at Little Salisbury House (now turned to

In 1650 or 1651 he returned into England, and lived most part in London, in Fetter Lane,
where he wrote, or finished his book De Corpore, in Latin and then in English; and wrote his
lessons against the two Savilian professors at Oxford.

He was much in London till the restoration of his majesty, having convenience not only
of books, but of learned conversation, as Mr John Selden, Dr William Harvey, John Vaughan
etc. I have heard him say, that at his lord’s house in the country there was a good library, and
that his lordship stored the library with what books he thought fit to be bought; but he said,
the want of learned conversation was a very great inconvenience, and that though he
conceived he could order his thinking as well perhaps as another man, yet he found a great
defect.

Amongst other of his acquaintance I must not forget our common friend, Mr Samuel Cowper,
the prince of limners of this last age, who drew his picture as like as art could afford, and one
of the best pieces that ever he did; which his majesty, at his return, bought of him, and
conserves as one of his great rarities in his closet at Whitehall.

1659. In 1659, his lord was and some years before—at Little Salisbury House (now turned to

In 1650 or 1651 he returned into England, and lived most part in London, in Fetter Lane,
where he wrote, or finished his book De Corpore, in Latin and then in English; and wrote his
lessons against the two Savilian professors at Oxford.

He was much in London till the restoration of his majesty, having convenience not only
of books, but of learned conversation, as Mr John Selden, Dr William Harvey, John Vaughan
etc. I have heard him say, that at his lord’s house in the country there was a good library, and
that his lordship stored the library with what books he thought fit to be bought; but he said,
the want of learned conversation was a very great inconvenience, and that though he
conceived he could order his thinking as well perhaps as another man, yet he found a great
defect.

Amongst other of his acquaintance I must not forget our common friend, Mr Samuel Cowper,
the prince of limners of this last age, who drew his picture as like as art could afford, and one
of the best pieces that ever he did; which his majesty, at his return, bought of him, and
conserves as one of his great rarities in his closet at Whitehall.

1659. In 1659, his lord was and some years before—at Little Salisbury House (now turned to

In 1650 or 1651 he returned into England, and lived most part in London, in Fetter Lane,
where he wrote, or finished his book De Corpore, in Latin and then in English; and wrote his
lessons against the two Savilian professors at Oxford.

He was much in London till the restoration of his majesty, having convenience not only
of books, but of learned conversation, as Mr John Selden, Dr William Harvey, John Vaughan
etc. I have heard him say, that at his lord’s house in the country there was a good library, and
that his lordship stored the library with what books he thought fit to be bought; but he said,
the want of learned conversation was a very great inconvenience, and that though he
conceived he could order his thinking as well perhaps as another man, yet he found a great
defect.

Amongst other of his acquaintance I must not forget our common friend, Mr Samuel Cowper,
the prince of limners of this last age, who drew his picture as like as art could afford, and one
of the best pieces that ever he did; which his majesty, at his return, bought of him, and
conserves as one of his great rarities in his closet at Whitehall.
The wits at court were wont to bait him, but he feared none of them, and would make his part good. The king would call him the bear: 'here comes the bear to be baited.'

Repartees. He was marvellous happy and ready in his replies, and that without rancour (except provoked) but now I speak of his readiness in replies as to wit and drollery. He would say that he did not care to give, neither was he adroit at, a present answer to a serious query; he had as lief they should have expected an extemporary solution to an arithmetical problem, for he turned and winded and compounded in philosophy, politics, etc., as if he had been at analytical work. He always avoided, as much as he could, to conclude hastily.

Memorandum: from 1660 till the time he last went into Derbyshire, he spent most of his time in London at his lord's (viz at Little Salisbury House; then, Queen Street; lastly, Newport House), following his contemplation and study. He contemplated and invented (set down a hint with a pencil or so) in the morning, but compiled in the afternoon.

I desponded, for his reasons, that he should make any tentamen towards this design; but afterwards, it seems, in the country, he wrote his treatise De Legibus (unprinted) of which Sir John Vaughan, Lord Chief Justice of the Common Pleas, had a transcript, and I do affirm that he much admired it.

1665. This year he told me that he was willing to do some good to the town where he was born; that his majesty loved him well, and if I could find out something in our country that was in his gift, he did believe he could beg it of his majesty, and seeing he was bred a scholar, he thought it most proper to endow a free school there; which is wanting now (for, before the Reformation, all monasteries had great schools appendant to them; e.g. Magdalen School and New College School). After enquiry I found out a piece of land in Braydon forest (of about £25 per annum value) that was in his majesty's gift, which he hoped to have obtained of his majesty for a salary for a schoolmaster but the queen's priests smelling out the design and being his enemies hindered this public and charitable intention.

1675, he left London cum animo nunquam revertendi and spent the remainder of his days in Derbyshire, with the Earl of Devonshire at Chatsworth and Hardwick in contemplation and study.

Then his sickness, death, burial and place, and epitaph, which send for.

From a letter to John Aubrey from James Wheldon, 16 January 1679.

'He fell sick about the middle of October last. His disease was the strangury, and the physicians judged it incurable by reason of his great age and natural decay. About the 20th of November, my lord being about to remove from Chatsworth to Hardwick, Mr Hobbes would not be left behind; and therefore with a feather bed laid into the coach; upon which he lay warm clad, he was conveyed safely, and was in appearance as well after that little journey as before it. But seven or eight days after, his whole right side was taken with the dead palsy, and at the same time he was made speechless. He lived after this seven days, taking very little nourishment, slept well, and by intervals endeavoured to speak, but could not. In the whole time of his sickness he was free from fever. He seemed therefore to die rather for want of the fuel of life (which was spent in him) and mere weakness and decay, than by power of his disease, which was thought to be only an effect of his age and weakness... He was put to a woolen shroud and coffin, which was covered with a white sheet, and upon that a black hearse cloth, and so carried upon men's shoulders, a little mile to church. The company, consisting of the family and neighbours that came to his funeral, and attended him to his grave, were very handsomely entertained with wine, burned and raw, cake, biscuit, etc... His complexion. In his youth he was unhealthy, and of an ill complexion (yellowish).

His lord, who was a waster, sent him up and down to borrow money, and to get gentlemen to be bound for him, being ashamed to speak himself: he took colds, being well in his feet (then were no hackney coaches to stand in the streets), and trod both his shoes aside the same way. Notwithstanding, he was well-beloved: they loved his company for his pleasant facetiousness and good nature. From forty, or better, he grew healthier, and then he had a fresh, ruddy complexion. He was sanguineo-melancholicus; which the physiologers say is the fresh, ruddy complexion. In his youth he was unhealthy, and of an ill complexion (yellowish).

His complexion. In his youth he was unhealthy, and of an ill complexion (yellowish). In his old age he was very bald (which claimed a veneration). yet within door, he used to study, and sit, bareheaded, and said he never took cold in his head, but that the greatest trouble was to keep off the flies from pitching on the baldness.

Skin. His skin was soft and of that kind which my Lord Bacon in his History of Life and Death calls a goose-skin, i.e. of a wide texture:

Crassa cutis, crassum cerebrum, crassum ingenium

Face not very great; ample forehead; whiskers yellowish-reddish, which naturally turned up to study, and sit, bareheaded, and said he never took cold in his head, but that the greatest trouble was to keep off the flies from pitching on the baldness.

His skin was soft and of that kind which my Lord Bacon in his History of Life and Death calls a goose-skin, i.e. of a wide texture:

Crassa cutis, crassum cerebrum, crassum ingenium

Eye. He had a good eye, and that of a hazel colour, which was full of life and spirit, even to the last. When he was earnest in discourse, there shone (as it were) a bright live-coal within
Jasper Mayne) that stood by – ‘Would you have done this, if it had not been Christ’s

...into the Strand, a poor and infirm old man craved his alms. He beholding him with eyes of

...pro suo modulo to those that were true objects of his bounty. One time, I remember, going

...Charity. His brotherly love to his kindred has already been spoken of. He was very charitable

...write very legibly since 1665 or 1666, as I find by some of his letters to me.

...year 1650, and has grown upon him by degrees, ever since, so that he has not been able to

...believe it did his lungs good and conduced much to prolong his life.

...him, he sang aloud (not that he had a very good voice, but for his health’s sake); he did

...Singing. He had always books of prick-song lying on his table – e.g. of H. Lawes’, etc, Songs

...along the sides with black ribbons.

...Habit. In cold weather he commonly wore a black velvet coat, lined with fur,. if not, some

...consideration he made him his executor.

...him, which he did perform to him living and dying, with great respect and diligence: for which

...Prudence. He gave to his amanuensis, James Wheldon (the Earl of Devonshire’s baker; who

...money to rub him.

...In the afternoon he penned his morning thoughts.

...His dinner was provided for him exactly by eleven, for he could not now stay till his lord’s

...walking, take a rude memorandum of it, to preserve it in his memory till he came to his

...board he drew his lines (schemes). When a line came into his head, he would, as he was

...butter; and took his walk, meditating till ten; then he did put down the minutes of his thoughts.

...drank no wine, his stomach grew weak, and he did eat most fish, especially whitings, for he

...drink every day wine with company, which, though not to drunkenness, spoils the brain.

...oppressed; but he never was, nor could not endure to be, habitually a good fellow, i.e. to

...benefit neither his wit was disturbed (longer than he was spewing) nor his stomach

...times; which, considering his great age, did not amount to above once a year: when he did

...women. I have heard him say that he did believe he had been in excess in his life, a hundred

...Temperance and diet. He was, even in his youth, (generally) temperate, both as to wine and

...His sight and wit continued to the last. He had a curious sharp sight, as he had a

...considering his great age, very erect.

...Stature. He was six foot high, and something better, and went indifferently erect, or rather,

...(i.e. his eyelids). He had middling eyes, not very big, nor very little.

...it. He had two kinds of looks: when he laughed, was witty, and in a merry humour, one could

...Sight; wit. His sight and wit continued to the last. He had a curious sharp sight, as he had a

...sharpt, which was also so sure and steady (and contrary to that man call broad-wittedness) that I have heard him oftentimes say that in multiplying and dividing he never mistook a figure: and so in other things. He thought much, and with excellent method and steadiness, which made him seldom make a false step.

...Though he left his native country at fourteen, and lived so long, yet sometimes one might find

...a little touch of our pronunciation. Old Sir Thomas Malet, one of our judges of the King’s

...Reading. He had read much, if one considers his long life; but his contemplation was much

...His books. He had very few books. I never saw (nor Sir William Petty) above half a dozen

...Xenophon, or some probable history, and Greek Testament, or so.

...at many sick people’s bedsides, than from the learned but unexperienced physician.

...His physic. He seldom used any physic. What it was I have forgotten, but will enquire of Mr

...at many sick people’s bedsides, than from the learned but unexperienced physician.

...Temperance and diet. He was, even in his youth, (generally) temperate, both as to wine and

...women. I have heard him say that he did believe he had been in excess in his life, a hundred

...Temperance and diet. He was, even in his youth, (generally) temperate, both as to wine and

...women. I have heard him say that he did believe he had been in excess in his life, a hundred

...Habit. In cold weather he commonly wore a black velvet coat, lined with fur,. if not, some

...consideration he made him his executor.

...him, which he did perform to him living and dying, with great respect and diligence: for which

...Prudence. He gave to his amanuensis, James Wheldon (the Earl of Devonshire’s baker; who

...money to rub him.

...In the afternoon he penned his morning thoughts.

...His dinner was provided for him exactly by eleven, for he could not now stay till his lord’s

...walking, take a rude memorandum of it, to preserve it in his memory till he came to his

...board he drew his lines (schemes). When a line came into his head, he would, as he was

...butter; and took his walk, meditating till ten; then he did put down the minutes of his thoughts.

...drank no wine, his stomach grew weak, and he did eat most fish, especially whitings, for he

...drink every day wine with company, which, though not to drunkenness, spoils the brain.

...oppressed; but he never was, nor could not endure to be, habitually a good fellow, i.e. to

...benefit neither his wit was disturbed (longer than he was spewing) nor his stomach

...times; which, considering his great age, did not amount to above once a year: when he did

...women. I have heard him say that he did believe he had been in excess in his life, a hundred

...Temperance and diet. He was, even in his youth, (generally) temperate, both as to wine and

...women. I have heard him say that he did believe he had been in excess in his life, a hundred

...Temperance and diet. He was, even in his youth, (generally) temperate, both as to wine and
command? 'Yes,' said he. 'Why?' said the other. 'Because,' said he, 'I was in pain to consider the miserable condition of the old man; and now my alms, giving him some relief, doth also ease me.'

His goodness of nature and willingness to instruct anyone who was willing to be informed and modestly desired it, which I am a witness of as to my own part and also to others. Aspersions and envy. His work was attended with envy, which threw several aspersions and false reports on him. For instance, one (common) was that he was afraid to lie alone at night in his chamber, (I have often heard him say that he was not afraid of sprites, but afraid of being knocked on the head for five or ten pounds, which rogues might think he had in his chamber); and several other tales, as untrue.

I have heard some positively affirm that he had a yearly pension from the King of France – possibly for having asserted such a monarchy as the King of France exercises, but for what other grounds I know not, unless it be for that the present King of France is reputed an encourager of choice and able men in all faculties who can contribute to his greatness. I never heard him speak of any such thing; and, since his death, I have enquired of his most intimate friends in Derbyshire, who write to me they never heard of any such thing. Had it, and it had it been so, he, nor they, ought to have been ashamed of been becoming the munificence of so great a prince to have done it.

Atheism. For his being branded with atheism, his writings and virtuous life testify against it. And that he was a Christian, it is clear, for he received the sacrament of Dr Pierson, and in his confession to Dr John Cosins, on his (as he thought) death-bed, declared that he liked the religion of the Church of England best of all other.

He would have the worship of God performed with music (he told me). It is or custom in the lives of wise men to put down their sayings. Now if truth (uncommon) delivered clearly and wittily may go for a saying, his common discourse was full of them, and which for the most part were sharp and significant.

He said that if it were not for the gallowes, some men are of so cruel a nature as to take a delight in killing men more than I should to kill a bird. I have heard him inveigh much against the cruelty of Moses for putting so many thousands to the sword for bowing to the golden calf.

I have heard him say that Aristotle was the worst teacher that ever was, the worst politician and ethic – a country fellow that could live in the world as good; but his rhetoric and discourse of animals was rare.

When Mr T. Hobbes was sick in France, the divines came to him, and tormented him (both Roman Catholic, Church of England and Geneva. Said he to them 'Let me alone, or else I will detect all your cheats from Aaron to yourselves!' I think I have heard him speak something to this purpose.

Insert the love verses he made not long before his death.

1. Tho' I am past ninety, and too old T'expect preferment in the court of Cupid, And many winters made me ev'n so old I am become almost all over stupid, 2. Yet I can love and have a mistress too. As fair as and as wise as is fair; And yet not proud, nor anything will do To make me of her favour to despair. 3. To tell you who she is was very bold. But if I'th' character your self you find Think not the man a fool tho' he be old Who loves in body fair a fairer mind.

Catalogue of his learned familiar friends and acquaintances, besides those already mentioned, that I remember him to have spoken of.

Mr Benjamin Jonson, poet-laureate, was his loving and familiar friend and acquaintance. Ayto, Scoto-Britannus, a good poet and critic and good scholar. He was nearly related to his lord's lady (Bruce). And he desired Ben Jonson, and this gentleman, to give their judgement on his style in his translation of Thucydides.

Lucius Cary, Lord Falkland was his great friend and admirer and so was Sir William Petty; both which I have here enrolled amongst those friends I have heard speak of; but Dr Blackburne left them both out (to my admiration). I asked him why he had done so. He answered, because they were both ignote to foreigners. His acquaintance with Sir William Petty began at Paris, 1648 or 1649, at which time Mr Hobbes studied Vesalius' Anatomy, and Sir William with him. He then assisted Mr Hobbes in drawing his schemes for his book of optics, for he had a very fine hand in those days for drawing, which drafts Mr Hobbes did much commend. His excellency in this kind conciliated them the sooner to the familiarity of our common friend Mr S. Cowper.

When he was at Florence he contracted a friendship with the famous Galileo Galilei, whom he extremely venerated and magnified; and not only as he was a prodigious wit, but for his sweetness of nature and manners. They pretty well resembled one another, as by their pictures doth appear; were both cheerful and melancholic-sanguine; and had both a constancy of fate, to be hated and persecuted by the ecclesiastics. Descartes and he were acquainted and mutually respected one another. He would say that had he kept himself to geometry he had been the best geometer in the world; but his head did not lie for philosophy.

When his Leviathan came out he sent by his stationer's (Andrew Crooke) man a copy of it, well-bound, to Mr John Selden in the Carmellete Buildings. Mr Selden told the servant, he did
Sir Jonas Moore, mathematician, surveyor of his majesty’s ordnance, who had a great
veneration for Mr Hobbes and was wont much to lament, he fell to the study of the
mathematics so late.

Edmund Waller esquire of Beconsfield: ‘but what he was most to be commended for was that
he being a private person threw down the strongholds of the Church, and let in light.’

Robert Stevens, serjeant at law, was wont to say of him, and that truly, that ‘no man had so
much, so deeply, seriously and profoundly considered human nature as he’.

Memorandum: he hath no countryman living who hath known him so long (since 1634) as myself,
or of his friends, who knows so much about him.

Now as he had these ingenious and learned friends, and many more, no question, that I
know not or now escape my memory; so he had many enemies (though undeserved; for he
would not provoke, but if provoked, he was sharp and bitter): and as a prophet is not
esteemed in his own country, so he was more esteemed by foreigners than by his
countrymen.

His chief antagonists were:

Seth Ward, DD, now Bishop of Salisbury, who wrote against him in his Vindicia Academiarum
anonymously with whom though formerly he had some contest, for which he was sorry, yet
Mr Hobbes had a great veneration for his worth, learning and goodness.

John Wallis, DD, a great mathematician, and that has deserved exceedingly of the
commonwealth of learning for the great pains etc, was his great antagonist in mathematics. It
was a pity, as is said before, that Mr Hobbes began so late, else he would have lain so
much, so deeply, seriously and profoundly considered human nature as he.

To conclude, he had a high esteem for the Royal Society, having said that ‘Natural
Philosophy was removed from the universities to Gresham College’, meaning the Royal
Society that meets there; and the Royal Society (generally) had the like for him: and he would
have himself, or of his friends, who knows so much about him.

Memorandum: he hath no countryman living who hath known him so long (since 1634) as myself,
or of his friends, who knows so much about him.

Now as he had these ingenious and learned friends, and many more, no question, that I
know not or now escape my memory; so he had many enemies (though undeserved; for he
would not provoke, but if provoked, he was sharp and bitter): and as a prophet is not
esteemed in his own country, so he was more esteemed by foreigners than by his
countrymen.

His chief antagonists were:

Seth Ward, DD, now Bishop of Salisbury, who wrote against him in his Vindicia Academiarum
anonymously with whom though formerly he had some contest, for which he was sorry, yet
Mr Hobbes had a great veneration for his worth, learning and goodness.

John Wallis, DD, a great mathematician, and that has deserved exceedingly of the
commonwealth of learning for the great pains etc, was his great antagonist in mathematics. It
was a pity, as is said before, that Mr Hobbes began so late, else he would have lain so
much, so deeply, seriously and profoundly considered human nature as he.

To conclude, he had a high esteem for the Royal Society, having said that ‘Natural
Philosophy was removed from the universities to Gresham College’, meaning the Royal
Society that meets there; and the Royal Society (generally) had the like for him: and he would
have
Thomas Hobbes (born 5 April 1588–died 4 December 1679) was an English philosopher, whose famous 1651 book “Leviathan” established the foundation for most of Western political philosophy from the perspective of social contract theory. Hobbes is remembered today for his work on political philosophy, although he contributed to a diverse array of fields, including history, geometry, physics of gases, theology, ethics, general philosophy, and political science. Nonetheless, Hobbes's account of human nature as self-interested cooperation has proved to be an enduring theory in the field of philosophy. Hobbes, then, whose life I write, was second son of Mr Thomas Hobbes, vicar of Charlton and Westport next to Malmesbury, who married Middleton of Brokenborough (a yeomanly family), by whom he had two sons and one daughter. Thomas, the father, was one of the ignorant 'Sir Johns, of Queen Elizabeth's time; could only read the prayers of the church and the homilies; and disesteemed learning (his son Edmund told me so), as not knowing the sweetness of it. The day of his birth was 5 April 1588, on a Friday morning, which that year was Good Friday. His mother fell in labor with him upon the fright of the invasion of the Spaniards. At four years old he went to school in Westport Church, till eight; by that time he could read well, and number four figures. Thomas Hobbes (1588–1679), whose current reputation rests largely on his political philosophy, was a thinker with wide-ranging interests. In philosophy, he defended a range of materialist, nominalist, and empiricist views against Cartesian and Aristotelian alternatives. In physics, his work was influential on Leibniz, and led him into disputes with Boyle and the experimentalists of the early Royal Society. In history, he translated Thucydides' History of the Peloponnesian War into English, and later wrote his own history of the Long Parliament. But despite that, Hobbes was a serious and prominent participant in the intellectual life of his time.