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Was Thomas Hobbes the first biopolitical thinker?

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Abstract

Thomas Hobbes's name often comes up as scholars debate the history of biopower, which regulates the biological life of individual bodies and entire populations. This article examines whether and to what extent Hobbes may be regarded as the first biopolitical philosopher. I investigate this question by performing a close reading of Hobbes's political texts and by comparing them to some of the most influential theories on biopolitics proposed by Michel Foucault, Giorgio Agamben, Roberto Esposito, and others. Hobbes is indeed the first great thinker to assert the supreme political importance of safeguarding life. Furthermore, this prominence of non-contemplative life is not limited to mere survival but also seeks to allow for the people's happiness. This may indeed allow us to consider him as the first biopolitical philosopher, at least in some limited capacity. However, the Englishman's biopolitical stance lacks the practical aspects seen in examples of 'properly modern' biopolitics. Moreover, peoples' lives were already governed radically in antiquity. I argue that Hobbes's biopolitical system was, therefore, minimal in the sense of a 'biopolitical nightwatchman state'. However, he acted as an undeniable catalyst to the 'properly biopolitical era of modernity', when mundane life and happiness became the explicit main objects of virtually all politics.

Keywords

Giorgio Agamben, biopolitics, biopower, Michel Foucault, Thomas Hobbes

Introduction

Scholars disagree on the particulars regarding the history of biopolitics or the technology of power that governs entire populations, which are seen to consist of the biological

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bodies of human beings. One of the epicentres of this debate is related to the phenomenon's supposed moment of emergence. This discussion splits the prevailing literature into opposing camps. The rift also separates the two most famous thinkers in the field: Michel Foucault, who popularised the notion during the 1970s,[1] and Giorgio Agamben, who has challenged the French philosopher's established formulations with his celebrated *Homo Sacer* book series, which commenced in the 1990s. The question persists to this day, as no one has been able to canonise a conclusive answer. Furthermore, the wide range of conceivable solutions has not been narrowed down at all. Foucault (1976: 33–6), who was the first to theorise the birth of biopolitics briefly in some of his lectures and in his famous book on sexuality, claims that the phenomenon arose fairly recently, during a time that he defines as the beginning of the modern era, or perhaps the modern *épistémè* (In English, simply 'episteme').[2] In particular, he claims that the modern biopolitical order started to form around the 18th century, although it was perhaps preceded by historical precursors that displayed a certain resemblance to it. Meanwhile, Agamben (1998: 1–12) challenges his predecessor's admittedly hasty formations by stating that we are dealing with a much older occurrence. According to him, biopolitics is as ancient as politics itself.

Introducing this unsolved disagreement does not get us far. Depending on the viewpoint, biopolitics may have had its genesis either some 200 years ago or whenever the first polity was established. To further complicate matters, many scholars have opted to pinpoint the birth of the phenomenon elsewhere. The likes of Mika Ojakangas (2012; 2016: 1–6) argue that modern biopolitics has its roots in ancient Greek political ideas and practices – especially those detailed and suggested by Plato and Aristotle, who were already obsessed with controlling both the quality and the quantity of the people living in the real and imagined city states. According to Ojakangas, biopolitical practices flourished in Greece and Rome before late antiquity, but they also dwindled down owing to early Christian influences that began to emphasise the pre-eminence of life after death instead of the mundane and temporary existence on earth. However, biopolitical ideas and practices made a triumphant return during the late Middle Ages and the Renaissance (hundreds of years before Thomas Hobbes's time), when Greek political texts, including Plato's *Republic*, *Statesman*, and *Laws* as well as Aristotle's *Politics*, were first translated into Latin and then reintroduced into philosophical and political discussions.

This is where we start to approach the specific topic of this study. Roberto Esposito (2008: 46, 53–4) believes that Hobbes was the first to prototype modern biopolitics while previous governmental arrangements (including those imagined and actualised by the Greeks) were not yet quite biopolitical. He continues by arguing that although the eugenics in Plato's *Republic* (see Plato, 1935: 5.461, 7.535a) may bear a certain resemblance to the specifically modern logic of governing, this seemingly radical ancient programme still omitted the explicitly modern forms of racism as articulated by Foucault. Ojakangas (2016: 19) could not agree less. He disputes Esposito by indicating that the *Republic* (Plato, 1935: 5.459a–b, 5.460a) includes an undeniable biopolitical doctrine of breeding human beings like animals and that this programme is undertaken in part precisely because of heredity.[3] Therefore, Ojakangas claims that Plato's work displays a new kind of bio-meritocratic racism, where parts of the population are not allowed to reproduce (or even live) owing to eugenic reasoning but the strongest and the most beautiful people are permitted to participate in complex marriage festivals. Furthermore, this arrangement is meant to be shrouded in gilded lies – the people are told that sexual unions are chosen by lot to prevent upsetting the unfit, who are to direct their bitterness towards their own bad luck and, therefore, away from the righteous philosopher kings.

One of the most recent attempts to conclude the debate regarding the birth of biopolitics comes from Sergei Prozorov (2022), who has argued for a twofold origin. According to him, the phenomenon's chronological emergence is undoubtedly modern and as such is connected to the emergence of the prevailing forms of governing that have been detailed in Foucault's analyses. However, this chronological birth of biopolitics is preceded by a plethora of notable precursors, which seem predominately philosophical in nature. According to Prozorov, Esposito's Hobbes is one notable example of this. Hobbes's political thought can be seen to represent an embodiment of 'unrealised potential' of biopolitics: it never escapes a textual or philosophical plane. Therefore, he claims that such an addition does not challenge the Foucauldian periodisation regarding the birth of the substantial phenomenon per se. However, although Hobbes is not a notable player in the history of biopolitical practices, I would like to claim that he has an important role in the history of biopolitical ideas and discourses. This is not to say that biopolitics can ever exist merely in the vacuum of philosophy books. True biopolitics must transcend theoretical debates regarding the value of life and offer concrete ways of governing human life – this is one of the main qualifiers that we are using to determine whether Hobbes was a biopolitical thinker.

In this study, I seek to pinpoint Hobbes's place within the history of biopolitics. After discussing his place in the prevailing literature, I begin to look for answers to two key questions. In the first, I discuss Hobbes as the first major thinker to recognise the primacy of life itself in the specifically material sense of the word and whether the evidence that we can muster is sufficient to allow for a reinterpretation of him as a biopolitical thinker – or even as the first of his kind, at least from a certain point of view. The second question is two-pronged. In part (a) of the second question, I ask what kind of concrete biopolitical mechanisms we can find from Hobbes's political thought (if there are any to be found in the first place) and, consequently, what these findings reveal about his biopolitical programme. In part (b) of the second question, I focus on concrete biopolitical instruments and practices from other points of view, especially those that pertain to Agamben's analyses and *thanatopolitics* (the politics of death). I do so to look for additional support for the claim that Hobbes was a biopolitical thinker while trying to figure out whether we can also consider at least some of these findings biopolitical within the specifically Foucauldian framework and, therefore, not only within the one that has been radically reimagined by Agamben.

I approach these research questions by performing a close reading of Hobbes's three most renowned political texts – his magnum opus *Leviathan: Or, the Matter, Form, and Power of a Commonwealth, Ecclesiastical and Civil* (Hobbes, 1839[1651]); his earlier political work *De Cive* (Hobbes, 1983[1642]), which already anticipates some of *Leviathan*'s themes; and the originally unpublished, although widely bootlegged, earlier work *The Elements of Law: Natural & Politic* (Hobbes, 1928[1889]). Although it is widely known that the three books include some notable differences, they are also exceedingly similar in many aspects. Indeed, the issues pertaining to my biopolitical analysis can be found consistently throughout all the three texts. The fact that there do not seem to be any major variations in Hobbes's approach to these topics is further highlighted by the fact that *Leviathan* and *De Cive* receive virtually the same amount of attention in this article, whereas the shortest and arguably the least important of the three works, *The Elements of Law*, is not cited quite as often, although it does include similar ideas that I wish to highlight from time to time.

Because we are attempting to decipher a historical philosopher's political *oeuvre*, it makes sense to do so in a manner that it used commonly in the history of political thought and academic philosophy. This approach is of course partial in the sense that it cannot possibly provide everything there is to know about the pluralistic history of biopolitics, especially in the more contextual sense connected to studying the multifaceted biopolitical practices that existed long before Foucault's 'biopolitical era'. Nevertheless, it is important to acknowledge that biopolitics has taken a plethora of shapes ranging from practical to philosophical. Both fields of study are important, and they often run parallel to each other. If one wishes to learn more about the tangible biopolitical practices before Foucault's 'biopolitical era', they can refer to, for example, the discussions regarding climates in antiquity (Meloni, 2021a, 2021b), security in Rome (Ricci, 2018), and populations (Biller, 2000), as well as urban life and health during the Middle Ages (Geltner, 2019; Rawcliffe, 2013; Rawcliffe and Weeda, 2019).

However, our exercise in intellectual history seems to be the optimal way of examining the particular topic of Hobbes's political thought. This is because it allows us to grasp the fact that although biopolitical practices have existed at least since antiquity, the way that they have been discussed within the framework of philosophical texts has undergone certain transmutations fairly recently. Furthermore, one could argue that such an exercise provides a valuable multidisciplinary perspective to this history journal and an interesting continuation to the project that Ojakangas (2012) started on its pages some 10 years ago.

Studying this topic matters for several reason. It allows us to explore important research directions related to how human life is conceptualised and how it ought to be governed in different eras according to different authorities. The theory of biopolitics remains a fantastic intellectual tool for answering these questions, but its boundaries remain blurry and debated. I seek to answer some of the lingering debates regarding its definition and origin to unlock its fullest potential as an even more precise and useful tool. Furthermore, because the biopolitical logic remains relevant today, the study of the phenomenon's developments may allow us to review some of our current practices. This may help us recognise its different forms and avoid some of the associated problems – or even resist coercion when the need arises. Although biopolitical governing has transformed, the central logic remains constant – life ought to be optimised. The theory is still applied to current issues such as the Covid pandemic.[4] Moreover, there is no doubt that it will continue to play a role in future discussions regarding, for example, the rise of artificial intelligence and advanced gene technology.

Hobbes and the prevailing literature on biopolitics

> The power of life and death was not an absolute privilege: it was conditioned by the defense of the sovereign, and his own survival. Must we follow Hobbes in seeing it as the transfer to the prince of the natural right possessed by every individual to defend his life even if this meant the death of others? Or should it be regarded as a specific right that was manifested with the formation of that new juridical being, the sovereign? In any case, in its modern form-relative and limited-as in its ancient and absolute form, the right of life and death is a dissymmetrical one. (Foucault, 1978: 135–6)

Hobbes's political *oeuvre* remains one of the most frequently visited battlegrounds within the constantly debated history of biopolitics. At face value, this may appear curious because Hobbes is known best for his theory of sovereignty, which Foucault thought of as the diametrical opposite of biopolitics, although, the Frenchman's notion of sovereign power is a much narrower concept that is centred around the early modern despot's power to kill and let live. Foucault (1997: 228–34) has claimed that the two technologies cannot become fully synchronised outside a specific occurrence that he calls *state racism*. In other words, sovereignty and biopower can unite their all but paradoxical cores only when certain parts of a population are promoted (biopolitical care) through the destruction of its undesirable, corruptive or degenerated members (sovereign power to kill).

Again, this has not stopped Esposito (2008: 46) from stating that Hobbes incorporates both sovereign power and biopolitics when he prototypes the modern *immunitary paradigm*, which seeks to conserve life through the protection that is granted to the subjects through the social contract (the alleged function of sovereign power). In this constellation, sovereign power is no longer defined through its deadly potentiality, unlike it is in Foucault's original analysis; instead, the sovereign is now charged with the explicit task of protecting life and not negating it. However, Esposito's analysis has at least one notable problem: Foucault maintains that modern governing of life is about more than just 'surviving and not dying' and is instead 'commanded by the problem of living and doing a bit better than just living' (Foucault, 2007: 326). In other words, mere survival alone does not seem to be sufficient to constitute biopolitics, at least in a strictly Foucauldian sense. However, this may still not hinder our analysis of Hobbes's political works because the Englishman's ideas regarding the sovereign protection of life are not limited solely to the mere preservation of bare life in the most minimal fashion. Let us return to this point later.

Jussi Backman (2022) makes insightful claims that bear a certain resemblance to both Ojakangas's and Esposito's conflicting stances while still making a unique contribution to the state of the art. He argues that Hobbes should be considered the first veritable biopolitical thinker because although the governance of life as such predates the English thinker by at least some two millennia (à la Ojakangas), the man of Malmesbury was still the first major thinker to recognise that the preservation of bodily life of human beings from (violent death) was to be regarded as the telos of virtually all politics (à la Esposito). Backman argues that before Hobbes's political texts, politics had always served a *metabiopolitical* goal, contemplation or the afterlife, both of which had reigned supreme at different points in time. This is not to deny the fact that ancient philosophers and authorities on medicine sought to govern life in the material sense too (for an example of Aristotle's influence on later population debates, see Biller, 2000: 296–384; for the reception of ancient medicine, see e.g. ibid.: 102). Although our perspective here is focused on a singular English philosopher, it is important to note that medical discourses also affected other places, including the Islamic empires both before Hobbes (see Syros, 2013) and after him (see Grehan, 2006). Biopolitical practices were also abundant in the Americas before Hobbes's time, as we see in Earle (2012), which discusses topics such as food, race, and the colonial experience. Again, although I am focusing particularly on the work of a European intellectual, biopolitical practices have also been employed in other continents.

However, Aristotle still believed that true *eudaimonia* could be achieved only through contemplation. As Backman notes, this kind of superior happiness exceeded simple material comfort. Meanwhile, early Christian philosophers venerated the world that was to come in the life after death instead of this current, mundane existence. Although late antiquity and the early Middle Ages seem to have been virtually devoid of ideas connected to biopolitical governing, one can still argue that the holistic flourishing of the ancients does not rule out at least some form of biopolitics or an unmistakable precursor to it. Material things needed to be figured out first, and the path of contemplation was open only for the select few. Furthermore, note that the modern ideas of well-being and happiness are far from being limited to the mere physical bodies of human beings. Instead, we are dealing with a grander pursuit that incorporates aspects such as mental health and a holistic notion of happiness. Biopolitics has to do with life (*bios*), but it does not have to be limited to biological functions.

The thinkers mentioned above are far from the only ones to connect Hobbes and the notion of biopolitical governing – the likes of Vappu Helmisaari (2020), Mikko Jakonen (2013), Marco Piasentier and Davide Tarizzo (2017), and B. A. Popp-Madsen (2014) have also approached Hobbes's work from somewhat similar perspectives.[5] Foucault can also be argued to agree with those who have chosen to highlight Hobbes's importance within the emerging debates regarding the problem of life and, therefore, the rise of the ongoing era of biopolitics. Foucault (2003: 241) argues that 'the problem of life began to be problematized in the field of political thought' during 'the seventeenth and especially the eighteenth century' – again, just before the beginning of the modern biopolitical era. To be more specific, this anticipatory shift started to take place as jurists began to ponder the question of life as related to the theories of social contract (a tradition that took its cues from none other than Hobbes). However, Foucault shows no interest in spending his time deciphering these unpragmatic debates of political philosophy; instead, he opts for the much more characteristic move of grappling with the problem 'at the level of the mechanisms, techniques, and technologies of power' (ibid.).

Indeed, there seems to be an obvious juxtaposition between vague, philosophical problematisations of life and the political programmes that govern life in a tangible manner (including programmes that are at least somewhat substantial and realisable, although they do not quite escape the pages of political programmes). In this sense, we are not far from Prozorov (2022), who has noticed that the historical precursors to biopolitics are often characterised almost singularly with philosophy instead of the more tangible changes in the art of governing depicted by Foucault. I would like to argue that this question establishes the epicentre of the challenge that one faces while attempting to read Hobbes as a thinker whose political thought includes biopolitical elements. Although Hobbes (1983[1642]: 158) explicitly states that his idea of survival includes more than mere living in the most minimal sense of the word, and he was overtly interested in the happiness of those bound by the social contract, there is always something more to veritable biopolitics. We must ask what kind of actual mechanisms of biopolitical governing Hobbes offers besides the agreeable intention of wanting to make the pursuit of well-being possible through security (or as part of it). We must also ponder a reversal of this question: do the much clearer, ancient examples of at least seemingly biopolitical governing – for example, the elaborate system of animal-style breeding of human beings devised by Plato in the *Republic* (Plato, 1935: 5.461) and the *Laws* (Plato, 1867: 5.735b–763a; see Ojakangas, 2016: 19) – constitute a biopolitical programme even though the Greek philosophers had not yet elevated non-contemplative life to its modern status as the explicit telos of virtually all politics (see Backman, 2022)? Such questions form the central thread of this article, as we try to decipher whether the history of biopolitics begins with Hobbes or whether we should try to place its genesis in some other point in history. Furthermore, we must ask: could it be possible that the phenomenon has several geneses depending on the criteria that we choose to employ to define it? In other words, the ultimate question is: what do we regard more important in defining biopolitics – the tangible and radical governing of life or finally seeing the safety (and with it the happiness) of physical human beings as the ultimate telos of virtually all politics? To put it differently, the debate seems to be about philosophical ideas versus political programmes and practices.

As we have mentioned, the history of biopolitics and Hobbes's role in it remain hotly debated topics within the still relevant larger scholarly discussion on biopolitics. However, the most notable thinkers within the field have yet another point of discrepancy that we must briefly discuss before moving on. Just as was the case with the debated history of the phenomenon, Foucault, Agamben, and later theorists have different answers to this question. This discrepancy has to do with the complex relationship between life-affirming biopolitics understood as a caring form of power and the deadly potentiality of sovereign power – the power to kill. Agamben (1998: 1–12) is famous for relabelling the current form of power as the exposed age-old combination of both sovereign power and biopolitics. He argues that sovereignty is achieved through the state of exception, which forms the sphere of meaningful human existence (*bios*)[6] by ruling out the (alleged) biopolitical subjects – the figures of bare life. According to Agamben's speculations, this excluded (and through its exclusion also included) figure is exemplified by the semi-obscure character in Roman law, *homo sacer*: someone who can be slayed without committing murder but who cannot be sacrificed to the gods (ibid.).[7] According to Agamben, there is no reason to demarcate the two technologies of power, whereas the exact opposite is true in Foucault's original theory of biopolitics, which focuses on the benevolent care that is aimed at the actual biopolitical subjects – precisely those people whose lives are optimised and never excluded from biopolitical confirmation through the power to kill.

These conflicting definitions lead to the inevitable conclusion that the dialogue between Agamben and Foucault is fundamentally impossible – or so says Ojakangas (2005), who argues that the exclusion of bare life cannot constitute the basis of biopolitics within the Foucauldian narrative. Indeed, biopolitics seems to always require at least some form of optimisation or maximisation of the safeguarded life. This is to say that the *homo sacer*-like figure of bare life cannot be regarded as the biopolitical subject, unlike, say, the citizen of a welfare state, whose existence is constantly affirmed (ibid.). From this perspective, most of Agamben's analysis appears to be virtually unrelated to the properly Foucauldian version of biopolitics. Again, the distinctly modern forms of governing are connected to more than 'just living' (Foucault, 2007: 326) or, to rephrase it, mere survival. Because achieving the well-being of the population is the key to biopolitics in this original sense, it is important to figure out what kind of forms of concrete governing Hobbes suggests, whether he manages to get across the threshold of veritable biopolitics and whether he can thus be labelled as a thinker whose political thought contains biopolitical elements?

Hobbes on maintaining life

When people are asked to think of Hobbes's contributions, the first thing that will come to their minds is his famed theory regarding the state of nature that is to be overcome through the social contract that establishes the sovereign entity. Hobbes does not spare his words when describing the conditions within the state of nature – such a life is notoriously 'solitary, poor, nasty, brutish, and short' (Hobbes, 1839[1651]: 113). He also describes this undesirable predicament as 'nothing else but a mere warre of all against all' (Hobbes, 1983[1642]: 34), where '*Man to Man is an arrant Wolfe*' (ibid.: 24; emphasis in original). Hence, the unorganised people ought to come together and concentrate their powers into a single entity (which can be either an individual, the minority, or the majority of the people). This act constitutes the sovereign that protects the lives of its subjects, who are now devoid of rights.

This is where we begin to approach distinct, biopolitically charged territories within Hobbes's theory. Although the people are said to give away their rights to the sovereign being, the takeover is not absolute. Instead, some utmost fundamental rights seem to linger on. Such is the case with the '*Right* of bodily protection, of free enjoyment of ayre, water, and all necessaries for life' (Hobbes, 1983[1642]: 68; emphasis in original; see also 1928[1889]: 69). In other words, the state promises to guarantee its citizens access to the necessities that every human being needs to survive. Furthermore, the responsibility on mere survival is not left to the subjects alone. Hobbes refers to the 'nutrition of a commonwealth', which consists in 'the *plenty*, and *distribution* of *materials* conducing to life: in *concoction*, or *preparation*; and, when concocted, in the *conveyance* of it, by convenient conduits, to the public use' (Hobbes, 1839[1651]: 232; emphasis in original). He goes as far as to compare the king to a shepherd who is to be tasked with giving the flock 'convenient food' (ibid.: 582).[8] Moreover, those who cannot live off their own work ought to be provided with the natural necessities by the commonwealth (ibid.: 334). Hobbes highlights the importance of taking such steps by citing Cicero's *De Legibus* (On the Laws; Cicero, 1853: III.3, 464) and saying that the safety of the people ought to be regarded as the supreme law, or, in Latin:

> *Salus populi suprema lex*; by which must be understood, not the mere preservation of their lives, but generally their benefit and good. So that this is the general law for sovereigns: that

> they procure, to the uttermost of their endeavour, the good of the people. (Hobbes, 1928[1889]: 142; emphasis in original; see Jakonen, 2013: 164)

As we can clearly see, Hobbes seems to go beyond guaranteeing just the mere survival of the subjects. Instead, he seems to aim for a greater good of the people. He also words this idea even more explicitly when he states that 'by safety here, is not meant a bare preservation, but also all other contentments of life, which every man by lawful industry, without danger, or hurt to the commonwealth, shall acquire to himself' (Hobbes, 1839[1651]: 322). There is yet another, similar instance where he asserts:

> By *safety* must be understood, not the sole preservation of life in what condition soever, but in order to its happiness, For to this end did men freely assemble themselves, and *institute* a government, that they might, as much as their humane condition would afford, live delightfully. (Hobbes, 1983[1642]: 158; emphasis in original)

The commonwealth works to ensure the happiness of the subjects or at least their pursuit of it. However, one should not be fooled into thinking that preserving human lives and allowing them to strive towards achieving happiness is nothing but an altruistic act on behalf of the sovereign entity. Those in charge also greatly benefit from the well-being of their subjects. Nonetheless, this synergy does not make Hobbes's approach anti-biopolitical or even non-biopolitical because a single action can have multiple goals and results. The mutual advantage shared by the sovereign and those who are governed is highlighted especially well when Hobbes reminds us that if the sovereign does not do enough to help people

> maintain themselves, and their families, nor conserve their bodily strength, and vigour, the disadvantage is as much his [the sovereign's], as theirs, who with never so great a stock, or measure of riches, is not able to keep his authority or his riches without the bodies of his subjects. (Hobbes, 1983[1642]: 130)

This is to say that the sovereign's 'interest depends upon our [the subjects'] safety, and welfare' (Hobbes, 1983[1642]: 140) and that the subjects are to be regarded as 'the inheritance of the Ruler' (ibid.). Hobbes's tone takes an especially biopolitical ring when he begins to discuss people as wealth and is dealing with not only the subjects' 'Lands, and Monies' but also their 'bodies, and active minds' (ibid.). Therefore, the entity vested with sovereign power ought to always

> furnish their subjects abundantly, not only with the good things belonging to life, but also with those which advance to delectation. They who have acquired Dominion by arms, doe all desire that their subjects may be strong in body and mind, that they may serve them the better; wherefore if they should not endeavour to provide them, not only with such things whereby they may live, but also with such whereby they may grow strong and lusty, they would act against their own scope and end. (Hobbes, 1983[1642]: 158; see Jakonen, 2013: 166)

Most of what we have gathered thus far seems to indicate that Hobbes displays at least a rudimentary biopolitical logic that seeks to take care of people's lives. Furthermore, he seems to be focused on the question of life in the distinctly physical sense that would later transform into the modern biological perspective we know today.

Next, let us approach the topic through our specific research questions. Note that, as I have already suggested, Hobbes does not stop at mere survival and claims that sovereign protection ought to strive towards something more – allowing for the happy life of the people. Because such a stance seems to meet the minimum requirements of a biopolitical system, Hobbes's political programme passes the first and most important test. When we combine these findings with the fact that Hobbes (1839[1651]: 113) is the first thinker to propose the preservation of life from (violent) death and, through it, at least some form of happiness as the aims of politics, we seem to be left with no choice but to claim that Hobbes's political philosophy includes a biopolitical dimension and that he is the catalyst to the biopolitical era of modernity from a certain point of view. However, questions regarding the specifics of his biopolitical thought and whether he was the first one to propose a veritable biopolitical system remain without a satisfactory answer. We will next tackle these questions.

Concrete forms of governing life

Although Hobbes's political thought meets the philosophical minimum requirements of biopolitical logic, and he is perhaps the first great philosopher to do so in a sense that highlights the supreme importance of safeguarding non-contemplative life, his ideas seem to pale in comparison with the distinctly modern, tangible biopolitical programmes (including those that Foucault was interested in studying instead of jurists' technical arguments regarding the social contract's implications for the problem of life). One of the differences between Hobbes's take on governing life and the later, much more palpable forms of biopolitics is that he is missing Foucault's (1976: 182–4) distinct double structure of biopower (the micro level that is used to discipline individuals and the macro level that is used to regulate entire populations). Moreover, this all-important constellation is explicitly left out. Although we can perhaps point out certain limited outlines of the macro level of the umbrella-like notion of biopower – meaning the concrete biopolitical population politics (*avant la lettre*) – the other side of biopower is almost entirely excluded. According to Foucault, this chronologically speaking initial stratum, discipline, is the micropower over the bodies of individual subjects. To quote Hobbes's own words, although the city is constituted for the subject's sake,

> a particular care is not required of *this* or *that* man; for the Ruler (as such) provides no otherwise for the safety of his people, then by his Lawes, which are universall; and therefore he hath fully *discharged* himselfe, if he have throughly endeavoured by wholesome constitutions, to establish welfare of the most part, and made it as lasting as may be; and that no man suffer ill, but by his own default, or by some chance which could not be prevented. (Hobbes, 1983[1642]: 157–8; emphasis in original)

He also makes similar, albeit perhaps even more explicit, claims elsewhere when he argues that safety should be ensured

> not by care applied to individuals, further than their protection from injuries, when they shall complain; but by a general providence, contained in public instruction, both of doctrine, and example; and in the making and executing of good laws, to which individual persons may apply their own cases. (Hobbes, 1839[1651]: 322–3)

Hobbes's argument here is that of liberalism – the state should not interfere in the life of individuals unless they claim to be victims of wrongdoing. Because he denies governing on the level of individuals, the suggested political system cannot fulfil the twofold definition of biopower as discipline over singular bodies *and* as the biopolitics of the population. Hence, his system remains limited, unlike those of his predecessors, including that of the French jurist and multifaceted philosopher Jean Bodin (1583[1576]: 835), who sought to reinstitute Roman marriage laws and the magistracy of censors that was to watch over the private actions of individuals while also governing over both the quality and the quantity of the people at large.[9]

Reinterpreting Hobbes's political philosophy as an example of early modern biopower runs into yet another notable obstacle – one that is directly related to the first. As I have already hinted, Hobbes is not interested in suggesting concrete tools for biopolitical governing. Indeed, he believes that 'the Ruler (as such) provides no otherwise for the safety of his people, then by his Lawes' (Hobbes, 1983[1642]: 157). There is, of course, a world of difference between employing nothing but universal laws to control everyone and everything within the commonwealth versus the intrusive and definite biopolitical practices that Foucault was interested in analysing. Again, according to Foucault, the notion of biopolitics needed to entail a collection of concrete or corporeal mechanics and instruments that were used to govern people's everyday lives.

Hobbes's general ideas regarding the protection of life (and through it, survival and the happiness of the citizens) are, nevertheless, undoubtedly biopolitical. Hence, I would like to suggest that we ought to approach his proposed system as *minimal biopolitics* that fits the criteria of a *biopolitical nightwatchman state*. We borrow the notion of the nightwatchman state (*Nachtwächterstaat*) from the German socialist philosopher Ferdinand Lassalle (1985[1862/3]: 345), who used it to voice his disapproval of the bourgeois state that had no interest in intervening into any other (social) issues besides thievery. We also borrow it from Robert Nozick, who appropriated it as the model of the morally admissible minimal state in his book *Anarchy, State, and Utopia* (1974). In other words, the nightwatchman state is a polity that fulfils nothing but the absolute minimum requirements of a functioning state. This limited agenda stands in contrast with the more intrusive approach of, say, contemporary welfare states, whose critics have satirised them as 'nanny states'. I find the label *nightwatchman* somewhat fitting for Hobbes's biopolitical arrangement because the Englishman does not go into the specifics regarding hands-on governing of life. To put it differently, the Hobbesian commonwealth aims to provide security and especially happiness in a somewhat minimal sense. Furthermore, he does not appear to propose any concrete details on how the happiness of the citizens should be achieved in reality (even when it comes to the so-called macro level of governing life, which he does not explicitly exclude).

Furthermore, this vague promise of allowing for the pursuit of happiness is incomparable to the maximalist biopolitics of the modern welfare state, which combs over every detail of human life with virtually endless interventions. It even pales in comparison to the techniques seen in certain previous political works by, say, Plato or even Bodin, who formulate their own kinds of distinct and concrete programmes of governing. Had Hobbes not included the minimal call for happiness into his definition of security, we would not be able to label the result as a nightwatchman version of biopolitics, as the ensuing system would no longer carry even this kind of limited biopolitical significance. Hobbes's system could not be regarded as the nightwatchman version of biopolitics for a different reason if he had included tangible forms of biopolitical governing into his political works. This is because such a system could surely be regarded as the real deal – a biopolitical commonwealth in every conceivable way without the need for any further appendages. Alas, this is not the case. For these reasons, I feel that it is justified to label Hobbes's biopolitical programme as something analogous to the nightwatchman. Note that my analysis here is limited to the biopolitical aspects in his political thought and that I am not attempting to make general claims regarding his political system.[10]

Hobbes, state racism, and Agamben's 'biopolitics'

Although Hobbes's *oeuvre* is not entirely devoid of hands-on 'population political' practices and methods, these rare instances do not seem to save his biopolitical system from being labelled as that of a nightwatchman. As I have noted, he suggests that the survival of the people is ensured through sufficient nutrition and other necessities of life. I would like to argue that this vague stance fits into the category of minimal biopolitics. He also states that insufficiently populated countries can be inhabited by 'transplanting' the poor from more populous places (Hobbes, 1839[1651]: 335). This move takes care of wars resulting from overpopulation and can obviously be interpreted as a biopolitical solution to a biopolitically charged problem. This may very well be the peak of Hobbes's biopolitics. Similar colonial practices can be found from many of Hobbes's predecessors – for example, from the previously mentioned Bodin (1583[1576]: 865), who congratulates the Romans for sending undesirable individuals away as a means of achieving the double effect of spreading the commonwealth's influence to distant places and simultaneously getting rid of some of its most deplorable individuals. However, Hobbes does not seem to elaborate on his 'transplantation' in similarly radical terms – at least in an explicit manner. Therefore, this brief instance does not seem to quite save him from receiving my suggested classification of a biopolitical minimalist either.

Although Hobbes's idea regarding evenly spreading out the populace does not seem to be motivated by state racism, note that other aspects of his political thought may still display such tendencies. Indeed, he does not seem to shy away from the general logic of spilling some bad blood to provide the best outcome for the greater masses. He unambiguously states that it 'sometimes conduces to the safety of the most part, that wicked men doe suffer' (Hobbes, 1983[1642]: 158). The message itself is clear: the best for the majority can, at least occasionally, be achieved through the anguish of the undesirable few. At first, this may appear as a strong example of state racism, where parts of the population can be repressed or perhaps even eliminated (or at least allowed to perish or subjected to a figurative death) to optimise the rest of the said population. However, we cannot ignore the fact that Hobbes does not appear to seek optimisation, happiness, or well-being in this instance (at least explicitly); instead, he seems to be interested in mere safety. If this was the formula of biopolitical state racism, many things, including traditional wars and the executions of lawbreakers, would need to be seen as biopolitical acts, although this is clearly not the case within Foucault's analyses. Suppose that we applied Hobbes's previously discussed maxim that heed for security includes happiness or at least the ability to pursue it. In that case, one should still be aware that the statement is deeply rooted in the Judeo-Christian ideas of sin and wickedness, which are somewhat removed from the thoroughly biopolitical categories of the inbred, the impure, and the inherently sick (although it is true that Hobbes's religious term 'wicked' bears a certain resemblance to the biopolitically charged categories of the abnormal and the deviant). It is also true that Foucault's (1997: 72) definition of state racism includes the liquidation of all sorts of undesirable threats to life beyond the obvious category of the 'racially impure' – indeed, the Frenchman goes as far as to include the political enemies of the Soviet Union into this list. However, there does not appear to be sufficient evidence to suggest that Hobbes's maxim includes a similar logic of optimising life.

Speaking of thanatopolitics, or the politics of death, none of those who have set on the path paved by Foucault seem to have taken the analysis of the negative dimension of the usually life-affirming power as far as Agamben has. The Italian philosopher claims that Western political order is in fact based on the sovereign exception or the foundational political act of deciding whether certain forms of life are worth living in the first place. As I have already argued in the introduction, such logic does not have a veritable connection to the specifically Foucauldian definition of biopolitics – unless the valuation of life is undertaken to maximise the well-being of the population as a whole. Regardless of which definition one chooses to follow, one of Hobbes's (1983[1642]: 229–30) claims appears to bear a striking resemblance to Agamben's later formulations regarding the sovereign decision on life that either is or is not worth living. More specifically, Hobbes argues that the city (and thus not the religious authorities or the philosophical speculations provided by the likes of Aristotle) has the right to determine whether a child of 'unwonted shape' may be considered as a human being and, consequently, whether such a child can be killed without breaking either the fifth commandment or laws set by human beings. Again, this should be seen not as a matter of philosophy or religion but as a political decision.

> But the decision of the question whether a man doe reason rightly, belongs to the City. For Example. If a woman bring forth a Child of an unwonted shape, and the Law forbid to kill a man, the question is, whether the Childe be a man. It is demanded therefore what a man is. No man doubts, but the City shall judge it, and that without taking an account of *Aristotles* definition, that man is a rationall Creature. And these things (namely *Right, Politie,* and *naturall Sciences*) are Subjects concerning which CHRIST denies that it belongs to his Office to give any Præcepts, or teach any thing, beside this onely, that in all Controversies about them, every single Subject should obey the Lawes, and determinations of his City. Yet must we remember this, that the same Christ as God could not onely have taught, but also commanded what he would. (Hobbes, 1983[1642]: 229–30; emphasis in original)

The decision regarding human life is thus exclusively made by those who hold political power. However, such a stance does not yet mean that it would be necessary to regard

Hobbes's take as an example of Foucauldian state racism, although this possibility must be left open. Biopolitics needs to have an (alleged) positive end. We can consider the Third Reich as a biopolitical polity despite its deadly policies partly because it was seeking to 'purify' and thus optimise its population by destroying the 'racially impure' and inherently ill elements, despite the twisted nature of this logic (and also because the powers that be sought to affirm the lives of those belonging to the 'Aryan' population in a manner that was not explicitly state racist).

However, as I have already hinted, this is not necessarily the case with all imaginable killings. In fact, Hobbes seems to leave the matter open to interpretation once again; if the legality of infanticide was to be argued based on the well-being, happiness, or optimisation of the remaining population, there would be no choice but to declare that we are indeed dealing with biopolitical state racism or biopolitical governing that is operating together with the sovereign decision to kill. However, because we are simply told that this is a political decision and not given further explanations on why it should take place, we have no way of confirming whether this remarkable passage carries any explicit biopolitical significance. We could just as well be dealing with an example of pure sovereign power – the power to kill without any of the affirming and optimising qualities that must always accompany all veritable forms of biopolitics. This is not to say that biopolitical reasoning itself makes any intervention more or less 'acceptable' – in today's world, once commonplace forms of 'negative' eugenics, such as infanticide or forced sterilisation, are supported by only a few, whereas a far greater number stands in support of screening for birth defects during the first stages of pregnancy. All these tools are employed to prevent disabilities in the population, yet there is still a world of difference between them.

Agamben's formulations on biopolitics need to face the same critique as those who would choose to declare that Hobbes's passage is state racist: why should the sovereign exception be seen as a biopolitical act if it does not seek to optimise life in any shape or form? Having to face this criticism is not the only connection between the two thinkers; Agamben also explicitly discusses Hobbes on several occasions. He does so perhaps most interestingly in his short work *Stasis: Civil War as a Political Paradigm (Homo Sacer II, 2)* (Agamben, 2015: 51–2). Here, the Italian philosopher argues that Hobbes seems to predict the notion of 'population', which would later find its place in the centre of Foucault's analyses. According to Agamben, Hobbes anticipates the imminent key concept when he discusses the double meaning of the word *people* in the *Elements of Law*:

> In one sense it signifieth only a number of men, distinguished by the place of their habitation; as the people of England or the people of France; which is no more but the multitude of those particular persons that inhabit those regions, without consideration of any contracts or covenants amongst them, by which any one of them is obliged to the rest. In another sense, it signifieth a person civil, that is to say, either one man, or one council, in the will whereof is included and involved the will of everyone in particular. (Hobbes, 1928[1889]: 97)

This is to say that establishing political order in an organised state leads to the simultaneous dissolution of the people that constituted it. As the sovereign emerges as a result of the social contract, the people are turned into a multitude or the object of the sovereign will, something that is akin to the Agambenian notion of bare life (see Piasentier and Tarizzo, 2017: 45). If we take into consideration what the social contract means for Hobbes, Agamben's arrangement seems to imply that the sovereign entity would be interested in the safety and happiness of the *homo sacer*-like figures of bare life, which does not seem logical – even within Agamben's reimagined biopolitical schema.

On a similar note, Agamben (2015: 47) also takes time to dissect the famous frontispiece of *Leviathan*. He tries to find additional proof for his claims by directing his attention towards the curious and well-documented fact that virtually all human figures reside outside the city. Indeed, most of the people can be found within the gigantic body located beyond the walls and hills that surround the town. Meanwhile, the area within the fortifications is occupied only by a few humans, who are all either guards or plague doctors. According to Agamben, this signifies the fact that 'the unrepresentable multitude can be represented only through the guards who monitor its obedience and the doctors who treat it. It dwells in the city, but only as the object of the duties and concerns of those who exercise the sovereignty' (ibid.). He concludes his argument by stating that the frontispiece 'announces the biopolitical turn that sovereign power was preparing to make' (ibid.: 48–9).

However, we are once again faced with the fact that the creation of bare life without a life-affirming counterbalance does not seem to fit into the traditional Foucauldian narrative of biopolitics and that the dialogue between the two thinkers remains impossible (Ojakangas, 2005). Furthermore, employing doctors to treat the multitude (making them live) is a biopolitical task, not a sovereign one – Foucauldian sovereign power by itself can only kill or let live. Suppose that Agamben's analysis of the frontispiece was right: the production of a being that is only a target of sovereign exercises is to be regarded as the literal antithesis of Foucauldian biopolitics, which is always seeking to optimise its targets. Indeed, if no form of life is optimised, we could not be farther away from actual biopolitics. Agamben's *homo sacer* is devoid of all such optimisation and can thus enjoy but a secondary or negative connection to veritable biopolitics. In other words, the rejected figure can be regarded as nothing more than a by-product of the biopolitical machine. Therefore, Agamben's interesting interpretation has limited use in the framework of this article, just as it does within the larger Foucauldian narrative. If we really want to look for biopolitical significance in the frontispiece (and I am not necessarily saying that we should), it can be argued that the placement of bodies serves as an example of the limited role of biopolitics in Hobbes's political thought. Sovereignty is key, as signified by the colossal giant that engulfs almost all human beings on sight. Biopolitics is but an afterthought that gets symbolised through a couple of miniscule figures here and there. Its role is marginal – yet it is still there and, curiously enough, is depicted outside the sovereign constellation. However, one should probably not read too much into such things.

Biopolitical practices versus a biopolitical era

Hobbes's political thought includes a biopolitical element. However, following this inquiry into his political programme, and especially into what he has to say about governing the subjects' everyday lives, it seems we are not dealing with much. This becomes even more apparent when we compare his ideas to, say, those in evidence in Plato's *Republic* or even Bodin's *Rèpublique*. Although it is true that the Englishman breaks the final lock that allows us to enter the unambiguously biopolitical era of modernity (he is the first major thinker to regard life in the non-contemplative sense as the ultimate telos of virtually all politics, albeit through a negation), his concrete biopolitical programme still pales in comparison to those of his successors – and even some of his early predecessors. As we have seen, Plato's *Republic* (Plato, 1935: 5.459a–b, 5.461) offers a much more radical example of biopolitical governing – his idealised *polis* is modelled in a manner that would allow those in charge to choose who gets to reproduce to breed the strongest and most beautiful men and women, just like dogs, while all those who are born outside the intricate system of breeding are killed or let to die.

Meanwhile, Hobbes does not go into much detail. He simply states that achieving security and allowing for people's happiness are key political goals, that the poor ought to be fed, that the population should be evenly distributed (perhaps in part owing to biopolitical reasons), and that it is sometimes beneficial to make the wicked suffer to provide safety for decent folk (it remains dubious whether this suggestion may be regarded as biopolitical, strictly speaking). Concrete references to the keys to biopolitical governing, such as 'sex' or 'race', are either inadequately expressed or entirely missing – unlike in Plato. Therefore, I have suggested that Hobbes's biopolitical programme is reminiscent of a nightwatchman – in other words, it could be labelled as a commonwealth of biopolitical minimalism. Again, although Hobbes was perhaps the first major thinker to declare the explicit political primacy of preventing (violent) death (and thus safeguarding life in a non-contemplative sense), he was by no means the biopolitical thinker par excellence – if we are to follow Foucault's definitions. Meanwhile, determining whether Hobbes's programme fits the Agambenian notion of biopolitics (which is not compatible with Foucault's) is outside the focus of this article, as such ideas are virtually unrelated (or at most, negatively related) to the idea of biopolitics as care, in which this article is invested.

What I mean by minimal here is that unlike Foucault's notion of biopolitics, which was written first and foremost as a critique for the state's overreach (Dean and Zamora, 2019: 48, 60–73, 116–27),[11] the role of biopolitics in the Hobbesian commonwealth seems to be rather nominal – he does not seek to provide much more than the sheer necessities plus the possibility of further happiness. However, the concrete meaning of this (and the means of achieving it) is left mostly unspecified. Furthermore, there was to be virtually no governance applied on the level of individuals (the first historical stratum of biopower, according to Foucault). Instead, the people would be almost exclusively controlled through the mass level of laws that are common to all. Meanwhile, the juicy leads regarding infanticide and the logic of state racism remain too vague to count as veritable pieces of evidence for a stronger biopolitical programme, but I am not prepared to disqualify them entirely, either. This part of the inquiry remains unsolved.

Because of the above-mentioned facts, I argue that Hobbes can be described as a semi-biopolitical thinker, or rather a biopolitical thinker from a limited perspective who is still far from receiving the title of biopolitical thinker par excellence. As I have pointed out, he does not seem to break free from the philosophical level of problematising life, at least in any substantial manner. Thus, he ends up pioneering the path of those jurists in whose footsteps

Foucault was not interested in following. Furthermore, he is by no means the first philosopher to introduce concrete examples of biopolitical governing – which he, once again, provides sparingly. Forms of practical biopolitical governing (the path that Foucault was actually interested in pursuing) seem to predate the man of Malmesbury by at least two millennia, although it is true that Foucault himself would not have agreed with such claims. However, the evidence seems to speak for itself. Indeed, there were fully fleshed-out systems of human breeding and state racism long before Hobbes's time (see Ojakangas, 2016: 19; contra Esposito, 2008: 53–4). This claim seems to hold true even though the notions of supreme happiness and well-being within the pre-modern contexts seem to exceed the strictly biopolitical categories of life because they were connected to the supremacy of a *metabiopolitical* contemplative life (see Backman, 2022). None of this alters the fact that corporeal life was still the target of radical instruments of de facto biopolitical governing that were used to control both the quality and the quantity of citizens within the Greek city states. I would like to argue that this concrete level of physical governing is the qualifier that matters the most when it comes to defining something like biopolitics. In a sense, I am thus arguing against Foucault's hastily formed timeline of biopolitics within the framework of his own definitions.

How should we then proceed with the task of determining the birth of biopolitics? I acknowledge that the question is far from easy. This current study seems to suggest that there are at least two possible geneses of biopolitics depending on the criteria that we choose to employ. Hence, there ought to exist a conceptual separation between concrete biopolitical ideas and the era that may be considered biopolitical on another level owing to the modern supremacy of life. In my previous work, I have called the ancient and Renaissance examples of such governing *biopolitics before the biopolitical era* (Lindholm, 2022: 150). Although Hobbes is perhaps the first 'real' biopolitical thinker in some limited sense, it would be imprudent to presume that aggressive biopolitical governing did not predate him by a notable margin simply because those who suggested such interventions into humans' lives had their minds set on an even more ultimate telos of contemplative *eudaimonia*, or life after death – a goal that the undeniable biopolitical instruments were supposed to serve. What matters most is that the governing was de facto biopolitical no matter the underlying philosophy. Hence, I conclude by stating that Hobbes commenced an unprecedented biopolitical era even though he was not a radical biopolitical thinker, unlike some of those who had mastered the governing of life long before him. Perhaps there is still a third beginning of biopolitics where the biopolitical telos and the radical tools of governing become conjoined. This beginning could very well coincide with Foucault's original narrative.

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Notes

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1. Note that although the currently popular manner of utilising the concept of biopolitics may be credited to Foucault, who popularised it during the 1970s, he did not coin the term, which had been used by Rudolf Kjéllen (1905: 26) at the beginning of the 20th century.
2. Foucault's take on history is notoriously francocentric. Hence, he also misses the global and imperial dimensions of biopolitics (for more on these topics, see Earle, 2012; Mbembe, 2016; Stoler, 1995).
3. Foucault's notion of state racism is not tied to obsolete notions of hereditary 'biological' or 'ethnic' 'race' and can, instead, denote the elimination of all kinds of groups that pose a biopolitical threat. There is a rich literature on the birth of (proto-)racism in the more commonly used sense of the word (see Earle, 2012; Eliav-Feldon, Isaac, and Ziegler, 2009; Heng, 2018; Isaac, 2004, 2006, 2017. For an interesting take on Francisco de Vitoria's 'color-blind racism' during colonial times, see Bohrer, 2018).
4. Agamben has discussed the Covid pandemic in a series of controversial texts compiled under the title *Where Are We Now? The Epidemic as Politics* (Agamben, 2021). He describes the pandemic as an 'invention' that has reduced the people of Italy to bare life (ibid.: 11–13, 64). Although a wider discussion regarding the pandemic is beyond the scope of this article, it is important to note that Agamben's new writings run into the same problem as his general take on biopolitics. Sovereign exception is not biopolitical unless at least some forms of life are optimised.
5. No one has perhaps connected Hobbes and biopolitics more famously than Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri (2001: 103). However, the celebrated duo develops the Hobbesian notion of multitude in a manner that is entangled with their own unique rendition of the concepts of biopower and biopolitics. Because their bold reconstruction is at odds with Foucault's original definitions, it cannot operate within this current conversation; therefore, I will not be focusing on it in depth. However, to briefly describe Negri and Hardt's contribution, the two are interested in the Hobbesian notion of 'multitude' (an uninhibited assortment of singularities) as opposed to the concept of 'people' (the unity that acts as the homogenous target of sovereign power; see ibid.; Helmisaari, 2020: 127–37; Jakonen, 2013: 41–3). As I have stated above, Hardt and Negri (2009: 57) reimagine 'biopower' and 'biopolitics' as geometrically opposed notions in a manner that cannot operate within Foucault's (1976: 182–4) original framework (although they themselves claim otherwise). According to Foucault, biopolitics is seen as one of the two sub-technologies of an umbrella-like biopower. This extended notion consists of both the micro level of discipling individual subjects and the macro level that controls the entire population through biopolitical governing. In other words, the Foucauldian conception of biopolitics is always an inseparable part and a subcategory of biopower (as well as its occasional synonym). Meanwhile, the two concepts would stand in an antagonistic relationship with one another if we were to listen to Hardt and Negri. I see no way around this impasse.

   > The biopower against which we struggle is not comparable in its nature or form to the power of life by which we defend and seek our freedom. To mark this difference between the two 'powers of life', we but not used consistently by him, between biopower and biopolitics, whereby the former could be

> defined (rather crudely) as the power over life and the latter as the power of life to resist and determine an alternative production of subjectivity. (Hardt and Negri, 2009: 57)

6. Agamben's famous division between *bios* and *zoē* has no historical basis (see Backman, 2017; Finlayson, 2010).
7. For a different perspective on Roman biopolitics, see Lindholm (2022: 79–97); Ojakangas (2016: 118–21).
8. Hobbes's (1839[1651]: 582) comparison of the king and a shepherd who provides the people with nutriture is of course highly reminiscent of Foucault's (2004: 130–1) formulations on the 'Judeo-Christian' pastoral power that takes care of the human flock in a somewhat similar manner. However, whereas Foucault emphasises that the shepherd controls the flock on two distinct yet related levels – all together at once and each of the members individually – the latter level is explicitly left out by Hobbes, as we find out later in this article.
9. Bodin's name is worth bringing up in this context because he is one of the few (near) contemporary influences that Hobbes chooses to cite by name. Hobbes does this while discussing the indivisibility of sovereignty in the *Elements of Law* (Hobbes, 1928[1889]: 137; for more on Bodin as a biopolitical thinker, see Lindholm, 2022).
10. To clarify, Hobbes's limited government and the minimal state, which Lassalle mocks during the 19th century, are distinct. Lassalle criticises the state for refusing to tackle social issues beyond thievery, whereas Hobbes's limited government was by no means looking to deny social protection. Again, we are using the notion of the biopolitical nightwatchman state only to describe Hobbes's limited take on biopolitics.
11. Dean and Zamora (2019: 49, 60–73, 116–271) also note that this was the basis for Foucault's widely discussed neo-liberal turn. He wished to limit governing, discipline, and normalisation to provide more freedom to experiment with one's life (ibid.: 154–60). Unfortunately, the rise of neo-liberalism did not lead to such changes (ibid.: 168–9).

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