

Notes on Chapters 1-4 and 8-10 of Karl Widerquist and Grant McCall, *Prehistoric Myths and Modern Political Philosophy* (Edinburgh University Press, 2016)

## CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

LOCKEAN PROVISIO (LP) is a mutual advantage principle: no one should be worse off from an institution. WM hold that any successful use of mutual advantage principle in justifying state or private property rights must at least satisfy the weak version of the Lockean proviso.

- Paine's contractarian position: everyone born after civilization should not be worse than had they been born before. (Contractarians aren't always clear that their comparison with "state of nature" is with real stateless societies or just with civil war / failed states.)
- Nozick's propertarian weak version of Lockean Proviso: civilization deprives people of liberties to hunt / gather (because of private land), so they would be owed compensation if civilization were to be a net loss to them.

HOBBIAN HYPOTHESIS (HH) = Fulfillment of Lockean Proviso: "Everyone IS better off or at least as well off in state / private resource ownership than otherwise"

- HH = way to silence complaints.
- WM: it's "stunning" how quickly people move from the LP to the HH.

WM thesis: The HH IS FALSE.

- Social contract says only rational move is to leave stateless society / no private resource ownership and join the state. But least advantaged people today are worse off than if they had never joined the capitalist state, since, because of various inequalities, they have many of its disadvantages and few of its advantages.
- The HH became canonical foundation of Western political philosophy via colonial prejudices upon contact with First Peoples of New World.

FALSE BELIEFS behind the HH:

1. stateless societies are inherently violent
2. stateless peoples live in destitution
3. their days are taken up with an all-consuming food quest
4. there is a dichotomy between "natural man" and "civilized man"
5. human societies necessarily progress from a uniform primitive base through a series of inevitable stages of development to the highpoint of civilization with diverse cultures
6. Because capitalism produces so much wealth, people assume everyone is better off. But that ignores distribution and inequality.

## CHAPTER 2: MODERN POLITICAL PHILOSOPHY AND PREHISTORIC ANTHROPOLOGY: SOME PRELIMINARY ISSUES

### PHILOSOPHY OF THE STATE AND THE PROPERTY RIGHTS SYSTEM

- A. How do you do political philosophy?
  - a. All disciplines have shared assumptions (you can justify every premise every time), but political philosophy is vulnerable to letting HH slide bcs it has become entrenched common sense or CW (“conventional wisdom)
  - b. Is the SN a thought experiment or a description of reality of nonstate life?
    - i. If it’s a thought experiment it can illustrate normative claims
    - ii. If it’s an empirical claim it can be examined for evidence
- B. Contractarianism (aka, “social contract theory,” “consent theory,” or “voluntarism”) is most widely accepted and even for those who reject it, it is main point of reference
  - a. “why does state have final authority?” – what moral obligation do we have to obey law?
  - b. SC is a contract for mutual advantage in trade of freedom from authority in exchange for security and welfare
- C. Propertarianism: private property rights are natural rights governments have strong moral obligation to respect
- D. A Similar Criticism: both above schools of thought rely in LP and HH. WM are not trying to prove
  - a. Not trying to prove opposite of HH
    - i. HH = everyone is better off in state than in nonstate
    - ii. Negation of HH = not everyone is better off in state (i.e., some are worse off)
    - iii. Opposite of HH = no one is better off in state (i.e., everyone in non-state is better off)
  - b. Not trying to prove *average* person is better off in nonstate (LP says *everyone* should be better off)
  - c. Not trying to show that it is impossible to fulfill the LP (even though it is currently not met); they argue it can be “easily fulfilled with the right policies” (that raise the standard of life for those worst off in capitalist states)
  - d. Not trying to question Hobbes or Locke’s stories about origin of state / property rights
  - e. Not engaging in “ideal theory” debate (bcs of naturalistic fallacy – inability to derive ought from is – does one need at least one normative / a priori premise for a normative conclusion [“things should be different than they are now”] ?)
  - f. Not criticizing the ideal / a priori normative parts of SC theory (the LP), but only those that claim that today’s states meet HH requirement
- E. A Similar Comparison
  - a. Contractarianism opposes states and nonstates
  - b. Propertarianism opposes private property in resources and common property / collective non-ownership (not public ownership)

### THE ANTHROPOLOGY AND ARCHAEOLOGY OF STATELESS SOCIETIES

- A. Two main sources of evidence: ethnography and archaeology
  - a. Ethnography is tricky due to bias, power, essentializing, and epistemological issues
    - i. Also, all contemporary nonstate people are linked into global state networks
    - ii. Further, even longterm ethnographers might not reach deepest roots of nonstate life
  - b. Archaeology: make inferences about past from current surviving objects, but we only have very limited samples from deep past

- c. We must beware thinking of current nonstate people as “living fossils”
  - i. That doesn’t mean we can’t do any “ethnoarchaeology”
    - 1. We can consult the way modern foragers solve problems
    - 2. If we think ancient foragers had similar problems that would help us understand how they might have looked for similar solutions
    - 3. We can also look to contemporary variation

#### STATE AND STATELESSNESS IN POLITICAL THEORY AND IN ARCHAEOLOGY

- A. Political theory
  - a. Takes sovereignty as essence of state (Weberian monopoly on legit force)
  - b. Defines SN as absence of state (as “stateless” rather than nonstate)
- B. Anthropology
  - a. Looks at structural features of a society
    - i. Childe and his 10 features (cities, class, specialization, etc)
    - ii. NB: this feature-listing method will be criticized by Scott, summarizing recent research on early states
  - b. Rapid expansion of states to cover the globe

#### NOBLE SAVAGE ALLEGATION

- A. WM deny they are romanticizing nonstate people
- B. “noble savage” is oxymoronic and blackmailing
  - a. It’s understood (by racists) as an oxymoron: how could a savage be noble?
  - b. It’s blackmailing, because if you don’t treat nonstate people as miserable and warlike, then you are romanticizing them
- C. Ethnocentric state disdain is far more common than romanticizing nonstate people

#### DOES THE BOOK OFFER ANYTHING TO INDIGENOUS RIGHTS MOVEMENTS?

- A. Possibly. It corrects false beliefs about nonstate people.
- B. Some of those are used to justify colonial domination.

### CHAPTER 3: THE HOBBSIAN HYPOTHESIS: HOW A COLONIAL PREJUDICE BECAME AN ESSENTIAL PREMISE IN THE MOST POPULAR JUSTIFICATION OF GOVERNMENT

#### HOBBS’S THREE ARGUMENTS FOR THE STATE

- A. Literal-consent version:
  - a. dropped in favor of hypothetical consent version examined below
  - b. H’s *definition* of SN: time w/o common power = anarchy qua statelessness
    - i. Rests on dichotomy btw natural and civilized people
    - ii. So that lack of a state allows reversion to natural savagery
    - iii. The big problem is idea of a uniform human nature to which savages are closest
    - iv. Hobbes at least thought civilized people were savage underneath and were only kept in check by state institutions, as opposed to some long-term domestication process.
      - 1. I believe in long-term domestication but think it started in nonstate societies of pre-*H. sapiens*

2. Hence contra Nietzsche, for instance, who thought it began with states
- c. H's description of SN as state of war (SW) = "violence hypothesis" (an empirical claim)
  - i. for him happens inevitably w/o states due to his psychological theory of human nature (HN) and its three drives: fear, gain, glory
  - ii. hence SN = statelessness = expression of HN = SW
  - iii. plus SW entails impossibility of society
- d. WM: defining SN as lack of state  $\neq$  SN as lack of society (since nonstate societies exist)
- e. H's SC = promise among subjects to obey sovereign
  - i. H knows that real origin of states is not a contract but victory in war
  - ii. His point: states by conquest produce same protection from SW as would a contract
  - iii. By producing that protection, states are justified
- B. Prudential-advice version:
  - a. You're a fool to reject the state
  - b. But if you buy H's view of morality as obeying contract, then state is extra-moral in its treatment of rejecters of state
- C. Yield-to-Superior-Force version:
  - a. Here the deal is btw sovereign and those defeated in war
  - b. It's only for current behavior: don't kill me now
  - c. It only works if you accept Hobbes's reduction of morality to obeying a contract

#### HOBBS'S SUPPORT FOR HIS HYPOTHESIS

- A. H relies on "violence hypothesis": SN = SW = expression of warlike HN = impossibility of society
- B. H's assumptions for SN = SW according to Kavka:
  - a. Natural equality (anyone can kill anyone else)
  - b. Conflicting desires (my desire for gain, safety, and glory conflict with yours)
  - c. Ability to foresee consequences (of constant danger)
  - d. Advantage to attacker (tempts one to pre-emptive attacks on dangerous others)
  - e. Limited altruism (hard to make trustworthy horizontal alliances: ppl won't run risks for you)
- C. H's examples
  - a. Civil war
  - b. "savage people in many places of America" (colonial myth / prejudice)
- D. Strong vs Weak violence hypothesis
  - a. Strong: stateless societies always have intolerable levels of violence: H needs this for deductive reading of the HH
  - b. Weak: stateless societies have greater violence than states but not necessarily intolerable: then violence alone is not enough and you need other measure of benefit of states to everyone

#### CONTEMPORARY JUSTIFICATIONS OF THE STATE

- A. Hypothetical-consent version:
  - a. You don't have to show everyone agrees: you only have to show that state is the only rational move since it meets a mutual advantage proviso
  - b. But what about folks who judge they don't benefit from state?
    - i. They might be irrational, as they might be rejecting a good state / good deal
    - ii. They might be rational, as they might be rejecting a bad state / bad deal
- B. Versions with additional criteria
  - a. For instance, Locke, who says state has to respect natural rights

- b. But for this book, WM want to say that if you have the LP (institutions are justified IF everyone is better off), then you need the HH (SN is so bad that in fact everyone IS better off)
- C. Strong-Proviso versions:
  - a. This is usually a critical position: your institutions haven't met my proviso's content, so they are unjustified
  - b. WM are fine with that, as they want to focus on the weak proviso / HH acceptance versions
- D. Is there an extra-weak version?
  - a. Bracketing nonstate society
  - b. And saying state is justified to avoid failed state / civil war

#### THE HH IS A COUNTERFACTUAL CLAIM

- A. Pure (impossible) vs contingent (might happen even if not currently) counterfactuals
- B. For WM, the SN is a contingent counterfactual for most people (who are currently in states)

#### THE HH IS AN EMPIRICAL CLAIM

- A. Isn't it obvious?
  - a. "everyone benefits so much it's irrational to object" is an empirical claim
- B. Hobbes treated the HH as an empirical claim
  - a. He did give civil war and American examples
  - b. His claims about HN are empirical
- C. Difficulties of conceptualizing and measuring wellbeing
  - a. Sure, but there has to be some empirical bite to "better off" claims of contractarians
- D. Most empirical discussion of Hobbes focuses on other claims
  - a. Again, claims about HN are empirical even if H disregards real history of state origins
- E. Contemporary scholars recognize Hobbes's use of empirical claims
  - a. But they sometimes conflate description with definition of SN
  - b. SN as stateless  $\neq$  SN as impossible society as there are nonstate societies
  - c. You can't have it both ways by accepting empirical claim about SN among sovereigns and rejecting empirical nature of claims about SN among individuals

#### CONTRACTARIANISM'S NEED FOR AN EMPIRICAL CLAIM

- A. Myths need some empirical bite: e.g., Narcissus has to be about bad effects of self-centeredness
- B. Need to avoid the "Giant Chicken" argument
- C. IOW, the LP requires the HH

#### THE HH IS A CLAIM ABOUT PREHISTORIC AND SMALL-SCALE STATELESS SOCIETIES

- A. Unless you want to go extra-weak and say SN = civil war
- B. But that has problems (see chapter 11)
- C. Isn't really invoked in the SC literature where SN = statelessness

#### THE "WEAK" HH IS A STRONG CLAIM

- A. The HH says that the worst-off person in state is better off than best-off person in nonstate

- a. But this only works if violence hypothesis is true, so that living in constant justified fear of attacks leading to violent death or enslavement or fight-to-the death scenarios, is worse than even the worst position of life in a state (for instance, as a slave)
- b. If it false, then you have to look to other well-being measures than mere avoidance of violent death
- B. Less-than-literal claims about “everyone,” issue of distribution, and problem of dissenters
  - a. Even if most or the “average” person benefits from many states, many people might not
  - b. So what is the argument that combines that fact with “mutual advantage”?
- C. Less-than-literal understandings of “benefit”
  - a. Ex ante arguments are about life prospects, not factual outcomes
  - b. But they can’t be about average outcomes; there has to be a minimum standard
  - c. Page 63: “If the state makes a good faith effort to get as many people to the proviso level as possible, to minimize the harm to those below, and to share the risks equally, it can claim that in an ex ante sense, everyone is better off in state society. If so, the extraordinarily unlucky are extraordinary in their luck; they are not extraordinary in their exposure to dangers to create advantages for others.”

CHAPTER 4: JOHN LOCKE AND THE HOBBSIAN HYPOTHESIS:  
HOW A SIMILAR COLONIAL PREJUDICE BECAME AN ESSENTIAL PREMISE  
IN THE MOST POPULAR JUSTIFICATION OF PRIVATE PROPERTY RIGHTS

LOCKE’S STATE OF NATURE

- A. Includes property rights via appropriation from improvement by labor
- B. Less inherently violent than for H, though there are conflicts that make the SC attractive
- C. Because of natural rights, government is justified only if it protects them; otherwise right to rebellion
- D. Civil society differs from SN in 4 ways
  - a. Private property
  - b. Land scarcity
  - c. Monetary economy
  - d. Governmental sovereignty

APPROPRIATION THEORY

- A. Appropriation is what creates natural property rights
- B. SN was a commons, or collective non-ownership
  - a. Anyone can use resources held in common but can’t exclude others (can’t own it)
  - b. Locke must justify private property by mutual advantage vs a commons
  - c. For Locke, a commons is open to appropriation
- C. Because of unequal ownership and inheritance, contractors to SC are unequal
  - a. For H, we are all equally vulnerable
  - b. For L, the property owners are most vulnerable, to overactive distributive government

LOCKE’S VERSION OF THE LOCKEAN PROVISIO

- A. Appropriation creates natural right to property if it leaves “enough and as good” to others
- B. Some extreme propertarians want to do away with that proviso:

- a. it doesn't matter even if nothing is left over, bcs no one has a positive right to resources (any rights have to come from appropriation)
- b. but that's just blank check for total colonial aggression against societies with commons
- C. Locke: market economy opportunities can make up for lack of available land due to previous owners
- D. WM on p. 72 consider hypothetical isolated forager and ask if land-propertyless participation in a market economy would provide more benefits
  - a. But this ignores the emotional / psychic benefits of communal traditional life
  - b. Which is not utopia; it has plenty of conflict, but at least anxious anomie is not a threat

#### LOCKE'S ASSERTION OF THE HOBBSIAN HYPOTHESIS

- A. L: "a king [in the Americas] feeds, lodges, and is clad worse than a day-labourer in England" (41)
- B. Thus via the HH, nothing more had to be done to justify property inequality in England
- C. Both H and L asserted the HH
  - a. H: it justified the state (state provides security lacking in SN = SW)
  - b. L: it justified state protection of private property (because of police and courts, it allows productivity for better material welfare than SN = commons)
- D. L: appropriation incentivizes improvement of land which so greatly increases productivity it compensates for lack of further appropriable land (but this ignores distribution to worst-off)

#### LOCKE, LIKE HOBBS, RELIES ON A COMMON PREJUDICE

- A. Colonial prejudices tainted all ethnographies available to H and L for their ideas about "America"
- B. Class different experiences were such that self-interested judgment (2<sup>nd</sup> Treatise #13, one reason to quit SN) would keep most of L's property-owning readers from knowing day-labourer life
- C. So without reliable information or experience, colonial and class prejudices substitute for empirical investigation with regard to assertion of fulfillment of HH

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### CHAPTER 8: THE HH IN ANTHROPOLOGY

Anthropology became a science under the influence of Euro-centrism and the HH. As it matured in the 20<sup>th</sup>, anthropologists don't really hold to the HH, though they do investigate violence types and rates in nonstate societies.

#### HOBBSIAN IDEAS IN THE DEVELOPMENT OF ANTHROPOLOGY

Progress vs devolution: not many ppl hold to the degeneration from a Golden Age view anymore, but there is still a lot of assumed progress: civilization provides training and institutions to intellectually govern our violent human nature which ran rampant in the past but is under control now.

Social evolution views: a monolithic past with regular unilinear stages of development; often in historical materialist (Marx, Engels) terms in which political economy changes drive social changes. 4 stage theories: foraging, herding, agriculture, commerce. Marx insists that changes and social functionality need not benefit every individual (this will be important here in testing the HH).

Very influential was a three-stage political culture scheme: savage, barbarian, civilized (Morgan).

Functionalist analogy of societies and organisms: social structures / mechanisms aim at homeostasis (Comte, Durkheim, Malinowski, Radcliffe-Brown, Parsons).

The development thesis ran into anomalies though (e.g., Pacific Northwest had complex politics but simple economies).

Neo-evolutionism didn't see single development path, but did see general trends of increasing complexity (Service – band, tribe, chiefdom, state and Carneiro) and a kind of phase space of social organization types.

The phase space idea is very important as it disabuses us of the contemporary foragers as living fossils idea: they don't show human nature any more than we do, because human nature is mostly plastic and adaptive to social / environmental conditions.

Page 117: “evolutionary cultural typologies, such as the famous one offered by Service (1962), are based on the primitivist view that there was, in the deep past, a single hunter-gatherer cultural type that characterized all humanity; that more complex societies evolved from these hunter-gatherer roots; that the hunter-gatherers still alive in the world today are societies that remained, for whatever reason, unchanged from this original cultural type of the deep past; and that hunter-gatherer societies that do vary from this cultural type do so because of contact with neighboring complex societies.”

WM will use, with caution, Carneiro's typology: band, autonomous village, chiefdom, state.

#### CONTEMPORARY CLASSIFICATIONS OF SMALL-SCALE SOCIETIES

SC traditions assumes dichotomy of state vs anarchy, but political power has a continuum of expressions.

Nonetheless, when we look for that the SC tradition called the SN, we can first look at acephalic forager bands as that society most distant from the state: no formal institutions, fission-fusion, no compulsion.

Also relevant are mid-range societies (tribes, autonomous villages, chiefdoms).

Great diversity among “autonomous village” types, but there is some rank though w/ little authority. Swidden agriculture doesn't allow easy fission-fusion, but they can have herding and foraging as options too. Generally, they treat the land as a commons. Hence they are nonstate, non-PP social forms.

Chiefdoms are political units of several villages; they can meet the SC criterion of state somewhat, though sovereignty here is often not very stable. WM won't really treat them as nonstate.

#### ETHNOGRAPHY AND THE VIOLENCE HYPOTHESIS

The social evolutionists and / or early ethnographers didn't always agree foragers were more violent than barbarian empires or civilized states; some also noted the relative ineffectiveness of non-civilized group conflict.

Boaz and the principle of cultural relativism: allows recognition of individual intelligence in all social settings, even as recognizing external cultural organization / coercion, scaffolding, and tradition allows civilization to achieve large-scale production.

Mid-20<sup>th</sup> C ethnography emphasized forager non-violence; critics (Keeley, Pinker) here looked to anti-Vietnam war pacifism and leftism in anthropology as a discipline. 1970s saw some skepticism about forager nonviolence.

Chagnon looked at violence in the Yanomamo and concluded to group functional benefits and individual genetic fitness benefits; these are very controversial and widely though not universally repudiated claims. Nonetheless, Chagnon and his allies do expose Hobbesian logic at work in equating SN and SW.

Sociobiology and evolutionary psychology (Wilson, Wrangham) as “neo-Hobbesian” (violent human nature that states serve to mitigate).

## POP ANTHROPOLOGY AND THE VIOLENCE HYPOTHESIS

Diamond and Pinker. Pinker accepts HH and credits a Kantian-style Enlightenment and state institutions for reducing violence in state societies in past 500 years. Hence he’s about ways to improve states rather than argue that states are less violent than nonstates; he doesn’t adopt “violent HN” perspective. Page 129: “Pinker argues that in a society of violence and insecurity, people learn to be aggressive and violent, and that in a society of peace and security, people learn to abhor aggression and violence.” Pinker’s problem for WM is that he extrapolates from violent states to violent nonstates, but that needs argument, not deduction.

My take on Pinker from HN paper: Steven Pinker’s *Better Angels* (2011) clearly denies a basic violence drive and instead insists that we have both peaceful and violent capacities that are elicited by social circumstances. And as a good modern liberal, I endorse the changing social circumstances of mobility, cosmopolitanism, revisionist history and so on that, per Pinker’s hypothesis, led to an uptick in moral investment in fairness and respect for individuals versus old-fashioned takes on communal loyalty, authority, and purity. Rather, my issue with him is his acceptance of the CRD so that social eliciting of altruism is always scrambling to catch up with what used to be a violence orientation to our evolutionary ancestors. This results in a model in which top-down and outside-in (“internalized norms against violence”) rational frontal lobe self-control (the most important of “our better angels”) keeps limbic system emotional temptations to violence (“our inner demons”) in check. That’s fine as far as it goes, but for the most part his treatment of our better angels, although it does include empathy / sympathy, doesn’t really analyze bottom-up limbic-based emotional dispositions to sympathetic care and fair cooperation. This is compounded with other problems with Pinker: 1) his questionable methods in his analyses of pre-state violence (Ferguson 2013a and 2013b), contemporary nonstate violence, and contemporary state violence (not just death rates in war narrowly considered, but war widely considered [e.g., influenza after WWI], and the fate of condemnation to hidden slavery sweatshops and to being despair-ridden “losers” leading lives worse than death; and 2) the restricted political space in which Pinker’s Western Civilization Whig story operates.

## THE HH IN ANTHROPOLOGY

Many anthropologists bought into the poverty / subsistence / edge-of-starvation picture on nonstate life such that agriculture would be undoubted progress. Sahlins exaggerates to the other extreme; most ppl now realize that forager life is neither lots of leisure nor unending misery.

## CHAPTER 9: NASTY AND BRUTISH? AN EMPIRICAL ASSESSMENT OF THE VIOLENCE HYPOTHESIS

Forecast: “Section 4 evaluates the strong and weak hypotheses in light of this information, arguing that societies in which sovereignty is most absent maintain the ability to keep violence at tolerable levels.

Because this finding rejects 350 years of accumulated theory of sovereignty, Section 5 briefly addresses that theory, discussing how bands are able to maintain peace without the institutions of state.”

#### ARCHAEOLOGICAL AND HISTORICAL EVIDENCE OF VIOLENCE IN HUMAN PREHISTORY AND IN STATE SOCIETY

Neanderthals had fairly high rates of interpersonal violence, but it's not easy to translate that to H sapiens, as Neanderthals might have had alphas and hence provoked male-male violence. When we look to H sapiens foragers @200Kya, we don't see much fossil trauma evidence, but there's not a lot of fossils in the first place. It seems they are more or less like somewhat violent modern foragers.

What we can say is that there is little to no evidence of pre-state / pre-agriculture warfare or anonymous group violence. Once we get population density preventing fission-fusion so that we get chiefdoms as state precursors or real states, we see plenty of fossil trauma, with the earliest being Jebel Sahaba (in Sudan). This is tied in with a new motive: territorial expansion (since land is now being worked on = intense niche construction, rather than just living off the land = scooping into ecological cycles).

Page 138: “The most violently disruptive episodes in history tend to be associated with the formation of states and the expansion of state-level forms of political organization into formerly stateless regions. Most other major violently disruptive episodes are associated with conflicts between, the breakup of, and turmoil within states. Early states and empires are perhaps the most violent and warlike contexts in which humans have ever lived.”

NB: Scott will say that states give nonstate people new predation opportunities: hill folk can swoop down on and take agricultural products or even peasants for resale as slaves to other states.

Civilized / urban productivity now allows crime or intra-social predation as well as violence at the margins.

Note however that this doesn't deny states can create peace zones within their areas of control. (140)

McCall says there is “evolutionary psychological basis for aggressive behavior” (141): I agree but there is also evolved anger-control as well as evolved joy in sharing and cooperation. It's all about the social conditions that allow expression of these – as well as, in good Nietzschean fashion – sublimation of the aggression into self-control for artistic / philosophical expression.

States also allow periodic mass war and / or genocides (141).

#### ETHNOGRAPHIC EVIDENCE OF VIOLENCE IN MODERN SMALL-SCALE STATELESS SOCIETIES

There is wide variance; we can say foragers are not essentially non-violent, but the same variance disallows essential violence of HN claims as well.

Social context here includes state territorial encroachment limiting flight option; alcohol; modern weaponry.

149: counting only homicides as “violence” is a problem; what about infanticide (doesn't actually fit the Hobbesian model of motivating the SC [151]) and capital punishment on the one hand, and theft and rape on the other? In states, there is also the problem of hidden homicides by poisoning, for example, or deaths by famine and disease: to the extent they are preventable by different distribution patterns, might they not be included in state “violence”? 150

## CONSENSUS VIEW OF VIOLENCE IN STATELESS SOCIETIES

Lots of variation; most are higher than intrastate levels; very hard to extrapolate to pre-state past.

Sahlins may have exaggerated with his “original affluent society” but his aim was to refute idea that foragers had no time to develop culture because they were constantly working to avoid starvation. 154.

Basically, non-state societies are neither Hobbesian SN = SW nor are they peaceful utopias.

155: “rest on the observation that the prevalence of observed violence in small-scale societies before incorporation into a state was usually greater than that observed among small-scale societies after inclusion into a state. Diamond (2012) makes a similar argument based on the differences between small-scale societies in New Guinea before and after colonial “pacification,” and he also extends this argument into a broader neo-Hobbesian justification of modern states as peacemakers. We see several flaws with this argument for the prevalence of violence among forager societies prior to contact and inclusion in colonial states. For one thing, we are actually inclined to believe that homicide rates, in fact, tend to spike in the decades just before indigenous societies come under state authority, both because of violence directly from people in state societies and because of an increase of inter-ethnic violence brought on by territorial pressure and related problems. Rather than being inhibited by the presence of the police, murder rates among peoples have at times been amplified by dynamics of colonialism and the various vagaries of the postcolonial world.”

## APPLYING THE ANTHROPOLOGICAL DISCUSSION TO THE PHILOSOPHICAL QUESTION

*The Weak Violence Hypothesis:* (that violence is “lower” in the state than nonstate). This formulation seems both most consistent with SC logic and least likely to be true: “the violence rates for every recognizable population within the state being justified are lower than the lowest violence rate recorded for any stateless society.” 157

*The Strong Violence Hypothesis:* violence in SN has to be “intolerable” since it results in “continual fear of the danger of violent death.” In this view, the SN = SW makes beneficial social life impossible, so that no matter how violent and arbitrary the state is, it’s still better than nonstate life. For WM, this is clearly a false description of the relation of state to nonstate life. 1) once we look past averages, we can see that many subpopulations in states have violence rates higher than that seen in many if not most nonstate societies 159. 2) if nonstates were intolerably violent, then they would have no stability and no culture; but that’s false as nonstate life has both. 3) ethnography would be impossible in a SN = SW but ethnography exists. (Scott would also add that many ppl vote with their feet by fleeing states for non-state life = “run for the hills” – that wouldn’t happen if SN = SW = intolerability.

*The Violence Hypothesis and the Precautionary Principle:* you can try to soften the strong hypothesis by saying some nonstate societies can be intolerably violent and hence so insecure it would be irrational to remain. But the most violent nonstates are usually next to states; many homicides are of nonstate ppl by state ppl; and even then their inhabitants don’t find them intolerable. If you say that civil war is what Hobbes is warning against by proposing the sovereign, then 1) many revolutions are peaceful civil disobedience, and 2) many very bad wars are sovereign states engaging in foreign affairs, not revolutions / civil wars. PLUS, you can turn the precautionary principle around: some states can produce much worse conditions, so you should avoid all states just to be on the safe side.

Let's look at patterns of nonstate violence: gain is not a motive, since land is not improved, food is not stored, and personal property is minimal and replaceable (a spear is not like a house). Hence large inequalities are not part of the society so large-scale class jealousy is not a problem. Reputation doesn't work like Hobbes thought it did: foragers cultivate reputations for cooperation; aggressors are marked out for retaliation, not admiration.

Which is not to say forager bands don't have conflicts over sexual jealousy and so on 166.

But they do have mechanisms to defeat alpha dominators: Boehm and "reverse dominance hierarchy" practices: ridicule, exile, capital punishment. Fission-fusion is also effective in limiting violent conflict. As is existing social obligation networks: they not only diffuse violence thresholds, they hedge against economic risk from drought and so on. Now it is true that social networks can obligate one to revenge a slight, but a revenge cycle is not and tends not to become a SW in Hobbes sense. The risk of setting off a revenge cycle might also restrain violence ahead of time.

171: "But the threat of revenge is not the most important way that social networks help to maintain peace. The way they reinforce the social ethos of equality, sympathy, and nonviolence is far more important. In such contexts, violent behavior risks the alienation of these all important social connections, which (as explained above) provide a form of economic security in the face of uncertainty. To be excluded from this social system would be a terrible fate—or perhaps a terrible punishment—indeed."

173: "One might be tempted to suppose that stateless societies are on an inevitable trend toward higher populations that will eventually bring conflict and make the state a necessity. But, those few late-Pleistocene examples notwithstanding, it is usually agriculturalists rather than hunter-gatherers who are prone to population explosions. Before state societies decided to use their numbers to conquer the world, a very large portion of the earth's land area was populated by hunter-gatherers living at population densities probably not much different than those that prevailed during the late Pleistocene. They had a well-developed political theory for how to maintain stable, stateless societies over the very long term. They did not need state societies to rescue them from some distant, hypothetical population explosion."

174: "Pinker correctly points out (1) states where protection is strong, (2) states where it is weak, and (3) stateless societies where it is weak, but he does not search for examples of the fourth possibility to complete the matrix: (4) stateless societies where social protections are strong. Of course, standard political theory (which he cites) tells him such a situation can never exist."

## CONCLUSION

Strong VH is false; nonstate life is not SW = intolerable = no social life possible.

## CHAPTER 10: ARE YOU BETTER OFF NOW THAN YOU WERE 12,000 YEARS AGO? AN EMPIRICAL ASSESSMENT OF THE HH

Here WM discuss general welfare as opposed to levels of violence. They will look at 1) social / cultural satisfaction; 2) material wellbeing; 3) health and longevity; 4) freedom; 5) "observed choice."

Preview of conclusion: 177: "the average person is better off in most contemporary state societies

(although not in most past state societies). But contemporary states allow so much inequality—with a bottom so low in absolute terms—that significant numbers of people are worse off in capitalist state societies than they would be even in a small-scale stateless society.”

## SOCIAL AND CULTURAL SATISFACTION

Band society is very communal in activities and decision-making. There is little privacy (or observed desire for it). Bands don't have literacy, but they do have art, music, dancing, myth, and so on.

State societies, when they have lots of inequality, produce lots of dissatisfaction. There also seems to be more mental health problems (alienation, isolation, depression, suicide).

## MATERIAL WELLBEING

Obviously capitalist states produce much more, especially in terms of luxuries, but does it lead to satisfying lives, even for those who have lots of material goods (let alone distribution producing poverty in states)?

*Luxuries:* Does the presence of capitalist material luxuries for some offset bad housing, diet, water for others? How do you calculate collective life, sharing, fresh air, clean water, feasting with roasted meat, life in nature, rich cultures of myth and religion for foragers? Are they “luxuries” too? 183

*Leisure and work effort?* 184 – Let's not forget that foragers are autonomous; they don't “work” in the sense of take orders from bosses.

*Basic needs:* the most disadvantaged people in capitalist societies are probably worse off: they have to desperately scramble for work; have to work long, long hours if they find it; and have no access to resources as everything is already owned. So in a crisis, you need to resort to theft, and that exposes you to police violence. Foragers however tend to express confidence in accessing resources; they just don't suffer resource deprivation anxiety as poor ppl in states do.

## HEALTH AND LONGEVITY

Average life expectancy is longer now than in states of 200 years ago, and for most nonstate societies, but there is a distribution in life expectancy w/in modern states. State also introduce new diseases, and past state societies probably failed even on average health measures compared to past nonstates.

Life expectancy is averaged for all births, so high infant mortality will lower life expectancy, but once you get past adolescence even in nonstate societies, living to 70 isn't uncommon.

## FREEDOM

*Political freedom:* are you free to participate in decision-making? Egalitarian foragers seem to be the best possible here, and political freedom shrinks as societies become more complex.

*Positive freedom:* ability to achieve your goals. Privileged folks in cap states have greater range of goals to choose from, but distribution hits here as well for worst off, who work more and consume less than foragers.

*Negative freedom:* freedom from constraints / coercion / interference by other people. Here it seems foragers have more of this type of freedom than the disadvantaged in states, who are constantly being

constrained, coerced, commanded, etc. Property rights in fact severely constrain economic activities of the poor; here land held in common by foragers allows great negative liberty.

*Status freedom.* Freedom to accept or refuse collaboration with other people. Coerced work infringes on this.

*Sexual freedom and freedom from gender- and group-based oppression.* This tends to be high in forager band society.

## CONSENT

Here WM discuss what do people actually do? Do nonstate people join states? Do state people run for the hills and nonstate life? It all depends on circumstances, but that's enough to defeat the HH, in which it would be irrational NOT to join states, since nonstate life = SN = SW.

Demand sharing is not sign of discontent but efforts to enforce equality 209.

Observed choice: many ppl run away from states. Maroon societies are real things!

Empirical theories of state origin don't always show full consent; there is a lot of war and capture. (Reference to James C Scott at 211.) So some individuals might consent to join states, but there is a lot of mass capture too.

Even if contemporary flight is low level today, that has three aspects: 1) it's hard to get to the margins today; 2) are states today really so attractive to all their inhabitants?; 3) were past flights to nonstate really irrational?

## THE VERDICT

Not everyone is better off in cap states than nonstates. Thus the HH is false; SN  $\neq$  SW intolerability; hence the SC doesn't always and everywhere justify any and all states. The HH was "never more than a colonial prejudice" 217

218: "The failure of contemporary society to fulfill the Lockean proviso is tragic not only because capitalist states are so wealthy, but also because the proviso is an incredibly unambitious goal. Establishing hunter-gatherer quality of life as the baseline for comparison sets an extremely low bar. The tragedy of state societies today is that for all their wealth and achievement, they have so consistently failed to surpass that bar. The hypothesis is false because the quality of life for disadvantaged people in industrial capitalist states is so low. It is low not from technical difficulties, but mostly out of lack of concern.

Almost every comparison considered above displays a similar pattern: the wealthy and the average are so much better off that it seems easy to make everyone better off, but our societies have consistently failed to do so. The promise of the Lockean proviso remains unfulfilled for the poor, the discontented, political dissenters, the homeless of developed countries, the shantytown residents of lesser developed countries, people who die young of cancer and other modern diseases, families who need support from child labor, the victims and perpetrators of campus massacres, and the urban foragers who must find food in other people's garbage. The hypothesis is false. The proviso is unfulfilled. Mutual advantage is not in effect. The first principle of civilization is violated. Our societies horribly mistreat their most disadvantaged members, and our myth that everything was even worse in prehistory makes it easier for us to do it."