



Editorial

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BEHEMOTH is a monster mentioned in the Old Testament, as well as a metaphor: For Thomas Hobbes it symbolizes war and chaos. Hobbes introduces a second creature, as does the Bible – LEVIATHAN. In his reading this monster represents the opposite of war and chaos, i.e., peace and order.

So why is this symmetry not reflected in the extended discussions of the “Hobbes industry” that embraces myriads of academic writings concerning the origin of modern statehood?

One, if not the, answer may be that while LEVIATHAN is considered a “machine” (Hobbes), hence a product that has been made (and must be maintained), BEHEMOTH is purely natural, rooted in the psychological disposition of man (Freud). While the first monster symbolizes a positive quality, a state of affairs men will think about and strive for, its counterpart is pure negativity – so why waste thoughts on it?

“Bisecting” the human condition certainly is understandable and remains harmless as long as we focus upon one or the other side of our condition. Taken by itself, death – though man’s first and foremost concern – is absolutely uninteresting. However, things change dramatically when we take into account the interplay between life and death, or – in other words – the fight between LEVIATHAN and BEHEMOTH.

The friends of order must learn as much as possible about their enemies, the forces of chaos. How much power is to their avail? Which guidelines do they follow? What are their motives? Where do they hide? Which weapons can they deploy? Are they willing to compromise or give in? If so, under what conditions? Or at which price?

Moreover, the reigning ideas of peace and order may well be transformed while “we” become increasingly involved with “them”. Ethnic purity, cultural identity, political “irony”, civility of manners, decency of taste, privacy of feelings and so on – all these pillars of “Western civilizations” may be well at stake and have to be adapted or sometimes even discarded. It goes without saying that these issues have been addressed before, some of them extensively. But, by and large, they have been scaled down to dimensions compatible with the liberal paradigm of politics, transforming agonistic “clashes” into the pluralist encounters we know.

This is a rather disturbing idea of the challenges ahead of us. There will be no eternal progress that Hobbes would make us believe in. He considers civilization a *perpetuum mobile*, a machine that goes by itself, with its mechanisms Industry, Culture of the Earth, Navigation, account of Time, Arts, Letters and so on.

On the other hand, the inventor of LEVIATHAN may well have been overly pessimistic, for his image of destruction and decay envisions the worst case scenario – a “*bellum omnium contra omnes*”, i.e., a war at the same time total and individual. This is a situation strictly out of control – literally nothing can be done to govern it. However, let us keep in mind that BEHEMOTH, like its counterpart, is an animal, i.e., an organism – and

therefore organized. This may help. To put it bluntly, fighting the Mafia is definitely easier than dealing with a “multitude” of individual criminals; and dealing with one big union has proven to be somewhat less difficult than addressing myriads of minor unions, let alone an army of unruly workers launching unorganized actions (“wildcat strikes”).

If we proceed along this line of reasoning, the picture may brighten up further. When they are organized, people or cultures no longer “clash” the way they are supposed to. Organizations follow a logic of their own, they are not rivals or enemies “by nature”. Their survival depends on a different set of circumstances, and co-existence may be a realistic prospect in spite of the usual lingering conflicts. Finally, one might conclude that the state “as we know it”, instead of being our guarantor of order, is the ultimate source of war, due to its rigid claim to sovereignty. LEVIATHAN, after all, is the “mortall god” tolerating no other gods.

Thus, all of a sudden a post-Leviathan cosmos opens up. It stresses the importance of self-regulation, with the state limited to the moderating, and modest, role of “gentle civilizer”. On a global scale, regimes of that kind exist already; similar agreements of smaller scope, and less gentle nature, have emerged as a way of securing order (with and without law) in “monster cities” here and there. In cases like these, the Sovereign is no longer sovereign. And “governance” is becoming contested because agonistic politics are replaced by unseemly patterns such as tacit arrangements and informal contracts. The responsibility for law and order is delegated to agents hitherto not considered fit to exercise public authority. We may increasingly observe “dialectical” regimes taking risks in order to reduce them. BEHEMOTH as part of the solution?

Considering the complexity and ambiguity of the challenge ahead it would be unwise to single out relevant disciplines and methodologies at the expense of others. It’s true, there will be special issues privileging particular approaches and relying upon a limited pool of “instruments”. But by nature, this journal is multidisciplinary.

It would be equally unwise to exclude, as a matter of principle, those contributions that, in a narrow understanding, may be considered not academic enough. “Reports” or “essays” often offer surprising insights and refreshing perspectives lending themselves to a more systematic elaboration.

Last but not least, it would also be unwise to insist upon a discriminatory philosophy, in particular a hidden teleology favouring, for example, “enlightened” arguments, “civilized” manners, and “modern” times over people, places, periods, and perspectives that are not.