



## Max Weber Programme Conference

### *“Thomas Hobbes and the Modern State: A 21<sup>st</sup> Century Interdisciplinary Perspective”*

5<sup>th</sup> Classics Revisited Conference  
San Domenico di Fiesole,  
Villa la Fonte, 30 March 2011

### **“An Autocratic or Liberal Leviathan?: The Schmitt-Strauss Debate over the Hobbesian State”**

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#### Abstract:

Carl Schmitt famously asserts that all genuine political philosophies are pessimistic concerning the nature of man. Yet, in his commentary on Schmitt's *Concept of the Political*, Leo Strauss insists that Thomas Hobbes's notion of man as dangerous but educable--on which Schmitt extensively relies--is not sufficiently pessimistic to justify the kind of authoritarian state theory that Schmitt seeks to put in the place of the liberal theory of state. Hobbes's assumption that man is educable, Strauss avers, permits the expansion of the kinds of freedom that Schmitt himself thinks will develop into a threat to the stability of the Leviathan state. This paper explores the place of Hobbes in the respective efforts of these authors to develop a genuinely authoritarian alternative to liberal state theory in interwar Germany.