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was hostile to the intellectual authorities of the churches, but yet he wanted his own philosophical works to be the authoritative texts within the universities.

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Hobbes was the first great English political philosopher, and his book Leviathan was one of the first truly modern works of philosophy. He has long had the reputation of being a pessimistic atheist, who saw human nature as inevitably evil and proposed a totalitarian state to subdue human failings.

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Hobbes naturally played a part in the construction of subsequent philosophies, but his importance for later philosophers has fluctuated. 'Interpretations of Hobbes'

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proposed a totalitarian state to subdue human failings.

Thomas Hobbes (1588–1679) was the first great English political philosopher, and his book *Leviathan* was one of the first truly modern works of philosophy. Richard Tuck shows that while Hobbes may indeed have been an atheist, he was far from pessimistic about human nature, nor did he advocate totalitarianism. By locating him against the context of his age, we learn that Hobbes developed a theory

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of knowledge which rivalled that of Descartes in its importance for the formation of modern philosophy.

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This book introduces readers to the concepts of political philosophy. It starts by explaining why the subject is important and how it tackles basic ethical questions such as 'how should we live together in society?' It looks at political authority, the reasons why we need politics at all, the limitations of politics, and whether there are areas of life that shouldn't be governed by politics. It explores the connections between political authority and justice, a constant theme in political philosophy, and the ways in which social justice can be used to regulate rather

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Skinner traces the course of Machiavelli's adult life, from his time as Second Chancellor of the Florentine republic, during which he met with kings, the pope, and the Holy Roman Emperor; to the fall of the republic in 1512; to his death in 1527. It was after the fall of the Republic that Machiavelli composed his main political works: *The Prince*, the *Discourses*, and *The History of Florence*. In this second edition of his *Very Short Introduction* Skinner includes new material on *The Prince*, showing how Machiavelli developed his neo-classical political theory, through engaging in

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continual dialogue with the ancient Roman moralists and historians, especially Cicero and Livy. The aim of political leaders, Machiavelli argues, should be to act virtuously so far as possible, but to stand ready 'to be not good' when this course of action is dictated by necessity. Exploring the pivotal concept of princely virtu to be found in classical and Renaissance humanist texts, Skinner brings new light to Machiavelli's philosophy of a willingness to do whatever may be necessary - whether moral or otherwise - to maintain a position of power. ABOUT THE SERIES: The Very Short

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John Locke (1632-1704) one of the greatest English philosophers of the late seventeenth and early eighteenth century, argued in his masterpiece, *An Essay Concerning Human Understanding*, that our knowledge is founded

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in experience and reaches us principally through our senses; but its message has been curiously misunderstood. In this book John Dunn shows how Locke arrived at his theory of knowledge, and how his exposition of the liberal values of toleration and responsible government formed the backbone of enlightened European thought of the eighteenth century.

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