

**A PREFACE TO AN UNPUBLISHED MS
BY MICHAEL OAKESHOTT ON
HOBBES'S *LEVIATHAN***

PATRICK RILEY
University of Wisconsin–Madison

To mark the centenary of the birth of Michael Oakeshott (1901-90), we now publish for the first time a small manuscript on Hobbes's *Leviathan* that Oakeshott wrote in 1963.

In that year, Professor John Watkins (who was to bring out *Hobbes' System of Ideas* in 1965) wrote to Oakeshott with several queries about "The Moral Life in the Writings of Thomas Hobbes," which had recently been published in *Rationalism in Politics and Other Essays* (London, 1962). Oakeshott responded with the present manuscript, which is interesting for its interpretation of Hobbes's notions of death and honor through the Hegelian idea of "struggle for recognition" in the *Phenomenology of Mind*, thereby linking the "idealist" Oakeshott of the twenties and thirties with the postwar Oakeshott who became the most notable interpreter of *Leviathan* in the twentieth century. Since Oakeshott viewed *Leviathan* as "the greatest, perhaps the sole masterpiece of political philosophy in the English language," it is splendid to have a "new" Hobbes essay by him—even a miniature one.

At my last meeting with Oakeshott in May of 1990—he died six months later—he kindly gave me a copy of his letter to Watkins and said that I could make whatever use of it I wanted. I cannot think of a better use than celebrating the centenary of a remarkable man who was at once an original philosopher and a brilliant historian of political and moral thought.

Patrick Riley is Oakeshott Professor of Political and Moral Philosophy at the University of Wisconsin–Madison.