

A Political Philosophy of Language and State

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By

Xing Yu

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To Canada

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PROLOGUE

This monograph is a study of political philosophy about the correlation between language and state. It is an attempt to study the fundamental role played by language first and then to study how language creates a condition for the genesis and growth of the state, using the method of political philosophy. On the one hand, language is defined as a system composed of signs created by humans for communication and it is considered a basic element of the evolution from the primitive society to the civilized one and a basis for the growth of the state. On the other hand, the state is defined as a community which comprises a group of people, a territory and a government and it is considered the result of the evolution of human society due to the role played by language. This is because using language, spoken or written, is only significant of creating a basic condition for setting up a long-term evolution from the tribe to the state. The study of language used by that state serves as a basis for the study of the state. Thus this study is also a study of political philosophy about the ontological relationship between language and the state. It argues that language gives origin to the state. My reasoning is that, since the dissolution of tribes or communal families in favor of the state, humans have become isolated individuals outside their core families characteristic of monogamy. Under these circumstances, what enables each to be socially connected with all others is language. Thus, language is to the state what kinship is to the tribe. In the beginning, humans are tribal people. They perform communication by way of behavioral display. For example, they smile or bow or wave their hands, all forms of communication. They may even dance, another form of communication. I consider such behavior to be non-verbal behavior, and such behavior is the original medium. By “medium,” I mean any being or form that creates a condition for communication. As behavior is the medium in communication over short distances, such a limited method of communication only enables humans to form a small community. Kinship is the essential linkage in such an environment. The birth of language is a revolution. Language enables humans to create various media. Media further play a part in extending the distance of mutual communication. Thus, spoken, or written, communication extends the distance of communication. In terms of spoken communication, people function as media in the process of communication

because such a process of communication is often in the form of human-chain linguistic communication. In terms of written communication, people use materials. They used to use clay tablet, papyrus, and parchment. Today they still use stone, metal object and paper. They are media. The use of media extends the time span and the reach of communication. Humans communicate over a long stretch of time and on a large scale. The exploitation of media in communication results in a long-term increase in the size of their community, leading inevitably to the formation of the state and the dissolution of the tribe. Thus, interpreting the role of language in the formation and growth of the state may allow us to give a true systematic description of the formation and growth of the state.

Interpreting the origin of the society, the philosophers of the past mention the role of language in the formation of the society in their writings. They hold that language enables people to exchange feelings, to impart thoughts or ideas, and even to chronicle history. They insist that humans form their society because of language. For example, Aristotle points out that language is the peculiarity of humans. He writes that “a human being is more of a political animal than is any bee or than are any of those animals that live in herds.” He indicates that humans can exchange feelings and present their views about justice and injustice due to the use of language.¹ Thomas Hobbes also mentions language that plays a role in the formation of the society. He also mentions the role of language in the formation of the state called the “commonwealth.” He writes that:

[T]he most notable and profitable invention of all other, was that of Speech, consisting of *Names* or *Appellations*, and their Connexion; whereby men register their Thoughts; recall them when they are past; and also declare them one to another for mutuall utility and conversation; without which,

¹ Aristotle writes that “It is clear, then, that a human being is more of a political animal than is any bee or than are any of those animals that live in herds. For nature, as we say, makes nothing in vain, and humans are the only animals who possess reasoned speech. Voice, of course, serves to indicate what is painful and pleasant; that is why it is also found in the other animals, because their nature has reached the point where they can perceive what is painful and pleasant and express these to each other. But speech serves to make plain what is advantageous and harmful and so also what is just and unjust. For it is a peculiarity of humans, in contrast to the other animals, to have perception of good and bad, just and unjust, and the like; and community in these things makes a household and a city.” Please see: Aristotle, *The Politics of Aristotle*. Trans. Peter L. Phillips Simpson (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1997), 11.

there had been amongst men, neither Common-wealth, nor Society, nor Contract, nor Peace, no more than amongst Lyons, Bears, and Wolves.²

Yet they may only believe that humans associate together due to their shared use of language. Their view about the formation of human society may not be correct. I mean that humans may also associate together to form a society like some social animals even if they have neither written nor spoken language. Their views cannot give clarity to the origin of the state. Aristotle's view may merely show that language serves as a foundation for humans to form their society, not their state. Hobbes' view needs further explanation. At least, the formation of society differs from the formation of the state. To me, studying the role of language needs studying the role of media since using language in communication necessitates the creation of an array of media and the use of media. The creation or the use of media extends the distance of linguistic communication. Thus language, together with media, extends the time span and the reach of communication. Then humans build a permanent and large community. This leads to the formation of the state and the dissolution of the tribes. A quantitative change leads to a qualitative change. In the past kinship was the basic element of the unity of the tribe which was a small community. Today language is one basic element of the unity of the state which is a large community if we interpret language in the sense of something that language gives origin to all kinds of media except the original medium—namely, behavior—and media further underlie the genesis and growth of the state.

We can reinterpret the theories of the origin of the state, advanced by the philosophers of the past. The interpretations, given by them, may be neither complete nor accurate. If we interpret the origin and growth of the state from a new perspective, we may see the state in a more systematic and accurate way.

The key is that in their interpretations of language the philosophers of the past failed to behold the role of media in support of the application of language. If they devoted their attention to the role of media in linguistic communication and found that it was the extension of the distance of linguistic communication that led to the formation of the state, they would probably be aware or clearly aware of the role of language in support of the growth of the state indeed. This is because language has irreversibly changed the condition of human communication since humans began to speak. Media rely on language. Media attach themselves to language.

² Thomas Hobbes, *Leviathan*. Ed. C. B. Macpherson (New York: Penguin Books, 1985), 100.

Language may be viewed differently if the role of media is also studied. Language not only facilitates humans to communicate with each other, but also necessitates the creation of media that extend the distance of linguistic communication. Then humans associate together on a large scale. This culminates in the dissolution of the original community formed by people on the basis of kinship and the birth of the new community formed by people on the basis of linguistic communication. Thus, if we study the role of language in the creation and the use of media, we may be able to invent a new theory about the genesis and growth of the state and this theory may give an interpretation better than the views offered by the philosophers of the past. We can compare this newly-proposed view with the related views offered by the philosophers of the past to give a systematic interpretation. This interpretation should be more reasonable and more accurate.

First, the study of the genesis and growth of the state, at the angle of the role of language mentioned by me, is more systematic than the view of the formation of the state adduced by Aristotle. This view may enable us to see the formation of the state more completely. Specifically, in his book *Politics* Aristotle says that the state grows naturally. Describing the city that serves as a basis for the formation of the state in ancient Greece, Aristotle states that people build the community of husband and wife for generation and build the community of master and slave for survival. "Villages spring from households."³ He continues that "[w]hen the community made up of several villages is complete, it is then a city, possessing the limit of every self-sufficiency."⁴ Aristotle implies that the city is the cluster of many villages and each village is a cluster of many households. Smaller communities merge to become a larger community. Thus the city grows by nature. Though we can see the city as growing by nature, we can interpret this phenomenon, described by Aristotle, to reveal the role of language mentioned by me to examine his theory in depth. Why does the community grow in size gradually? Why are people willing to form a larger community regardless of the original smaller communities built on the basis of kinship? Will people always form a larger community along with an increase in population? An interpretation of such a situation accentuates that humans create media in their mutual communication. Then media enable them to extend the distance of communication. Extending the distance of communication further enables them to communicate over a long span of time and on a large scale. People, from different tribes, are

³ Aristotle, *The Politics of Aristotle*, 9. He believes that a household should include a house, a wife and an ox if the household is poor because an ox can replace a slave. See: Aristotle, *The Politics of Aristotle*, 10.

⁴ Ibid., 11.

enabled to communicate with each other. Then they have their common memory of the community; they exchange goods and services; and they share traditional ideas. They may even embrace the same religious belief. They associate together due to the formation of common interest among them. They form a new community, leaving the original tribes dissolved. A piece of evidence is that the household is composed of a master and a slave or some slaves as discussed by Aristotle. He implies that the slave is a tool. He directly mentions that "the slave is a living possession."⁵ The linkage between a master and a slave should not be kinship. Though this slave is the property of a family, the formation of such a family reveals the dissolution of the tribe because the use of slaves only appears in the stage of the formation of civilized society. In the civilized society in which monogamous families take shape and tribes gradually dissolve, humans must have built a state. As I assume that language plays a role in the growth of civilized society, the growth of the society in size should be a condition for the formation of the state. Citizens (and their dependents) and slaves form this state in this context. This is the reason for the emergence of villages, towns and cities and then states described by Aristotle. This is why animals are unable to form a permanent and large community. For example, a group of lions or wolves may form a community, but this community may be dissolved at any time and is always small. As humans are able to use language, communicating over a long span of time and on a large scale, thousands of people, or even millions of people, may form a permanent and large community such as a state.

We may further prove the role of language in the formation of the state this way. We may further indicate that linguistic communication leads to the expansion of the community and the expansion of the community erodes and loosens the organization of the tribe. Then humans, originally from different tribes and later from different families, begin to cooperate and unite, and then they form their community in which kinship is no longer an important element of the formation of the community. Kinship attenuates. The attenuation of kinship results in the gradual dissolution of the tribe. Humans form the families characteristic of monogamy because there is no longer the original tribe that conditions group marriage. Polyandry and polygyny have also been largely extinct. The reason is that outside the tribe people are usually only able to form the families of monogamy as now people no longer unite on the basis of kinship. The original community, formed because of kinship, ends and a new community grows on the basis of linguistic communication. Households

⁵ Ibid., 14.

of monogamy become the basic economic units. The city finally emerges along with the formation of households of monogamy as well as with the formation of villages and towns. Aristotle insists that a man cannot survive if he is not part of the city.⁶ He alludes to the fact that families take shape within the city. Obviously, he believes that the city, instead of tribe, is the chief community of Greeks in which Greeks build their families. This indicates that language is a medium in support of human communication. It extends the time and reach of communication. Then people dissolve their tribes and form their state.

I believe that while Aristotle gave his interpretation of the formation of the state, he only interpreted the formation of the city-state. Though his view is not totally groundless, his explanation seems over-simplified. How can we interpret the formation of ancient empires? How can we interpret the formation of kingdoms in medieval times? Were those states formed in a natural way? While Aristotle presents his view, he emphasizes that people depend on each other in production and living. He means, I argue, that as families depend on each other in production and living, they congregate. Then families congregate to form a village and villages congregate to form a city. People, however, may not always form their states this way. In view of the emergence of some empires in history, we see that sometimes a group of people conquered a region and then a state took form. In other words, humans built various types of states in history. They not only built city-states, but also established some other types of states such as feudal kingdoms and empires. How can we interpret the formation of a kingdom or an empire in history? How can we interpret the formation of a territorial state? How do we interpret the formation of a state formed by immigrants in modern times? If we find an approach to interpret the origin of a kingdom or an empire or a state of immigrants, how do we interpret the formation of city-states in ancient Greece? Since written language is a prerequisite for the formation of a civilized society, language should play a role in the formation of the state. We need to study in depth how humans associate together and then build their society and

⁶ Aristotle writes that "[T]he city is by nature prior to the household and to each one of us taken singly. For the whole is necessarily prior to the part. For instance, there will be neither foot nor hand when the whole body has been destroyed (except equivocally, as when one speaks of a foot or hand made of stone), for such a foot or hand will have been ruined. Everything is defined by its work and by its power, so that a foot and hand in such a condition should no longer be said to be the same thing (except equivocally). It is clear, then, that the city exists by nature and that it has priority over the individual. For if no individual is self-sufficient when isolated, he will be like all other parts in relation to their whole." See: *Ibid.*, 11–12.

the state. Describing the course of the growth of the state only may not adequately clarify how a state takes form. The formation of a state may not be so simple. But pinpointing the role of language should be a better approach for us to have an insight into the formation of the state throughout history because Aristotle's view may not enable us to clearly see the formation of all kinds of states.

In presenting a view about the origin of the state from the perspective of language, I prefer not to view the formation and the growth of the state from the angle of the natural formation of the state only. Needless to say, along with an increase in population, people form a large community. Scholars may argue, for example, that a tribe may evolve to be an ethnic group of people and an ethnic group of people may evolve to be a nation along with an increase in population. Then humans form nation-states. However, not all states may come into existence this way, as noted earlier. How can we interpret the formation of some states on the basis of national fusion following the migration of a group of people from one region to another in history? How can we interpret the formation of some states that absorbed different ethnic groups of people in history? How can we interpret the origin of some states which were empires in the past? I do not deny that some states take form naturally in history, but I also insist that some other states may take form in a different way. In this aspect scholars may overlook the role of language in the growth of the state. If we argue that a batch of families form a village and a batch of villages form a town and a batch of towns form a city and a city becomes a state, we will ask how people build kingdoms, empires and some other nation-states formed by different ethnic groups of people. Is there an approach for us to interpret the formation of various types of states that emerged in history? I pinpoint the role of language in the formation and growth of the state. In other words, in some cases a state takes form naturally, but language also plays a role in the formation of the state. In some other cases, a state takes form for a special reason. In these cases, language definitely plays a role in the formation of the state. The reason is that language serves as a basis for the creation of a wide range of media and media extend the reach of linguistic communication across and between communities. People form a large community. If scholars argue that a state takes form naturally, I argue that it is because language plays a role.

I mean that while humans use language in communication, they have to create and use a variety of media. These media constitute the social fabric. Then we see that while humans communicate using language, they interact with language and language interacts with media and media just mean the formation of the society and the state. Then humans interact with the

society and the state. Sometimes it seems that a state takes form by nature, but it is actually the extension of the distance of linguistic communication that results in the formation of the state. In some other cases, a state does not take form by nature, but language invariably plays a part in the formation of that state. For example, a number of villages may form a town and a number of towns may form a city. How do these villages form a town and how do these towns form a city? People have to communicate with one another. People have to use language. Then all villages and all towns can communicate with each other. But we can view this case conversely. If humans did not use language, they would not build a large community because they were unable to create and use media. Then they would not form a state. So my view is that the formation of the state in a seemingly natural way involves the role played by language. Scholars cannot satisfactorily interpret the origin of the state without pinpointing the role of language.

Second, the theory of social contract may enlighten us to think of the role of language, but this theory overlooks the fact that people make a contract because they use language. The theory of social contract is the theory that stresses the obligations undertaken by ordinary people and the sovereign, or the government, as well as the rights had by ordinary people and the sovereign or the state in the formation of the state. The theory of social contract of the state is identical with the interpretation of the genesis of the state from the perspective of language in the respect that a government will take shape when human society grows in size. A contract means the formation of common interest between parties. Language itself denotes the possibility of forming common interest because without common interest people will not communicate, or keep on communicating, with each other by using language. But the shortcoming of the theory of social contract is that the use of language is antecedent to the making of a social contract and hence the interpretation, from the angle of contract, may not be a final theoretical solution though the theory of social contract may support the description of the role of language in the formation of the state in a certain way. In view of the role played by language, the power holder acts as a medium in the formation of the government and the government acts as a medium in the formation of the state because the power holder precipitates the formation of the government and the government precipitates the formation of the state. The key is that the philosophers of early modern times interpreted through their imagination the origin of the state by relying on the theory of natural law created by some Greek and Roman philosophers of ancient times. For instance, the philosophers of Stoicism discussed the law of nature. Thus, they argue that

humans are in the state of nature in the beginning. Each of them is responsible for his safety and security as well as well-being. All are subject to the law of nature. Then Hobbes, a philosopher emerging in late medieval times or in early modern times, insists in his book *Leviathan* that as humans are often in a state of war of every man against every man, they cede part of their freedoms and rights to the sovereign in exchange for the protection of themselves by the sovereign. He believes that people are unable to establish order and organize the state unless they cede some of their rights to the sovereign and let the sovereign establish order and organize the state.⁷

John Locke believes that people cooperate with each other in the outset. But he also believes that the government takes form because people make a social contract. In the book *Second Treatise of Government*, Locke argues that the individual places some of his rights present in the state of nature in trusteeship with the sovereign (government) in return for the protection of certain natural individual rights.⁸ Locke mentions that an original compact is entered into to make one body politic under one government.⁹

Hobbes and Locke are followed by Jean-Jacques Rousseau in the building of a theoretical edifice of social contract as Rousseau opines that “the social order is a sacred right which is the basis of all other rights. Nevertheless, this right does not come from nature and must therefore be

⁷ Hobbes writes that the only way to erect a common power, as may be able to defend them from the invasion of foreigners and the injuries of one another, and thereby to secure them in such a way, as that by their own industry and by the fruits of the earth, they may nourish themselves and live contentedly, is to confer all their power and strength upon one man, or upon one assembly of men, that may reduce all their wills, by plurality of voices, unto one will. See: Hobbes, *Leviathan*, 227.

⁸ Locke writes that “Men being, as has been said, by nature, all free, equal, and independent, no one can be put out of this estate, and subjected to the political power of another, without his own consent. The only way whereby any one divests himself of his natural liberty, and puts on the *bonds of civil society*, is by agreeing with other men to join and unite into a community for their comfortable, safe, and peaceable living one amongst another, in a secure enjoyment of their properties, and a greater security against any, that are not of it. This any number of men may do, because it injures not the freedom of the rest; they are left as they were in the liberty of the state of nature. When any number of men have so *consented to make one community or government*, they are thereby presently incorporated, and make one body politic, wherein the *majority* have a right to act and conclude the rest.” See: John Locke, *Second Treatise of Government*. Ed. C.B. Macpherson (Indianapolis, Indiana: Hackett Publishing Company, Inc., 1980), 52.

⁹ Ibid.

founded on conventions.”¹⁰ He offers his theory of social contract on the grounds that “Since no man has a natural authority over his fellow, and force creates no right, we must conclude that conventions form the basis of all legitimate authority among men.”¹¹ The result is that, according to Rousseau,

[E]ach man, in giving himself to all, gives himself to nobody; and as there is no associate over whom he does not acquire the same right as he yields others over himself, he gains an equivalent for everything he loses, and an increase of force for the preservation of what he has.¹²

Undoubtedly, the past philosophers only engaged in hypothetical reasoning. The state of nature was described to offer their views about what the state ought to be. Their arguments may be even assumptive. Rousseau makes the following comment:

Every one of them, in short, constantly dwelling on wants, avidity, oppression, desires and pride, has transferred to the state of nature ideas which were acquired in society; so that, in speaking of the savage, they described the social man. It has not even entered into the heads of most of our writers to doubt whether the state of nature ever existed; but it is clear from the Holy scriptures that the first man, having received his understanding and commandments immediately from God, was not himself in such a state; and that, if we give such credit to the writings of Moses as every Christian philosopher ought to give, we must deny that, even before the deluge, men were ever in the pure state of nature; unless, indeed, they fell back into it from some very extraordinary circumstances; a paradox which it would be very embarrassing to defend, and quite impossible to prove.¹³

He stresses that the inquiry must not be regarded as historical truths, but only as mere conditional and hypothetical reasoning.¹⁴

Why did the past philosophers engage in hypothetical reasoning this way? I venture to argue that they created their theories through such reasoning because they imagined a way of forming the state and hence inevitably overlooked the role of language. If language is assumed to

¹⁰ Jean-Jacques Rousseau, *The Social Contract*. Trans. G.D. H. Cole (Chicago: Encyclopaedia Britannica, Inc., 1952), 387.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, 389.

¹² *Ibid.*, 391.

¹³ Jean-Jacques Rousseau, *A Dissertation on the Origin and Foundation of the Inequality of Mankind*. Trans. G.D. H. Cole (Chicago: Encyclopaedia Britannica, Inc., 1952), 333.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 334.

underlie the genesis and growth of the state, we may find out the secret of the genesis and growth of the state. Though the study of the role of language in the genesis and growth of the state is not historical either, it may create a more solid foundation in our study of the genesis and growth of the state. The grounds, offered by me, are simple. Humans were tribal people in the past. They were organized in the tribe. They were not in the state of nature described by the philosophers of the past. We not only need to interpret how the state takes form but also need to explain how the tribe dissolves. The philosophers of social contract cannot explain this phenomenon.

If we argue that the state is formed by those who are originally stateless, we can believe that language plays a role in the formation of the civilized society and the state. Humans, performing linguistic communication with one another, will form a society. As this society grows in size, a government may take form in this society. The government may serve the people and the people may be willing to submit to the governance of the government. The theory of social contract can be revised to advance the argument that humans first use language and then make a social contract. But language, not social contract, plays a role in the formation of the state. My interpretation is that due to the extension of the distance of linguistic communication, humans interact with one another on a large scale. They form a large community. This community is a state. If people made a contract in a very small community, they might not form a state. Only if the community grows in size will people need to make a social contract defined by the philosophers of social contract. So the state takes form in extending the distance of linguistic communication. If people make a social contract, making such a social contract merely precipitates the formation of the state. So the interpretation of a role played by language is more convincing than the interpretation of a social contract.

Of course, the theory of social contract can be utilized to advance the argument about the formation of the state in the evolution of society since those philosophers mentioned the social conditions of humans prior to the formation of the state from time to time. The formation of the state just happens in the course of the dissolution of the tribes. For example, Hobbes writes that:

The Children of Israel, were a Common-wealth in the Wildernesse; but wanted the commodities of the Earth, till they were masters of the Land of Promise; which afterward was divided amongst them, not by their own discretion, but by the discretion of *Eleazar* the Priest, and *Joshua* their Generall: who when there were twelve Tribes, making them thirteen by subdivision of the Tribe of Joseph; made nevertheless but twelve portions

of the Land; and ordained for the Tribe of Levi no land; but assigned them the Tenth part of the whole fruits; which division was therefore Arbitrary.¹⁵

His description clearly shows that prior to the growth of the civilized society in which there is a state, humans remained tribal people. When people were the members of the tribe, they were actually organized. They were not isolated individual people without the assistance given by all others whenever they needed assistance. Each of them was not isolated because each was connected with all others by kinship. Thorstein Veblen once noted that in the primitive economic situation—in savagery and lower barbarism—there is no solitary hunter living either in a cave or otherwise, and there is no man who “makes by his own labor all the goods he uses.”¹⁶ Particularly, the situation might not be that each was totally responsible for his own security. Each and the other might cooperate with each other. They might not be in the state of war though a tribe might be often in the state of war against another one. In other words, tribes, as communities, might often be in the state of war between one another, but each individual within the tribe might not be in the state of war because kinship meant love and mutual assistance between one another. The relationship between one tribe and another may be characterized by war while the relationship between one person and another within the tribe may be characterized by peace. The tribe was governed by the tribal chief and was not in the state of disorder. There was the order within the tribe. Customs, as unwritten laws in some cases, might be obeyed by the members of the tribe. The reason that humans depart from tribes to form a state is that they use language. In the meantime, language enables people to communicate on a large scale. People are thus enabled to dissolve tribes and hence to form a larger community along with an increase in population. For instance, in ancient times, Hebrews built their state on the basis of the union of different tribes.

That is, as humans use language, language underlies the formation of their own common interest. If they bear obligations required by all others in order to gain rights given by all others because they now form a community on the basis of linguistic communication, there can be a tacit contract. If they admit that they actually gain certain rights given by all others because they bear obligations expected by all others, there is a de facto contract. But without language, people will not make any contract. In

¹⁵ Hobbes, *Leviathan*, 296–297.

¹⁶ Thorstein Veblen, *The Place of Science in Modern Civilisation And Other Essays* (New York: B.W. Huebsch, 1919), 184.

a word, when people perform linguistic communication with each other, they may give undertakings to each other this way or that way. They may form their state and dissolve their tribes. But language plays a role both in the process of building the state and in the process of dissolving the tribe. Thus history tells us that in ancient Greece tribes existed long after or at least upon the formation of the city-states. Narrating the life of Theseus (legendary), a Grecian noble man, Plutarch writes that after the death of his father Aegeus, forming in his mind a great and wonderful design, he gathered all the inhabitants of Attica into one town and made them one people of one city, whereas in the past they lived dispersed and were not easy to assemble upon any affair for the common interest. The related background is that differences and even wars often occurred between them. Then he, by his persuasions, appeased those differences and wars, going from township to township, and from tribe to tribe.¹⁷ Likewise, in Rome there were also tribes though we believe that the state, such as the Roman Republic, took form at that time. Narrating the life of Romulus (8th century B.C.), a Roman noble man, Plutarch also notes that the city doubled in number and one hundred of the Sabines were elected senators and the legions were increased to six thousand foot and six hundred horse. Then they divided the people into three tribes: the first, from Romulus, named Ramnenses; the second from Tatius, Tatienses; the third Luceres, from the *lucus* or grove where the Asylum stood to which many fled for sanctuary. And they were just three and the very name of *tribe* and *tribune* seemed to show this fact. That is, each tribe contained ten *curiae* or brotherhood.¹⁸

Then I argue that philosophers, advocating the theory of social contract, created their theories through imagination. Their explanation is characteristic of being hypothetical in reasoning or even assumptive. Of course, they imply, or mean, that the power of the state is given by the people. The state, according to their view, is formed because the people make a contract among themselves and make a contract with the power holder of the state. This means that, in the formation of a state, there is already a contract made by all; there is a contract made by the ruled and the ruler and the sovereign rules the state according to the related contract. Such an interpretation is not repugnant to the interpretation of the role of language in the genesis of the state. But the theory of social contract can only be used to interpret the formation of a governing body under certain circumstances. It does not suffice to interpret the whole process of the

¹⁷ Plutarch, *The Lives of the Noble Grecians and Romans*. The Dryden Translation (Chicago: Encyclopaedia Britannica, Inc., 1952), 9.

¹⁸ Ibid., 24–25.

formation of the state through history because humans build a state in a large community. Only by interpreting the role of language can one interpret the origin and growth of the state completely, accurately and correctly.

Third, this view may also help us review the theories of some other philosophers, or thinkers, who do not concur with the philosophers advocating the theory of social contract. Among these philosophers or thinkers, some philosophers, or thinkers, uphold the view that people build the state through the use of force or conquest. They accentuate the role played by the military leader of a social group in the formation of the state. They do not believe that any social contract is made in the building of the state. They believe that the formation of the state is not the volition of ordinary people, but the will of a strong man. They seem to believe that the formation of the government can be equated with the formation of the state. The formation of the state is the matter of those who hold power. In their view, in the formation of the state, people, residing passively within it, cannot leave this state freely. Thus the state is imposed on those ordinary people. For example, David Hume writes that:

Almost all the governments, which exist at present, or of which there remains any record in story, have been founded originally, either on usurpation or conquest, or both, without any pretence of a fair consent, or voluntary subjection of the people. When an artful and bold man is placed at the head of an army or faction, it is often easy for him, by employing, sometimes violence, sometimes false pretences, to establish his dominion over a people a hundred times more numerous than his partizans.¹⁹

He asserts that the theory of social contract disagrees with the facts, saying that everywhere rulers assert their independent right of sovereignty from conquest or succession.²⁰

Franz Oppenheimer, a German sociologist, largely agrees to Hume's conclusion though his relevant analysis differs from Hume's in detail. He insists that:

The State, completely in its genesis, essentially and almost completely during the first stages of its existence, is a social institution, forced by a victorious group of men on a defeated group, with the sole purpose of

¹⁹ Please see: Jerry Z. Muller, ed., *Conservatism: An Anthology of Social and Political Thought from David Hume to the Present* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1997), 55.

²⁰ See: *Ibid.*, 54.

regulating the dominion of the victorious group over the vanquished, and securing itself against revolt from within and attacks from abroad.²¹

Although the theory of conquest sheds light on the origin of the state in a certain aspect, an analysis of the role of language, given from the perspective of linguistic communication, may expose one of the major omissions of this view. This omission is that the formation of a government cannot be equated with the formation of the state though the formation of the government is essential for the formation of the state. The formation of the government is one necessary condition for the formation of the state, but cannot represent all the necessary conditions for the formation of the state. The role of language should be stressed for the presentation of an overall view of the formation of the state. My analysis starts here: In the formation of the state, people, forming the state, should be able to communicate with each other, using language, so that a great many people, in a large community, can communicate with each other in order to maintain the unity of the state. If, in the outset, the victorious group, using one language, conquers another defeated group using another language, the two languages may amalgamate into one later. Describing the combination of the victorious group of people and the defeated group, Oppenheimer mentions that:

We saw in the second stage . . . how the net of psychical relations becomes ever tighter and closer enmeshed, as the economic amalgamation advances. The two dialects become one language; or one of the two, often of an entirely different stock from the other, becomes extinct. This, in some cases, is the language of the victors, but more frequently that of the vanquished.²²

People, who communicate with each other by using language, also build the common memory of the community, embrace the common religious belief, adhere to the same custom and mores, put into practice common cultural ideas, and know that they belong to the same group. If we argue that conquest is against the will of the conquered people and the conquerors solely intend to exploit the conquered people in the outset, the conquerors may gradually recognize the value of the conquered people. People may understand each other gradually. They may be aware of the formation of the common interest between the two sides. For example, the state may be formed due to the fact that the nomads conquer the peasants.

²¹ Franz Oppenheimer, *The State* (Montréal, Canada: Black Rose Books, 2007), 8.

²² *Ibid.*, 48–49.

The nomads become the conquerors while the peasants become the conquered people. Yet, they may rely on each other later because the nomads, as the conquerors, need tributes given by the peasants as the conquered people while the conquered people, the peasants, need the protection of the conquerors, the nomads. Nevertheless, as the birth of language antedates conquest, language can be the key to the philosophical interpretation of the totality of the state.

That is, Hume's and Oppenheimer's views may be considered single-faceted if we view the role played by language in the growth of the state. My reasoning is that this theory of conquest or, in some sense, subjugation cannot deny that language appears long before the appearance of the state. When humans were still tribal people, they commenced to use language in their mutual communication. Language should be a factor in the extension of the distance of linguistic communication and the expansion of the human community and hence a factor in the final formation of the state. Thus initial conquest may be a step precipitating the formation of the state. In the formation of the state, people, forming the state, should have already had their mores, religion, art, literature, history, philosophy and law, etc. Even if we accept the view of conquest and believe that the mores, religion, art, literature, history, philosophy and law, had by the victors, differ from those had by the vanquished, those cultural or social constructs may amalgamate. For example, as Oppenheimer writes, "Both cults amalgamate into one religion, in which the tribal god of the conquerors is adored as the principal divinity, while the old gods of the vanquished become either his servants, or, as demons or devils, his adversaries."²³ Thus those cultural or social forms are also the factors conditioning the genesis of the state. The initial effort, made by the conqueror, is merely an element functioning in the formation of the state. In other words, in early times, people, forming small communities in different areas, may not be strongly motivated to form a large community. They may be temporarily under the governance of the society though such a society may not be stable or perpetual. It is the conqueror that conquers the conquered people, and then the conqueror builds the large community called the state and becomes the ruler of the state. People may be forced by the conqueror to form a state in a period of time only.

This comment is identical with the related historical narratives in which the state is ruled by a despot in the outset. Though in ancient Greek cities people established democracy, the establishment of a despotic system should antedate that of a democracy. Yet we can also believe that in late medieval times or early modern times what was witnessed by

²³ Ibid., 49.

people was largely the replacement of despotic states by democratic states in Europe. In North America democracy was built when new nation-states were born. In other regions outside Europe and North America peoples did not start building democracy until modern times. Yet building democracy in various societies should be a trend in modern times. Then studying the long-term growth of the state may enable us to see that the conqueror of the state, objectively, functions as a medium that historically precipitates the formation of the state. To put it differently, linguistic communication results in the formation of the common interest of all from different tribes and hence results in the dissolution of the tribes and the formation of the state. But an individual person, acting as a conqueror, may hasten the formation of the state. Discussing representative government, John Stuart Mill writes that:

[K]ingly government, free from the control (though perhaps strengthened by the support) of representative institutions, is the most suitable form of polity for the earliest stages of any community, not excepting a city-community like those of ancient Greece: where, accordingly, the government of kings, under some real but no ostensible or constitutional control by public opinion, did historically precede by an unknown and probably great duration all free institutions, and gave place at last, during a considerable lapse of time, to oligarchies of a few families.²⁴

He believes that in the beginning, the government was quite despotic.²⁵ Yet, we can assert that a kingly government functions in ancient times on behalf of the representative government established in modern times because we can hold that the pre-modern state is inherited by the modern state. This is because in history people cannot build the state at one fell swoop. The conqueror becomes a medium. Despotism creates a condition for the later growth of the state that adopts democracy. Despotism stems from conquest. Conquest is aimed at interest. Interest is available in a large community. If people do not use language in mutual communication and hence fail to form a large community, there should not be an abundance of

²⁴ John Stuart Mill, *Representative Government* (Chicago: Encyclopaedia Britannica, Inc., 1952), 353.

²⁵ Mill writes that "To enable it to do this, the constitution of the government must be nearly, or quite, despotic. A constitution in any degree popular, dependent on the voluntary surrender by the different members of the community of their individual freedom of action, would fail to enforce the first lesson which the pupils, in this stage of their progress, require. Accordingly, the civilisation of such tribes, when not the result of juxtaposition with others already civilised, is almost always the work of an absolute ruler, deriving his power either from religion or military prowess; very often from foreign arms." Please see: *Ibid.*, 339.

the wealth owned by the community. Thus the potential conqueror may not conquer them. This is because the conqueror usually conquers the people of a region in an attempt to seize a great deal of wealth including land. Nevertheless, though conquest is aimed at interest, after the conquest, the conqueror also needs ruling legitimacy in order to rule the state for a long time and the conqueror does not gain certain ruling legitimacy until he becomes the ruler. The initial conquest may be only part of a long process of the formation of the state in which language plays an essential role. I present one piece of evidence in support of my argument. That is, feudal states evolve to be nation-states, and nation-states establish democracy. Thus, I argue that the initial conquest may serve as a medium in the process of the formation, or the growth, of the state. For example, France that used to be a kingdom in the Middle Ages grew to be a nation-state in early modern times. In the transition from a kingdom to a nation-state, the kings of France, including Louis XIV, sometimes launched the war of conquest and expanded the territory of, and increased the population of, France. French people later inherited the state growing large historically due to the role played by language after France had become a republic. Thus, any ruler of the Middle Ages in the history of France is only a medium in the formation of the state. He is a historic medium. This is because, at that time, it proved impossible for ordinary people to form a large state. The commitment of the ruler in the expansion of the state created a condition for the formation of the modern state later. But the entire growth of the state proves that the state always grows due to the role played by language and culture derived from that language.

That means that it is language that is fundamentally significant for the formation of the state. Initial conquest is a temporary phenomenon in the formation of the state. The state takes form finally because of the use of language instead of initial conquest. In narrating the history of Germany, Karl Marx and Frederick Engels note an important phenomenon. In writing that barbarians from Germany took the Roman Empire, they do not forget to mention that “the conquerors very soon took over language, culture and manners from the conquered.”²⁶ Obviously, they noticed the role of language in the formation and building of the state. In Chinese history, Mongolians conquered China in the thirteenth century and Manchurians conquered China in the seventeenth century. But the Han Chinese, the main ethnic group, assimilated part of Mongolians and all Manchurians. It is true that the conquerors expanded the territory of China, but all those assimilated ethnic groups of people learned the Chinese

²⁶ Karl Marx and Frederick Engels, *The Germany Ideology*. Ed. C. J. Arthur (New York: International Publishers, 1970), 90.

language, namely, Mandarin. It is language, together with the culture developed on the basis of this language, that determines the final formation of the state.

As such, it is arguable that the view of initial conquest may be a facet of the entire process of state formation, but not all facets of state formation. The view of initial conquest can be revised. In order to describe the origin of the state, we need to have a broad field of vision. We can perhaps prove the role of language in the genesis and growth of the state. We can take into consideration a long process of state formation underlain by language. Thus the view of the role of language, in the genesis and growth of the state, should have a unique value.

Fourth, thinkers, or philosophers, or other scholars, sometimes ascribe the origin of the state to the necessity of self-defense of people in an area. This view is in conformity with the view of social contract in a certain aspect because this view stresses that people unite to build a state in order to ensure the security of the community. In other words, people may cede part of their rights to the state for them to be protected by the state. Thus Hobbes admits that this is one reason for the establishment of the government, as mentioned earlier. This view also confirms indirectly its possible relevance to war. It holds that a war precipitates the formation of the state. It may also be logically in agreement with the view that initial conquest results in the formation of the state if the method of building the state is studied. The related philosophers, however, focus on the necessity of the union of people in order to guard against foreign invasion and take the union of people as the reason for the formation of the state. Some of them emphasize, in particular, that self-defense is the sole origin of the state under certain circumstances. They pinpoint the external threat as a special reason for the formation of the state. They insist that people form their state under external pressure. They argue, in particular, that dispersed families, threatened by the invasion or intrusion of herdsmen or external groups of people, unite to increase their own strength of defense to bar herdsmen or others because herdsmen or others do not regard invasion as forbidden. The union of the local people results in the building of a state. They imply that the common need of all culminates in the union of all and hence the building of the state. The external pressure is the cause. The state is built within a region. In this regard, Immanuel Kant is among a few prominent philosophers particularly holding this view. In the essay entitled *Speculative Beginning of Human History* (1786), he writes that:

When subsistence depends on the earth's cultivation and planting (especially trees), permanent housing is required, and its defense against all intrusions requires a number of men who will support one another.

Consequently, men who adopt this form of life can no longer remain in scattered families, but must instead come together and found villages (improperly called towns) in order to protect their property against wild hunters or hordes of wandering herdsmen. The primary needs of life required by a *different way of living* could not be *exchanged* for one another. Culture and the beginning of art, of entertainment, as well as of industriousness must have sprung from this; but above all, some form of civil constitution and of public justice began, at first, to be sure, only in regard to the grossest brutality, revenge for which was no longer sought by the single individual, as it was in the state of savage, but rather by a lawful power that preserved the whole, i.e., became a form of government, and was controlled by no other power.²⁷

In later times some other scholars further confirm that the consolidation of defense, needed for the security of all, is the origin of the state. Their descriptions are that a war compels the ruler of the state to recruit soldiers, to increase the levies of taxes and to strengthen administration. All measures, taken for the purpose of defense, lead to the building of the state. As defense is built against possible invasion, they regard a war between one state and another as a cause of the formation and growth of the state. For example, some scholars accentuate the role of a war in the building of nation-state in ancient China, in early modern Europe and in the United States of early modern times.²⁸ They believe that the outbreak of a war hastens the pace of state building. Their basic view is that the defense of the community leads to the ruler's exertion of his effort in state building for survival. Is this view plausible? My view is that self-defense only necessitates the union of people and merely reflects a course of state building instead of the origin of the state though the related descriptions and researches can be used to support the philosophical view about the origin of the state advanced on the basis of analyzing the role of language in state formation. If humans did not speak, they would not be able to extend the distance of their mutual communication. They would remain within the tribe. If they needed self-defense at that time, they would make an effort to build the tribe instead of a state because people would not be

²⁷ Immanuel Kant, *Perpetual Peace and Other Essays on Politics, History, and Morals*. Trans. Ted Humphrey (Annapolis: Hackett Publishing Company, 1983), 56.

²⁸ These views are presented by the books including the following books: Victoria Tin-bor Hui, *War and State Formation in Ancient China and Early Modern Europe*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005; Charles Tilly, *Coercion, Capital, and European States, AD 990–1990*. Cambridge, Massachusetts: Basil Blackwell, Inc., 1990; Bruce D. Porter, *War and the Rise of the State*. New York: The Free Press, 2002.

able to form a large community such as a state without language. Yet we can also believe that, as humans speak and write, they are enabled to communicate over a long time and on a large scale. Many people begin to communicate with one another. They unite for self-defense. Then they no longer strengthen the building of the tribe but the building of the state. Therefore, it is arguable that language bolsters the formation of a large community. Civilization germinates because humans extend the distance of linguistic communication. Extending the distance of linguistic communication is the sole basis for the long-time cooperation and the union of a great many people. Strengthening the defense of the community has been merely a process of strengthening the building of the state in the formation and the growth of the state since the birth of language. The only one plausible interpretation of the genesis and growth of the state should be given in view of language. As people, from different areas, unite, their original heterogeneous cultures may amalgamate into one homogeneous culture. They may have the same memory of history as gradually as time goes on. They may gradually uphold the same religious belief. They may often exchange feelings. They may cooperate in production. They may jointly engage in some large public engineering projects. They may jointly engage in some social undertakings. Then some may come forward to form a government. Forming a government is a step toward the formation of the state.

While we offer a view about the origin of the state, such a view should be able to interpret the origin of all types of the state. If we advance a view about the origin of some types of the state only, we have to think about why sometimes humans form their state in some other way around. Is the view about the origin of the state presented from the perspective of defense or war plausible? How do we interpret the formation of the United States, or modern Italy, or modern Germany as a nation? How do we interpret the formation of many states in Africa and Asia after World War Two? Were those states not formed in the state of peace? How should we understand the birth of some states in the state of peace in this world? Accentuating the role played by language in the origin of the state is, I argue, a better interpretation of the formation of the state. This view can interpret the origin of all types of the state successfully. A war may not lead to the formation of the state if people do not use language. A war may lead to the formation of the state in some cases if people have already built a large community. Yet such a war should be deemed as a medium that precipitates the building of the state that originally takes form after humans begin their mutual interaction realized by using language on a large scale. Tribes were also often at war. Prior to the arrival of Europeans