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## ABSTRACT

This thesis tests the hypothesis that Hobbes's conception of desire for power constitutes the first principle of his psychology. I clarify and evaluate Hobbes's argument on desire for power and the psychology from which it develops, with attention to their political dimensions. Hobbes's new science of the passions is shown to culminate in the proposition of "a general inclination of all mankind, a perpetuall and restlesse desire of Power after power, that ceaseth onely in death." Hobbes attempts to reduce the distinctly human passions to forms of desire for power. This apparently extreme idea becomes intelligible, I suggest, as the attempted solution to the radical problem of Hobbes's psychology: given his polemical premise of negating any highest good or perfection, what can be the principle of a psychology that seems to deny any final direction to human desire?

Scholars prioritize various elements of Hobbes's psychology: self-preservation, fear of death, vanity or pride, mechanistic motion-appetite, reason, hedonism. Yet a close analysis of Hobbes's layered, increasingly comprehensive account, most in *Leviathan*, reveals desire for power as underlying, comprising, or completing these many elements. This conceptualization of power is not, as sometimes claimed, a sheen of scientific or political rhetoric added to Hobbes's psychology, but its necessary elaboration. Hobbes conceives desire for power—an interpretation of desire as much as a theory of power—from two inseparable natural sources or aspects of the psyche: the structure of desire itself as perpetual motion and the proud social desire for superior relative power. Hobbes elaborates not only power as universalized means to future desires, but indefinite power



itself as a kind of non-teleological end. Hobbes depicts the infinite striving after power with a blend of affirmative energy and nearly tragic gravity.

Hobbes stretches the concept of power but does not, as may Nietzsche, absolutize it to explain all of human and non-human life. I suggest Hobbes develops the concept of desire for power with some awareness of its limitations. Hobbes may overconcentrate on this concept to elaborate optimally a crucial aspect of especially political reality, the reducibility of motivation to desire for power. The moral grounding of Hobbes's political doctrine of natural right involves a radical critique or reformation of desire for power in its inseparability from pride, on the basis of self-preservation as possible rival principle of desire. Hobbes's desire for power, while not primarily a term of domination, gives a naturalistic explanation for evil through antagonistic sociality.

Finally, I consider Hobbes's attempt to ground his psychological concept of desire for power in his scientific-metaphysical concept of motion-power.

## I. INTRODUCTION

### § 1.1. DESIRE FOR POWER AS A PSYCHOLOGICAL PRINCIPLE

Hobbes's psychology is the origin of a uniquely modern attempt to understand human beings through a concept of power. Hobbes's presentation of his psychology, or new science of the passions, is shown to culminate in the portrait of a master passion which subsumes the others, the desire for power. Our current familiarity with expansive notions of power, as well as with a certain reductionist spirit, may obscure the novelty of this conception. Prior thinkers, ancient and earlier modern, surely considered something like power as a motive, usually in the form of political power—whether calling it power or using other words, such as strength or rule, which describe similar aims—but not power as such a generalized and ultimate explanation of human motivation.<sup>1</sup>

Hobbes makes power the primary psychological term, the principle of desire. Hobbes effectively defines power as a modern philosophical term of self-understanding,

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<sup>1</sup> To sketch an initial and general background: ancient Greek and Roman authors, insofar as they speak of power as an object of desire, refer to specifically political power as merely one possible object—however central and even potentially noble—among others for particular persons or political groups. Thucydides leaves us statements, and narrative evidence, of the decisive tendency of human beings to desire rule over others and of the strong to rule the weak, even putting it as a “necessity of nature,” (*Peloponnesian War*, Bk. 5, 105. 2, Hobbes trans., p. 568), though these statements are speeches given to certain characters, and may be qualified by other speeches or by events or the characters of the particular speaker. Still Thucydides, whom Hobbes translated and learned from, portrays desire for rule or power as a leading motive and lets us consider power as a possible standard of natural necessity, but in the specifically political domain, however primary that domain may be. Augustine's Christian psychology of desire concentrates on love of domination, yet as merely one leading form of the more ultimate experience of pride, which itself is one of three kinds of selfish, worldly desire; if Augustine traces all forms of worldly desire to pride, still pride at most explains sinful desire, not human desire simply. Machiavelli makes the concern with political power or rule central, but only in his psychology of a certain human type, and even then not power but glory seems the ultimate aim. Machiavelli does not reduce other desires to power, nor explicitly develop a universalized, open-ended concept of power. Bacon and Descartes project technological power over nature as an advantageous goal for humanity as a whole. Thus they consider inclination to power over nature as at least a main aspect of the scientific disposition of mind, and perhaps of political strategy in a wide sense, but not power as such as a principle of the individual psyche particularly in relation to other human beings.

including awareness of the political predicament. He modifies and radically extends previous usage by elaborating desire for power as a psychological principle: Hobbes conceives not merely political power as one possible object among others for particular persons or groups, nor only technological power over nature as a favoured strategy for humanity as a whole, but a natural desire for power as the decisive source and essence of human desire. Hobbes gives his most concentrated formulation of the idea in *Leviathan*:

In the first place, I put for a generall inclination of all mankind, a perpetuall and restlesse desire of Power after power, that ceaseth onely in Death.<sup>2</sup>

For all the renown and clear force of this superb proposition, and the impressive scholarly work on its subject, essential problems remain unclear in our understanding of this crucial Hobbesian thought. Interpretation varies substantially on the meaning, foundations, and intention of Hobbes's assertion: What does Hobbes understand by desire for power? What is the philosophic grounding of this proposition? Why does he introduce this concept into his psychology—what is its place within his teaching on human nature and politics? Does Hobbes affirm or condemn the desire for power?

I will attempt to elucidate Hobbesian desire for power in all its implications. This will best be achieved by examining the author's treatment of this concept within his psychology as a whole and in light of his political teaching, with due consideration of the concept's possible scientific foundation as well as its theological or anti-theological significance. To my knowledge, this kind of sustained and comprehensive study of the concept has not been undertaken. I aim to clarify and critically evaluate Hobbes's argument on desire for power and the psychology of which it forms, as I suggest, the crux

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<sup>2</sup> Thomas Hobbes, *Leviathan*, ed. Richard Tuck (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991), Chapter XI, page 70.

and most complete principle. How compelling, finally, is the account? What does Hobbes achieve, theoretically and politically, by comprehending human phenomena through the concept of desire for power, and what does he sacrifice?

## § 1.2. SCHOLARLY INTERPRETATION OF THE CONCEPT OF DESIRE FOR POWER: VIEWS, OBJECTIONS, AND PROBLEMS

Hobbes attempts, at least in one current of his thought, to explain distinctly human passions as modifications of desire for power. He presents the decisive passions as “Desire of Power, of Riches, of Knowledge, and of Honour. All which may be reduced to the first, that is Desire of Power.”<sup>3</sup> The argument appears extreme. It has received a barrage of such criticism not only in modern scholarship, but in philosophical, theological, and political responses to Hobbes from his own time onwards. We may delineate several related strands of possible extremism.

Hobbes has been criticized on a strong basis for homogenizing and constricting human motives within overly narrow bounds. The reduction of passions to desire for power seems to oversimplify human experience.<sup>4</sup> As a concept the desire for power tends toward formal abstraction. Some suggest further that it is not based on empirical observation, but derived from prior Hobbesian postulates, or in some way imposed.<sup>5</sup> Malcolm emphasizes a break with observation:

When Hobbes describes life as a ‘restlesse desire of Power after power,’ he is not making the empirical observation that men are power-hungry, but is merely

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<sup>3</sup> *Leviathan*, VIII, 53.

<sup>4</sup> Pierre Manent, *La Cité de l’homme*, 161-164.

<sup>5</sup> Noel Malcolm, *Aspects of Hobbes*, 32; Harvey Mansfield, *Taming the Prince*, 174-75; Michael Oakeshott, *Hobbes & Civil Association*, 18.

conjoining his view of life as motion with his definition of power as ‘the present means, to obtain some future apparent good.’<sup>6</sup>

Hobbes indeed conjoins his view of life as motion, arguably his most fundamental psychological premise, with this definition of power as present means to future apparent good. Malcolm sharply captures the extensive force of this conjunction, and the crucial importance of Hobbes’s thinking his conception of desire for power from his principles with precision. But, to begin with, it is unclear that this conjoining of principles or definitions constitutes any ultimate break with empirical observation (not that Malcolm necessarily makes this claim). The principle or first cause, in this case motion, may have been discovered or conceived by analysis from empirical observation of effects. But Malcolm here seems to mean empirical in a more basic, pre-scientific sense: Hobbes does not arrive at this understanding of power by seeing human beings around him craving power and living accordingly. But again, how does this “conjoining” contradict the empirical possibility that people do seek power, or more precisely the possibility that Hobbes’s description of desire for power was affected by his observations of such motives in the hearts of people around him, whether by inference from actions or words or expressions, as well as from introspection, which Hobbes himself gives as one of his methods? Hobbes may reply that it is precisely the coherence of his scientific principles with his observations of human beings and the world that gives consistency and plausibility to his conceptions and their phrasings, such as desire for power. Put another way, why is the human outcome of conjoining motion and desire for apparent good not just this, a creature that hungers after power and can be observed to do so? Malcolm justly emphasizes Hobbes’s combination of separate postulates or definitions; and

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<sup>6</sup> *Aspects of Hobbes*, 32.

perhaps he means only to emphasize this basis in Hobbesian postulates and definitions as more decisive to the author's formulation of desire for power than what he learned from observation. But Malcolm may press this point too far if he is suggesting that these principles simply replace empirical observation, or that Hobbes's combination of his own postulates properly considered does not accord with his having empirically discerned the reality of people being moved by hunger for power.

The strength of Hobbes's conception of desire for power comes precisely from a cohesion of scientific principles and empirical observation of the world in the scientific and pre-scientific sense, including introspection. Hobbes's development of the concept of power combines the expanded, reflective range of scientific abstraction which he discovers in the word and the visceral force of its immediate, everyday usage. It remains possible that there be an extremism in Hobbes's abstraction of power as generalized motive. There is, I suggest, a stretching of the concept. But insofar as this extension does not break the binding to the immediate core meaning, or, put another way, insofar as the motive of power can be seen to run through more of our passions and thoughts than usually considered, then the stretching can be an accurate expansion. If one thinks Hobbes presses the explanatory range of power too far, then his conception risks overstretching.

Further in regard to the relation between the observed and the scientific, if the observed are observed effects and the scientific principles are first causes or definitions or axioms, then Hobbes's professed scientific methodology proceeds precisely with the aim of unity by combining the analytic with the synthetic methods. The synthetic method begins from first causes or principles or supposed definitions, then shows how effects

necessarily follow in a chain that leads to the observable effects we can perceive. The analytic method begins from observed effects and searches for causes that could have produced such effects, reaching hypothetical yet, in Hobbes's thought, strongly compelling causes or definitions.<sup>7</sup> However imperfect the demonstrations in physics and its human part, psychology, where we cannot know all the steps of causation except as hypothetical (since we do not make the cause as in geometry, and we cannot see all the stages of nature's causation leading to the observed effect), still the methodological paradigm combining synthesis and analysis applies to psychology, if with less precision than in geometry.

Hobbes, then, strives in his account to maintain coherence between the principle of natural motion as first cause of desire and the observed facts of human desire.<sup>8</sup> As I shall consider, it is not simple for Hobbes to show how universal motion causes human beings to desire power as opposed to something else, but motion remains the first cause of desire and may constrain the possible character of human desire and its objects. One can still claim that Hobbes relies on only observation of causes or only on principles without consideration of the other, and thus risks tension or incoherence between first cause and observed effect. But such a claim that Hobbes violates or fails to fulfil his method requires a compelling argument against Hobbes's understanding of the

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<sup>7</sup> Ideally these methods are reversible, as in geometry, where the same series of demonstration can be reversed to move from axiom/cause to effect/proof or from effect to cause. Talaska gives a compelling argument for the unity of Hobbes's methodology across the philosophic disciplines, with the mathematical providing the paradigm, which physics and psychology cannot perfectly achieve but nonetheless model themselves after within what is possible to demonstrate in these fields (unlike geometry, they demonstrate only hypothetical causes; and, as Talaska suggests, their chains of causation and demonstration are not reversible). See "Analytic and Synthetic Method According to Hobbes."

<sup>8</sup> Indeed one could suggest Hobbes discovers the principle of motion, from which he begins synthetic demonstrations, from a prior analytic procedure, analyzing his perception of continual change or motion around and within himself into a principle of universal motion in nature.

compatibility of the principle and the observed effect in question (not merely the fact he refers to only one of them in a given passage).

One further interpretive problem to be drawn out of Malcolm's formulation above is that the definition of power he quotes from Chapter X—"present means, to obtain some future apparent good"—is one of at least three definitional formulations of power in relation to human desire in *Leviathan*.<sup>9</sup> As we shall see, the definition as present means to future good is itself a formal opening definition which requires elaboration and further explanation to arrive at Hobbes's full conception of power. This fuller definition is by no means at odds with Malcolm's formulation, except that the fuller account, including the integral role of pride within Hobbes's portrait of desire for power, may bring the conception of desire for power closer to the observed psychological drama of human love of power.

Another objection is that, taken absolutely, Hobbes's account of the range of passions and virtues as mere forms of power can become finally empty and meaningless. One of the earliest published critiques of *Leviathan*, John Eachard's *Mr. Hobbs's State of Nature Considered* from 1672, is a sustained mockery of Hobbes's explanation of the range of abilities and virtues in terms of power in Chapter X. In Eachard's satirical dialogue, "Timothy" is the author's mouthpiece and Hobbes is represented by "Philautus" or "self-lover:

Timothy: "you fall into a great rapture of the excellencies of *power*; making every thing in the whole world that is good, worthy and honourable, to be *power*: and nothing is to be valued or respected but upon the account of *power*."

Philautus: And is not *power* a very good thing?

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<sup>9</sup> The two other formulations I suggest as the most significantly definitional in *Leviathan* are the "Power after power" proposition in Chapter XI (which Malcolm also quotes in his same sentence) and the reduction of three main desires to desire for power in Chapter VIII, both of which I quote above on p. 2 and p. 3 respectively.



Timothy. A most excellent thing! I know nothing like it but the *Philosophers stone*: for it does all things, and is all things, either at present, or heretofore, or afterward. ...A prudent man is *honourable*, because he is *powerfull* in advice: and a *person* of good *natural wit, and judgment* is *honourable*, because it signifies *strong parts* and *powers*. In short, Sir, I perceive there is nothing either in actions or speeches, in Arts or Sciences, in wit or judgment, in man, woman or child that is good & valuable, but it is all upon the account of *power*.<sup>10</sup>

In Jon Parkin's apt summation of Eachard's argument, "If everything is power, then nothing is."<sup>11</sup> Hobbes is seen to overuse the concept, nullifying it into a tautology. This critique has persisted to our day. Hobbes could reply that, if power is truly the root psychic cause of the passions, then this is no tautology, but the true explanation, no more a tautology than might be the universal explanation from a principle of, say, the good or of love.

Hobbes's concentration on power is criticised for enclosing his psychology within a moral vision generally reputed to be inordinately dark, cynical, pessimistic.<sup>12</sup> Hobbes's famously tough-minded realism can become, in this sense, an extremism. But an overreaction to the seemingly glaring immorality of Hobbes can impede interpretation. Moral aversion to Hobbes and the dark corners of the human situation he explores, whether based on disagreement or distaste or fear, can lead readers to dismiss his thought without searching for the possible moral dimension within Hobbes's severe account. Or, if it is the case that Hobbes's psychology leaves no such moral dimension and yet is accurate, then through moral aversion one is rendered reluctant to understand. Along these lines, interpretation can go too far in seeking to bring Hobbes closer to accepted or

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<sup>10</sup> Eachard, *Mr. Hobbs's State of Nature Considered*, 22-24.

<sup>11</sup> *Taming the Leviathan*, 293-94. Even if we give credence to the historical report that Eachard is considered a mere pamphleteer, and took aim at Hobbes partly to ingratiate himself with certain groups at Cambridge, still his critique is strong. He may have been turning into witty dialogue the kind of critiques prevailing in Cambridge circles, giving us an impression of academic responses of the time.

<sup>12</sup> For the critical reception of Hobbes and particularly his *Leviathan* in seventeenth-century England, see Parkin, *Taming the Leviathan*; Yves Glaziou focuses on French Enlightenment responses in *Hobbes en France au XVIII Siècle*.

acceptable views and thereby dull or weaken his argument on the harsh aspects of human nature.

Indeed, though Hobbes has been vilified as monstrous and evil since he wrote his books, there is also a surprising tendency among scholars—whether out of moral aversion or simply other modes of understanding him—to soften his psychology, neglecting or explaining away the terrible elements he seems to put at the core of our nature without simply condemning them as evil. Certainly his portrait of desire for power is a primary image of the darker Hobbes. Bernard Gert normalizes Hobbes in this way:

One reason why Hobbes is often regarded as having such a distorted account of human nature is traceable to his use of political rhetoric, e.g., his use of the term ‘power’. When he says, ‘...a perpetual and restless desire of power after power...’ this sounds as if he is claiming that all people are like Saddam Hussein or other power-hungry dictators. However...Hobbes’s disturbing statement about power is only a claim that all people tend to be concerned about their future; it explains pension funds and medical checkups more than it does anti-social power grabs. Indeed, for Hobbes, the former are not only more common than the latter; they are also more rational.<sup>13</sup>

This reading either nearly trivializes Hobbes’s proposition (i.e., people strive for means to what they want in the future), or confuses the desire for power, a forceful and boundless passion, with the transformed prudence of the citizen that Hobbes aims to effect (and even this “bourgeois” may well exhibit irrational power-hunger of a petty kind). Hobbes may use the “term power” precisely to emphasize the indeed “disturbing” nature and political relevance of real human tendencies that motivate not only actual dictators but a range of human beings in their directly political and less political desires. The pension fund example neglects entirely the problem of sociality that is bound up in Hobbes’s presentation of desire for power. It is not merely crude “power grabs” that are

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<sup>13</sup> *Hobbes*, 64.

at issue, but our way of seeing ourselves and others through a lens of power, relative power. I argue that this dimension of desire for power, Hobbes's interpretation of power as the hard core or mirror of pride, allows him to clarify and dramatize the nature of our relations with others: not an asociality as often claimed, but an intensely antagonistic sociality.

Criticisms of Hobbesian extremism, then, however ultimately accurate I think some of them are, if supposed at the outset risk constraining interpretation. The presumed objection, or the impression of Hobbes it generates, may deflect us from investigating Hobbes's radical thought on power to discover its potential reality or, as I suggest, its potential explanation of particularly crucial and urgent aspects of truth within Hobbes's presentation. I consider that Hobbes may thus employ this concept with some awareness of its limitations, including perhaps limitations as a psychological principle.

More generally, I consider the possibility that a certain overconcentration is necessary in the use of language or concepts, of which desire for power is one, to elaborate optimally an aspect of experience, that a particular conceptual or spoken or written explanation must be incomplete and neglect certain aspects of reality to represent others; that a concept or explanation must be balanced with other ones within an author's presentation to constitute a less incomplete explanation. The concept of desire for power may be an extreme attempt within this general problem of explanation insofar as it aims for apparently universal reduction, but I suggest that precisely Hobbes's awareness of these limitations allows appreciation of what his apparent extremism does achieve in terms of explaining the considerable extent of truth in the reducibility or origin of human

phenomena in desire for power—and, as I discuss, the particular importance within the context of Hobbes’s presentation of accentuating these elements of the truth.

### § 1.3. ALTERNATIVE PLAUSIBLE PRINCIPLES OF HOBBS’S PSYCHOLOGY

So far I have characterized the desire for power as a culmination of Hobbes’s psychological account, but this must be stated as my hypothesis and requires demonstration. Hobbes develops the desire for power as one part of his psychology, or account of human nature. Hobbes seems at times to place most weight on two other passions: pride or vanity and fear of violent death. It has been plausibly argued that not desire for power, but the polarity of pride and fear, must be the basis of Hobbes’s moral philosophy.<sup>14</sup> Fear of death is formulated positively by Hobbes in the desire for self-preservation; as such this represents a rival source of human desire to that for power. Major emphasis is also given to Hobbes’s mechanistic-deterministic model,<sup>15</sup> within which motion—its physiological embodiment in appetite and aversion caused by external objects—seems fundamental, and power is scarcely mentioned.<sup>16</sup> As Hobbes presents pleasure and pain as our experience of this motion, and gives a generally naturalistic treatment of desire, he is often considered a leading seventeenth-century Epicurean, or

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<sup>14</sup> Such is the main line of Leo Strauss’s argument in his earliest of several writings on Hobbes: “Not the naturalistic antithesis of morally indifferent animal appetite (or of morally indifferent human striving after power) on the one hand, and morally indifferent striving after self-preservation on the other, but the moral and humanist antithesis of fundamentally unjust vanity and fundamentally just fear of violent death is the basis of Hobbes’s political philosophy” (*Political Philosophy of Hobbes*, 27).

<sup>15</sup> Gary Herbert notes the “admittedly almost universal” belief that Hobbes grounds his “mature theory of human nature on a crude mechanics” of motion. Herbert counters that Hobbes’s “dynamic” conception of human motion, including the notion of endeavour, “does not preclude both the identity of and the difference between man and [mechanical] nature,” accounting for both “volition” or “purposiveness” and “causal determinacy” (*Unity of Scientific & Moral Wisdom*, 65-66).

<sup>16</sup> *Leviathan*, Chapter VI.

hedonist.<sup>17</sup> Finally, while Hobbes famously depreciates reason as instrumental to passion, this subjection of practical and theoretical reason remains more ambiguous than often considered.<sup>18</sup> Hobbes's psychology, then, contains several plausibly leading elements without explicit indication of their priority or interrelation: desire for power; desire for self-preservation; motion of desire and aversion; fear of death; pride or vanity; pleasure; and right reason. This causes difficulty and disagreement on Hobbes's psychology and its constituent elements (several of which are in some measure originally formulated by Hobbes). This study must clarify the whole of Hobbes's psychology to elaborate the part in question, desire for power—whether it is finally a “part” or somehow underlies and completes the whole.

It is worth asking at the outset: Why does Hobbes even introduce the stratum of desire for power? His initial psychology—say, motion-desire with emphasis on the passionate opposition of pride and fear of death—represents a plausible account (and one that supports Hobbes's political intention, specifically his doctrine of natural right). Some explain Hobbes's assertion on power by contending that it is rhetorical or ironic: the author does not believe that all motives are reducible to power, or views this formulation as secondary within his thought. For example, the reduction to power may be a result of Hobbes's attempt at increasingly scientific presentation of his pre-existing understanding of human nature.<sup>19</sup> Or, as part of his political project, Hobbes translates human motives into the neutral element of power to silence discussion of any possible substantial or final good. Such interpretations reveal significant aspects of Hobbes's rhetorical-political

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<sup>17</sup> Strauss ascribes to him agreement with the Epicurean view that “the good is fundamentally identical with the pleasant” (*Natural Right & History*, 188).

<sup>18</sup> Malcolm gives a solid account of the prominent interpretation of Hobbes's depreciation of practical reason as instrumental to desire (*Aspects of Hobbes*, 30).

<sup>19</sup> Strauss, *Political Philosophy of Hobbes*, 169.

strategy. They may exaggerate insofar as they neglect the genuine theoretical foundation of desire for power —the basis that ultimately compels whatever rhetorical strategies he may employ. Hobbes may have these and other rhetorical reasons for adopting and accentuating the concept. Yet this rhetorical dimension remains ancillary and ultimately rooted in Hobbes’s fundamental thought on desire for power as genuine root of the passions and acutely the political passions.

We have discussed plausible interpretations that do not take power as the principle, but rather find other motives or passions more primary. But Hobbes is of course renowned as a theorist of power, both of power politics and psychology of power, and has received extensive and excellent scholarly attention as such. We have seen in a number of interpretations so far, that a central significance is given to power (even if I questioned whether the concept was dismissed without adequate appreciation or given an interpretation less complete or compelling than Hobbes’s conception may be). Among the relatively few interpretations that take power as the fundamental, as the universalized motive in a quite strict sense—which I will consider further as I draw out my own argument in the body of the thesis—one of the most impressive is that of Michael Oakeshott:

Philosophical explanation, then, is concerned with things caused. A world of such things is, necessarily, a world from which teleology is excluded; its internal movement comprises the impact of its parts upon one another, of attraction and repulsion, not of growth or development. It is a world conceived on the analogy of a machine, where to explain an effect we go to its immediate cause, and to seek the result of a cause we go only to its immediate effect. In other words, the mechanistic element in Hobbes’s philosophy is derived from his rationalism; its source and authority lie, not in observation, but in reasoning. He does not say that the natural world is a machine; he says only that the rational world is analogous to a machine. He is a scholastic, not a ‘scientific’ mechanist. This does not mean that the mechanistic element is unimportant in Hobbes; it means only that it is derivative. It is, indeed, of the greatest importance, for Hobbes’s philosophy is, in

all its parts, pre-eminently a philosophy of power precisely because philosophy is reasoning, reasoning the elucidation of mechanism and mechanism essentially the combination, transfer and resolution of forces. The end of philosophy itself is power—*scientia propter potentiam*. Man is a complex of powers; desire is the desire for power, pride is illusion about power, honour opinion about power, life the unremitting exercise of power and death the absolute loss of power. And the civil order is conceived as a coherence of powers, not because politics is vulgarly observed to be a competition of powers, or because civil philosophy must take its conceptions from natural philosophy, but because to subject the civil order to rational enquiry unavoidably turns it into a mechanism.<sup>20</sup>

Here desire is the desire for power, but Oakeshott's universalizing of power within Hobbes's thought is based on a view of the nature of Hobbes's "rationalism," taking epistemology as decisively prior to other possible sources of Hobbes's concentration on power—and a certain interpretation of Hobbes's epistemology at that. For Oakeshott, Hobbes does not observe or analyze the world as "things caused," by which he means efficient-material causation. Rather the human mind is limited to comprehending the world in terms of efficient cause and effect, or mechanism, so we inevitably conceive the world within such bounds. As such we can conceive ourselves only in a similarly limited way as a creature operating on a mechanistic model consisting of movement of forces, or power. There is a coherence and wholeness to Oakeshott's explanation. And it includes conclusions that, without consideration of their basis and therefore ultimate content, resemble outcomes of the argument of my thesis. However I am not convinced Hobbes thinks we understand the universe as mechanistic merely because of the structure of our limited mind, which excludes teleological understandings even if the universe may be governed by teleological order. When Hobbes dismisses teleology or final causality as an illusion of past philosophic or theological schools, he can rather be taken to mean that the world has no teleological structure. Hobbes's first principle in physics, all is motion,

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<sup>20</sup> "Introduction to Leviathan," 17-19.

appears to be his understanding of the structure of nature. Indeed for Hobbes if anything it is the teleological perspective that is imposed by the particularity of the human mind onto nature as a projection of our sense of purposive action.

In giving priority to a certain epistemological vision, Oakeshott brings an indirection, a derivative quality to use his word, into Hobbes's picture of the world including his psychology. Hobbes's thought is formed "not in observation, but in reasoning." Oakeshott suggests a radical disjunction between observation or immediate experience, and reasoning or thought, as between a natural and a rational world (where the natural may be the true world that we cannot attempt to see or infer). If the human being is then a complex of powers, and desire is desire for power, only in this constrained derivative sense, that means that we necessarily see ourselves rationally as a complex of powers, but naturally we may have other dimensions. Oakeshott's interpretation finds some remote basis in Hobbes's skepticism, but I do not think Hobbes meant his comprehension of nature and human nature as so indirect. Hobbes's analysis may be hypothetical, in the sense that we cannot directly and absolutely intuit first causes of nature—though Hobbes asserts some principles of nature as self-evident, requiring neither method nor demonstration. Hobbes considers observed effects real, at least real signs of real universal underlying motion (which seems his touchstone of reality, and the basis of his mechanism). I argue that motion is the ultimate natural basis of his psychology in the more complex form in which motion can be applied to human beings. Motion is emphatically not the "rational" shadow of an unknowable yet perhaps purposive nature as Oakeshott suggests.



This is not the place for an adequate consideration, however deserved, of Oakeshott's thought, but it is worth mentioning that his rendering of Hobbes's epistemology is not accepted by, among others, Malcolm:

When he [Oakeshott] attributes to Hobbes the view that 'Truth is of universals, but they are names, the names of images left over from sensations; and a true proposition is not an assertion about the real world,' [Leviathan, Oakeshott ed., xxv] he misrepresents Hobbes's nominalism, which declared only that universals were names as opposed to real entities; truth was a property of statements, not things, but those statements could indeed be true statements (whether particular or general) about the world.<sup>21</sup>

Malcolm's criticism suggests that Oakeshott takes Hobbes's model of thinking and language a degree too far from reality, not merely denying that universals exist in nature, but also denying that true propositions can make an assertion about the real world (even if this may not strictly resolve the question whether statements about the world must be statements on the reality of nature as opposed to rational statements about a humanly constrained world of efficient causes).<sup>22</sup> For all the elegant coherence of Oakeshott's grasp of power as Hobbesian principle, he weakens it into a derivative non-principle at a remove from reality. Still he captures with great clarity the unifying thread that power may form through Hobbes's psychology.

In asserting that "civil order is conceived as a coherence of powers, not because politics is vulgarly observed to be a competition of powers," but rather because "rational enquiry unavoidably turns it into a mechanism," Oakeshott on a different basis echoes other scholars' resistance, I think excessive, to the notion that Hobbes directly observes

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<sup>21</sup> "Oakeshott and Hobbes," 221. See Malcolm, *Aspects*, 152-53.

<sup>22</sup> The same extreme view of Hobbes's skepticism allows Oakeshott in one place to propose that Hobbes could be a fideist, that is, that he may believe it possible to have faith since we cannot know the reality of nature.

human competition over power. This reluctance to allow the concept of desire for power a real social origin, risks emptying out a central facet of this concept, which as an elaboration of the human disposition to power could even be considered more immediately derived from the political than from other domains.

#### § 1.4. THE POLITICAL DIMENSION

Hobbes must not only confront the theoretical problem of conceiving a tenable non-teleological psychology, but also formulate such a psychological model that may ground, or harmonize with, his new practical science of politics. Such a dual theoretical and political intention animates Hobbes's psychology and specifically its articulation in terms of a concept of power. The concern with providing the psychological basis for radical political reformation, then, constitutes the further problem or task of Hobbes's political psychology. Hobbes's argument on desire for power will be seen to exemplify the unity and potential disunity between the theoretical and practical dimensions of his teaching.

Hobbes develops his psychology in the context of his political teaching. This is emphatically true for the version of his psychology that most prominently features the concept of desire for power: Hobbes properly elaborates this concept only in the First Part of *Leviathan*, his most complete presentation of his political philosophy. I maintain that the desire for power must be understood in light of this political perspective. If scholars underestimate or obscure the political intention, they may struggle to make adequate sense of some extreme, baffling, or contradictory propositions (and exclusions) in his analysis of the passions and the reduction to power. We should consider the

political implications of each move in the early books of the *Leviathan*, as well as how the subsequent political teaching may shed light on or qualify statements in the psychological passages. Nor does Hobbes fail to indicate the political intention of his overall composition, and of specific passages including the main proposition on desire for power,<sup>23</sup> most clearly in *Leviathan* but also in *Elements of Law* and *De Homine*, the two other accounts of human nature. In *De Cive* the psychology is explicitly cast as instrumental to politics, but will not be found to conflict with the analysis of power in the thematically psychological works.

Hobbes's concept of desire for power is shaped by his political reflections in at least this sense, that the presentation of his psychology concentrates on the politically relevant, including the anti-political, aspects of man as its most immediate concern. Further, Hobbes may orient his psychology around his political design. By expressing motivation in the unitary factor of power, Hobbes renders an account and terminology of human behaviour that harmonizes with the moralized calculus of powers enacted through the sovereign. The portrayal of a relentless and unlimited individual desire for power dramatizes the imperative to concentrate political power in sovereign authority. Again at an extreme some argue that key elements of Hobbes's psychology are crafted rhetoric for a political and technological project, not to be taken seriously on the theoretical level.<sup>24</sup> This may become too clever by half, precipitately dismissing some of Hobbes's more daring thoughts and grounds of his project. Moreover, the natural primacy of desire for power in a sense cuts against Hobbes's political solution, namely the integrity of natural right, which demands with moral sanction the strict delimitation of the individual pursuit

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<sup>23</sup> *Leviathan*, XI, 70.

<sup>24</sup> See Leon Craig, *Platonian Leviathan*; Jerry Weinberger, "Hobbes's Doctrine of Method."

of power. This demand of natural right is based on man's awareness of his own lack of relative power, or of the probable futility and misery of relying strictly on his own natural power: taking peace as the common good, reflection on the consequences of the natural primacy of desire for power leads to the imperative surrender of individual powers to the combined unitary power of the sovereign. It remains a question whether the good of peace can be derived from the nature of original desire for power or from other desires.

It is worth noting that some scholars claim that Hobbes's political philosophy can in some sense be understood without his psychology. In terms of the trilogy *Elements of Philosophy*, this would mean *De Cive* can be understood without knowing *De Homine*, which latter corresponds roughly to the subject matter covered by the First Part of *Leviathan* on which we are concentrating. Indeed Hobbes makes such a suggestion in explaining his decision to publish *De Cive* before *De Homine* (and before *De Corpore*, on physics and first philosophy). Strauss among others argues for such an independence of Hobbes's politics from his psychology. Hobbes's account of human psychology is part of his account of nature, or his physics, in which sciences we do not make the first causes, nor can we intellectually intuit them directly, but can only try to infer them as principles from effects. But in politics, not nature or God, but human beings, do make the political structure and as such can know the first causes which are within our minds. Therefore understanding of political principles is independent of the natural principles—even though the natural principles evidently are the first causes of the human beings that are the authors and matter of the political principles and structure.

This argument for the independence of political from psychological science seems only partially valid. Simply put, how can one arrive at the political principles without an

understanding of human nature, which is the stuff of politics? Even if politics involves a transformation of human nature, one must know the potentialities and consequences of motivating or compelling the human matter in this or that way. This knowledge belongs to psychology, or the science of human nature. Hobbes begins *Leviathan*, his political monument, with his most searching investigation of human psychology, which seems to be the basis, in a positive not merely polemical or negative sense, of the subsequent political doctrine.

But one could argue, and I think Hobbes means, in defence of the independence of political understanding, that one is able to gain a practical, effective grasp of political principles without fully understanding the first causes of human nature. Politics would then relate to psychology somewhat as technology relates to science. One can grasp the principles of how to use, say, military technologies, without the scientific principles underlying their creation. And in the case of politics, the required grasp of human nature might be made intelligible in terms relatively close to the everyday way of seeing human motives and actions. Hobbes indeed could publish his *De Cive* as a political handbook useful to the practical science of politics.<sup>25</sup> And that is precisely the reason he gives for his early publication, the immediate political crisis of order in England.

Still it seems necessary that Hobbes's political prescriptions in *De Cive* are based on his own knowledge of the grounds and causes of political wisdom, that is, the understanding of first causes of human motion. This seems especially true given that Hobbes claims his understanding of human nature surpasses that of past thinkers and will correct common misperceptions. It seems far from common opinion, even if Hobbes

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<sup>25</sup> However, even practically, one could suggest that fuller understanding of causes of human behavior may lead to more certain grasp, adherence, and application of political principles; and Hobbes gives his potential political leaders and citizens healthy doses of his psychological science in the political *Leviathan*.

thinks he can convince us that it explains much common sense with a more true science of causes. His conception of desire for power exemplifies a radical way of comprehending causes of human passions, and seems significantly presupposed by his political teaching. I do not take his political science as intellectually independent of his psychology, if by intellect we mean the maximal understanding of causes possible to the human mind.<sup>26</sup> Psychology seems, as in Hobbes's original ordering of the sciences, prior and foundational for political understanding.

#### § 1.5. THE SCIENTIFIC-METAPHYSICAL DIMENSION

Hobbes's interpretation of human nature through desire for power involves not only the author's political concern but also the related, arguably primary, theological dimension, the situation of human and divine power. This is in turn inseparable from Hobbes's scientific reduction of power in nature to efficient causality: Hobbes seeks to purge natural philosophy of theological amplifications of Aristotle's already implausible essences and final causes. Hobbes's scientific work reduces the Scholastic teleological power-act structure of being (and any roughly compatible idea of divinity) to the efficient cause and effect of exclusively local motion, the action of which is power. This scientific notion of power represents a possible foundation for his psychological concept. I suggest that Hobbes's scientific understanding of power must be a substantial, not merely polemical or analogical, basis for Hobbes's idea of power as human motive, but I

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<sup>26</sup> It is also a question whether we cleanly "make" political principles, since we are rearranging what is already made or naturally existing, the natural or given order of society of natural beings. This may again be a practically effective way of conceiving the political task but a simplification of the thinking involved. I will touch on this last problem in considering Hobbes's notion of knowing as making when discussing the relation of desire for power and thinking in § 4.8.

question whether Hobbes can transfer the idea of strictly efficient causality with consistency to the human subject.

We see, then, another and ultimate problem in the interpretation of desire for power: the foundations and origins of this concept seem plausibly to draw upon different branches of Hobbes's philosophy: psychology, politics, science, theology, and epistemology. The relation between branches of Hobbes's thought—exemplified well by the concept of power—is a vexed question, perhaps a difficulty for Hobbes himself. Scholars' commentary on desire for power tends, often justifiably and according to the themes of their work, to focus on particular aspects of the concept. The task of understanding Hobbes's psychological concept requires balanced consideration of all its aspects and layers in their coherence and incoherence within the author's presentation.

I choose to concentrate on Hobbes's psychological treatment of power, his concept of desire for power, not only because my main interest is moral and political philosophy. It is worth considering whether the concept of *desire* for power is in some sense his most immediate and comprehensive thought on power, since it characterizes the knower without whom there is, for Hobbes, no knowledge of power of any kind. Hobbes's human embodiment of power as a psychological principle comprises or experiments with the possible unity of a concept of power across human and non-human nature. Even if Hobbes is said to take his starting point from accepting, even hypothetically, the scientific notion of power—the action of directionless matter in motion determining non-human nature, in which man's place appears ambiguous—then he is necessarily thrown back to reflection on the human, to psychology as the primary

and governing science, as the only possible source of direction. Hobbes tests what it means for that very direction to be understood as desire for power.

#### § 1.6. THE ARGUMENT OF THIS DISSERTATION

Hobbes's conception of the desire for power becomes intelligible above all in light of the modern denial, scientific or otherwise, of a complete human good, or teleology. I will test the hypothesis that the desire for power constitutes the genuine core of Hobbes's teaching on the passions: the necessary completion of a compelling psychology in the absence of a traditional final or formal cause. I take the first movement of thought of Hobbes's psychology to be polemical or negative: he dismisses any previous notion of a highest good, abandoning the rule of reason, or moderation in a harmonious sense, or pious love over the soul. This polemic does serve Hobbes's political intention of fracturing potential belief in any highest good in order to extinguish contention over such notions and the unequal claims to rule they imply. Still I argue that this re-orientation of politics originates in Hobbes's denial of the foundation—not in merely expedient concern over the fragility, imprecision, or divisiveness—of any complete good or way of life. This leaves the task (or potential crisis, though not in Hobbes's eyes) of seeking an alternative principle of order and motivation—not within the “soul,” which term Hobbes excludes from his own account, but among the faculties, principally passions and mind. I argue that in Hobbes's initial psychological accounts the axioms of pride and fear of death, and of basic mechanistic motion-appetite, come to light as inadequate, but contain roots of his eventual solution through desire for power, which comprehends and recasts these elements of his psychology. A close analysis of Hobbes's



layered, increasingly comprehensive account, most fully in the First Part of *Leviathan*, reveals desire for power as underlying, comprising, or completing these integral but insufficient aspects of Hobbes's psychology. The conceptualization of power is not merely a sheen of scientific or political rhetoric added to Hobbes's moral psychology, but its necessary and most complete elaboration. Hobbes discovers not only a universalized power as means to future discrete goods or desires, but infinite relative power as a kind of non-teleological end.

In the desire for power, Hobbes discovers a more ultimate and comprehensive passionate origin for the range of human energies and activities. The traditional problem of hierarchical order among parts of the soul is solved, or displaced, by the conception of a unitary force governing the motion of the passions. This ceaseless motion underlies the experience—as depicted by Hobbes psychologically and physiologically—of radical disjunction between desire and fulfillment; which experience is, as I argue, intrinsic to desire for power. Hobbes's picture of a monistic desire for power may risk abstraction into a specious uniformity of passions and an extreme of perpetual instrumentality. Yet Hobbes could maintain that his account accurately acknowledges the limited goods and relatively vain fulfillments of desire to which nature has unfortunately abandoned us. Hobbes portrays man's infinite striving after power with a blend of affirmative energy and nearly tragic gravity, which reflects this ambivalence.

Hobbes's explication of natural desire for power, while not, as some argue, merely motivated by his political imperatives, can be shown to cohere with his political theory but also reveal hard tensions between natural and political orders of desire. The portrait of desire for power, I suggest, serves as Hobbes's naturalistic explanation of what

is traditionally called evil. I argue Hobbes's notion of power is not, as in later modern and contemporary discourse, primarily a term of domination, but does explain a naturally antagonistic sociality, which involves desire for power over others and produces harmful effects, whether evil or cruel or morally indifferent, which Hobbes seeks to counteract politically. Hobbes's reduction of human motivation to the factor of power harmonizes with his political solution, a moralized calculus of powers enacted through uniformly representative sovereignty. And the priority of such a formless and open-ended mode of desire, or concession to the rule of potentiality in the psyche, contributes to the moral and perhaps metaphysical basis for the liberal privileging of rights. But the natural primacy of desire for power also cuts against Hobbes's political solution, namely the integrity of natural right, which demands with moral sanction strict delimitation of individual pursuit of power. The moral grounding of Hobbes's political order involves a radical condemnation or reformation of desire for power in its inseparability from pride. Hobbes attempts to integrate a moral-political critique into his psychological principle of power: while mainly a re-ordering of external effects, rather than an internal harmonization of the psyche, I argue this critique extends, even in the state of nature, to moral intention in a significant sense (e.g., in consciously useless cruelty, or more generally in the offending exertion of power without perceived ultimate intention of self-preservation). Desire for power must be enlightened or intimidated into concern for intended effects of desires on oneself and others, a form of prudential charity. This moral intention may be ultimately based on desire for self-preservation, but the political state does not reduce allowable desire merely to self-preservation, so there remains a tension between ends of self-preservation and power, perhaps qualifying power as the animating principle of desire.

Hobbes's psychology of power is the basis for his famously realist power politics, but Hobbes appeals to a "zeal for peace,"<sup>27</sup> which becomes the principle of Hobbesian natural law and sovereignty. Hobbes denies peace as the naturally final psychic good, but builds on desire for peace, or artificial political rest, as at least a common instrumental good. Hobbes, unlike subsequent philosophers who radicalize his original inquiry, preserves wise and humane delimitations on the theoretical and political conceptualization of power. Hobbes stretches the concept of power, but does not absolutize it within the psyche (and the organic and even inorganic world), as may Spinoza and Nietzsche, nor abstract and unanchor it from its original place in a psychology of desire, as may Foucault.

Finally I consider the possible grounding for Hobbes's psychological concept of desire for power in his principal scientific and metaphysical concept of motion-power-causality, suggesting a qualified unity of these concepts across Hobbes's philosophy. Hobbes's aggressive scientific reductions of all phenomena to motion in the opening chapters of *Leviathan* play a negative polemical role, clearing away the possibility of traditional metaphysical or theological groundings for psychology and politics. The positive grounding of Hobbes's psychology on modern scientific first principles of motion is less clear, and has been denied or minimized by many scholars, yet I suggest that Hobbes intends to ground his psychology of power on scientific and metaphysical

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<sup>27</sup> Hobbes's Latin is "*pacis studio*" (*De Cive*, *OL II*, 154). He makes appeal to his own zeal for peace in the concluding sentence of the Preface of *De Cive*. Tuck translates: "words... of one who has a passion for peace" (15). The English version of 1651 alters the original phrasing perhaps excessively, giving "spoken for... the establishment of peace" (Warrender ed., 37). Tuck's more literal translation of the sentence: "[mine] are not the words of a partisan, but of one who has a passion for peace, whose justified grief at his country's present calamity reasonably merits some indulgence" (15). "Passion" expresses well Hobbes's intense desire and concern for peace, but "passion" is a key term in Hobbesian philosophic usage, and here Hobbes does not choose the Latin word for passion or for desire, but *studio*, "zeal" as I translate it here, which can indeed be passionate and desirous, but is not the term identical to passion. Perhaps one could render *studio* as "zealous application" or "assiduous zeal or passion."

materialism, better expressed as motionalism. Difficulties and inconsistencies in a materialist grounding (or, on the alternate interpretation, in lack of any grounding) of Hobbes's reductive or reductionist argument on the range of human desire, including desire for knowledge, as desire for power may undermine the plausibility or limit the explanatory range of this philosophic conception.

#### § 1.7. POWER AS A MODERN TERM OF SELF-UNDERSTANDING

After Hobbes, the concept of power, most specifically as a term of man's self-understanding, will have a prominent trajectory in modern philosophy—not least in our contemporary discourse, whatever the continuities and divergences from Hobbes's conception. An organic line of thought unfolds, from Hobbes to Spinoza to Nietzsche to Foucault among others, taking main Hobbesian premises and each developing the notion of power, indeed reading and critiquing each other's writings (as well as those of often shared adversaries), thinking through implications and possibilities, I believe with increasing radicality, explaining more and more of reality, human and non-human, in terms of a concept of power. I will compare Hobbes's account of power with radically different alternatives such as Aristotle or Aquinas, and with modifications in the Hobbesian line such as Nietzsche. This thesis then also acts as a basis and starting point for a study of the modern philosophic concept of power: its historical origins in Hobbes and, more ultimately, the structure and limits of the idea of power as a term of self-understanding.

We can broadly distinguish two lines of argument on power as a basis for political psychology: the attempt to explain human phenomena through a notion of power; and the

consequent or derivative moral critique of social and political problems through a critical discourse on power. Both efforts find their thoroughly developed roots in Hobbes. While the two lines of argument are combined, whether perfectly unified or not, in Hobbes, the theorists of power that follow him do not necessarily elaborate both. On the contrary, Spinoza and Nietzsche radicalize the explanatory side of Hobbes's account as the whole. To sketch briefly, Spinoza maintains a purely naturalistic psychology in which human striving to persevere in our being is considered in terms of power. All striving expresses or reflects degrees of power, an increase or decrease of power. Power is identified with virtue as in a sense the essence of human nature.<sup>28</sup> However Spinoza, unlike Hobbes and Nietzsche, does not seem to formulate a desire or striving *for* power as an object. Spinoza's political doctrine, as he famously describes it in contradistinction to that of Hobbes, maintains the strict naturalism of his psychology, preserving "natural right intact," that is, conceiving natural right on the strict basis of power; indeed Hobbes's natural right, as I argue, is based on a radical moral-political critique and limitation of natural desire for power.<sup>29</sup> Nietzsche's concept of will to power absolutizes a striving for

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<sup>28</sup> "Virtue is human power itself, which is defined by man's essence alone (by D8), i.e. (by IIP7), solely by the striving by which man strives to persevere in his being. So the more each one strives, and is able, to preserve his being, the more he is endowed with virtue. And consequently (by IIP4 and P6), insofar as someone neglects to preserve his being, he lacks power" (*Ethics*, Part IV, P20, trans. Curley, p. 210); "By the end for the sake of which we do something I understand appetite. D8: By virtue and power I understand the same thing, that is (by IIP7), virtue, insofar as it is related to man, is the very essence, or nature, of man, insofar as he has the power of bringing about certain things, which can be understood through the laws of his nature alone" (IV, Definition 7, 201). Among many others, see also IV, P18, 208-09.

<sup>29</sup> "As regards political theories, the difference which you inquire about between Hobbes and myself, consists in this, that I always preserve natural right intact [*ego naturale ius semper sartum tectum conservo*], and only allot to the chief magistrates in every state a right over their subjects commensurate with the excess of their power over the power of the subjects. This is what always takes place in the state of nature" (Letter to Jellis, June 2, 1674). Perhaps one could question whether Spinoza's political theory, including its liberal dimension, purely sustains or can sustain this naturalism, but it remains his attempted political basis.

power to explain all human and even non-human life as forms of this drive.<sup>30</sup> Whether the will to power is interpreted as Nietzsche's comprehensive and ultimate teaching, or as one leading direction and expression of his thought qualified by others, still Nietzsche is not seen to give a moral critique of will to power as motivation.<sup>31</sup>

It is worth adding that Nietzsche's concept of will to power currently holds such prominence in our minds and philosophic language, that there is the risk of Nietzsche's meaning imposing itself on the interpretation of Hobbes's earlier concept, as happens in some Hobbes scholarship, and understandably so.<sup>32</sup> Perhaps today one cannot but begin

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<sup>30</sup> "Life itself is *will to power*" (*Beyond Good and Evil (BGE)*, aphorism 13; trans. Kaufmann, p. 21); "Suppose, finally, we succeeded in explaining our entire instinctive life as the development and ramification of one basic form of the will—namely, of the will to power, as my proposition has it; suppose all organic functions could be traced back to this will to power and one could also find in it the solution of the problem of procreation and nourishment—it is one problem—then one would have gained the right to determine all efficient force univocally as—will to power. The world viewed from inside, the world defined and determined according to its 'intelligible character'—it would be 'will to power' and nothing else—" (*BGE*, aph. 36, p. 47-48). 'Exploitation' does not belong to a corrupt or imperfect and primitive society: it belongs to the essence of what lives, as a basic organic function; it is a consequence of the will to power, which is after all the will of life" (*BGE*, aph. 259, p. 203). "Unitary conception of psychology. – We are accustomed to consider the development of an immense abundance of forms compatible with an origin in unity. [My theory would be: –] that the will to power is the primitive form of affect, that all other affects are only developments of it... That all driving force is will to power, that there is no other physical, dynamic or psychic force except this (*Will to Power*, aph. 688, trans. Kaufmann, p. 366-67). Among many others, see also *BGE*, aph. 260, p. 204-5; *BGE*, aph. 23, p. 31-32.

<sup>31</sup> Nietzsche seems to suggest or imply some mode of hierarchy or at least difference within the forms of will to power. Nietzsche makes distinctions within expressions of will to power, e.g., philosophy is "the most spiritual will to power" (*BGE*, aph. 9, p.16), whether the spiritual may be a measure of superiority or only a distinction of kinds. And Nietzsche condemns certain historical expressions of will to power, such as those infused with *ressentiment*, as unhealthy. But in these two and other such cases Nietzsche's standard of distinction is not moral in any accepted sense of the term, and certainly not in a Hobbesian sense of moral or just (perhaps Nietzsche's standard may be a hierarchy of most complete attainments of power, or mastery or self-mastery, or, if some other standard beyond power to which Nietzsche has explicit or implicit recourse, then still not a moral one). It is difficult to find a moral-political critique of power in Nietzsche. Indeed his concept of will to power is often explicitly a critique and displacement of what Nietzsche considers the moral self-understanding or misunderstanding.

<sup>32</sup> An interesting example is Craig's Nietzschean renaming of Hobbes's concept: "Hobbes is notorious for contending that will to power is the paramount constituent of human nature" (*Platonic Leviathan*, 289). Craig's assertion is immediately followed, without further comparison of Hobbes with Nietzsche, by quotation of Hobbes's famous statement on "desire for Power after power." Perhaps Craig means to point mainly to the indeed major elements shared by the two concepts. Still Hobbes does not write of a "will to power," though he extensively analyzes and uses the term will (which he relates but does not equate to desire), nor would his use even of will bear the same meaning as Nietzsche's term will in will to power, which Craig here evidently refers to. Such a reformulation of Hobbes's thought seems approximate or misleading as to the precise character of Hobbes's conception.

from a notion of power heavily shaped by Nietzsche. Yet the effort must be made to see Hobbes's conception of desire for power not through Nietzschean lenses but in its own original, vital form. Indeed regarding Nietzsche, the study of Hobbes's concept can help clarify the roots of the concept of the will to power in a genealogical sense. More ultimately, reflection on Hobbes's understanding of power may lead to clarification and perhaps some critical reconsideration of Nietzsche's interpretation of power in light of Hobbes's idea of desire for power.

Foucault launches critiques of power, effectively moral however much he may protest the term, and however difficult it may be, as for Hobbes, to base a critique of power on a reality somehow composed of power while perhaps denying a natural standard beyond power. But Foucault arguably conceives a notion of power without foundation in a plausible psychology especially of desire, that is, not grounded in an account, as in Hobbes, of power that explains original human motivation to seek and value and exert power (and on which basis, by a necessity rooted in human nature and its tendencies, there is seen to develop, and not simply for the worse, government by people and institutions authorized to exert power). Power is said in Foucault to act on us, even to form us, but it is unclear how such power is tied to human desire or agency, or otherwise what directs it, if not power itself in its own strategies and accumulations. As such the idea of power risks becoming really abstract, everywhere and nowhere, to the point of veering toward incoherence, or, to borrow a favourite Hobbesian censure, becoming a piece of the over-theoretical jargon of our day, and losing the clarity and psychological grounding Hobbes attempts to give it. It is a question whether stages in this modern line

are an inevitable, logical if extreme unfolding of the idea of power from Hobbesian premises or a falling away from Hobbes's measured psychological conception of power.

#### § 1.8. PLAN OF INQUIRY AND TREATMENT OF HOBBS TEXTS

Hobbes's conception of desire for power takes full shape only in *Leviathan*. The account of human nature in *Leviathan*<sup>33</sup> does not begin from the concept of desire for power as a founding axiom or proposition. Rather I suggest that his presentation in *Leviathan* builds toward the proposition on desire for power as the culmination of a layered, increasingly comprehensive account. It is difficult, if not impossible, to judge whether Hobbes has in mind his full conception of desire for power from the beginning of his composition, or whether it unfolds and crystallizes in his thought as he writes out his masterpiece. In the wider perspective of Hobbes's literary career, the progressive nature of Hobbes's development of a psychological concept of power is more discernible: none of the three major earlier works of moral and political philosophy include the plausibly universal desire for power, but among them *Elements of Law* already gives the concept of power an expanded significance at the root of key passions, prefiguring the elaboration of desire for power in *Leviathan*. The temporal sequence of development of the concept is of only incidental importance in itself, but may provide one reflection of the order and structure of Hobbes's thought on power. What is essential, as I will attempt to show, is the compelling, even necessary logic from the premise of negation of the *summum bonum* to the development of the concept of desire for power within Hobbes's

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<sup>33</sup> More specifically, the first 13 chapters, which precede Hobbes's introduction of a political doctrine of natural right or natural laws.



psychology as its complete or least incomplete principle, the most effective expression of its animating principle.

My analysis will follow primarily *Leviathan* as the most comprehensive and formally perfected document of Hobbes's political psychology. We cannot rely merely on the fact of the later composition of *Leviathan* to lend it superior authority to his earlier writings. Rather I will explicate Hobbes's attempted completion and elaboration in *Leviathan* of the psychology of the earlier works (of what I have provisionally called his psychology "prior" to the conception of desire for power). I will consult extensively the earlier works—mainly for our purposes *Elements of Law*, *De Cive*, and *De Homine*<sup>34</sup>—whenever relevant passages may either improve or challenge our understanding of any thought expressed in *Leviathan*. I will consult these other works especially whenever they may seem to undermine or contradict any argument from *Leviathan*, thus requiring that I reconcile the various presentations or suggest an unresolved or irresolvable tension within Hobbes's thought. I will also rely on the early works, especially *Elements of Law*, to shed light on the genesis of Hobbes's psychology and its concept of power. I will draw on *De Corpore* to consider the relevance of Hobbes's scientific and metaphysical concept of power.

My exposition of Hobbes's psychology attempts to represent the order of Hobbes's thinking as I understand it in three "stages" or aspects: 1) negative polemic against classical and biblical teleology (eternal essence, final cause, a highest good, or

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<sup>34</sup> *De Homine* was published in 1658, seven years after *Leviathan*. The more relevant date of its composition is debated by scholars. It seems agreed that Hobbes at least began work on *De Homine*, along with the other two parts of his trilogy *Elementa Philosophiae*, in the late 1630s and early 1640s. Richard Tuck provides evidence that "by 1641 *De Homine* had already taken much the same form it was to have in 1658" (*De Cive*, Tuck ed., Introduction, p. xi, note 7). I find Tuck's view on this point the most convincing in the field. However, given the uncertainty of *De Homine*'s time of composition, I will not rely finally on assumptions of its being earlier or later than *Leviathan* in any comparative analysis of their contents.

any other such complete terms of natural or divine direction, between which Hobbes may not always perfectly distinguish); 2) positive account of human nature, culminating in the conception of desire for power; 3) political solution or remedy prescribing natural rights based on selected postulates of human nature, forming an effective critique and delimitation of desire for power. Hobbes's presentation of his psychology and politics in *Leviathan* can be shown to follow this order, more precisely as the constant pattern of his unified thought than as consecutive stages or parts. Throughout the First Part of *Leviathan* Hobbes interweaves these inseparable aspects of his psychology that I have separated out analytically.

## 2. THE PROBLEMS OF HOBBS'S PSYCHOLOGY

### § 2.1. HOBBS'S REJECTION OF THE IDEA OF A GREATEST GOOD

Hobbes's apparently extreme conception of desire for power may become intelligible above all as an attempt to solve the radical problem posed by his psychology in rejecting a teleological starting point. Hobbes dismisses the traditionally predominant basis, natural or divine, for self-understanding:

To which end we are to consider, that the Felicity of this life, consisteth not in the repose of a mind satisfied. For there is no such *Finis ultimus*, (utmost ayme,) nor *Summum Bonum*, (greatest Good,) as is spoken of in the Books of the old Morall Philosophers.<sup>1</sup>

To state the ensuing problem of Hobbes's psychology in a stark and provisional way: given this polemical, and not merely polemical, negative premise of dismissing any highest human good or perfection, what can be the principle of a psychology that seems to deny any principle of direction to human desire?

Aristotle, whom Hobbes addresses as an adversary from beginning to end of *Leviathan*, famously posits the highest good as the orienting, architectonic principle of his *Ethics*. In the same breath he alludes to an opposing hypothesis and its consequences:

If therefore among the ends [*telos*] at which our actions aim there be one which we wish for its own sake, while we wish the others only for the sake of this, and if we do not choose everything for the sake of something else (which would obviously result in a process *ad infinitum*, so that all desire [*orexin*] would be futile and vain), it is clear that this one ultimate End must be the Good, and indeed the Supreme Good [*tagathon kai to ariston*].<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> *Leviathan*, XI, 69-70.

<sup>2</sup> *Nicomachean Ethics*, trans. H. Rackham, Book I, Chapter ii, 1094a19-23, p. 5.

Aristotle suggests, conditionally and negatively, the possibility of comprehending choice and desire in the absence of a final good.<sup>3</sup> He mentions this alternate hypothesis only to swiftly dismiss it in a kind of *reductio ad absurdum*: without a greatest good, all human desire would be useless and empty. It is axiomatic for Aristotle that such a failing structure of desire cannot cohere with the order of nature and human nature. Nor, one may suggest, could it explain the human experience of desire and plausibly complete fulfillment as Aristotle depicts it in the *Ethics* and other works.

Thomas Aquinas, the leading authority of Christian Scholastic philosophy, which Hobbes fights more adamantly than that of Aristotle, also treats the objection that desire has no final end, but rather proceeds indefinitely. Thomas concludes yet more starkly than Aristotle: “If there were no last end, nothing would be desired, nor would any action have its term.”<sup>4</sup> No final end, no desire in some decisive sense. The final end, the subject of Thomas’ opening chapter on human nature, is seen as the purpose and very condition of desire. For Aristotle and Aquinas, then, desire would be radically misunderstood if not incomprehensible without a corresponding greatest good; and whatever such picture of desire could be imagined would be implausible, inherently failed, and vain.

Hobbes, I suggest, takes up precisely this possibility, that desire may have no final good. He embraces and elaborates what might be called a non-teleological psychology. One measure of the scope of Hobbes’s task can be taken from the absolute terms in which

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<sup>3</sup> In this sentence Aristotle states conditionally not only the hypothesis which he rejects, that of choice or desire without end, but also the hypothesis he accepts as the working basis for his *Ethics*, that of choice or desire directed to an ultimate good. Unorthodox interpretations may question in what sense, and in what spheres of activity (i.e., ethical vs. contemplative) Aristotle takes this assertion of a final good to be true. This is not the place to enter into difficult controversies of Aristotelian interpretation. The overwhelming weight of Aristotle’s presentation in the *Ethics* and elsewhere, and its reception since—philosophic, theological, or scholarly—takes its bearings from such teleology as Aristotle’s basis for understanding human nature.

<sup>4</sup> *Summa*, First Part of Second Part, Question 1, Article 4, *Rispondeo*.

previous thinkers had framed and put aside the non-teleological picture as misleading and incoherent. Still within his departure from this traditional understanding, Hobbes can be seen to agree on the structure of the problem in two ways: First, the question of a highest good is decisive and orients psychological inquiry. If one denies the reality of a highest good, then one is compelled to rethink the nature of desire on some other foundation if such can be found. By granting and negating Aristotle's principle, Hobbes enters dialogue with Aristotle at the deepest point. Hobbes can be said to put himself in at least initial dependence on Aristotle's terms, giving his own argument a trajectory of negation which it may not overcome. Better, Hobbes cuts clean to the root of the problem—with awareness of what human possibilities disappear with denial of a highest good—from which clear new beginning point he reconceives a psychology from its foundations and in all its consequences. This reconception will still be carried out in the form of a polemical dialogue with Aristotelian thought—whether in the form of reduction from Aristotelian conceptions, or modification or expansion of them, including as a primary instance, the conception of power. I will analyze Hobbes's psychology in relation to that of Aristotle, not only or mainly because comparisons between philosophers' ideas can be illuminating, but because Hobbes's arguments and concepts simply cannot be fully understood except in relation to the Aristotelian ones they confront and out of which they are often carved.

The second way in which Hobbes may agree with Aristotle on the structure of the inquiry into human desire is that, though Hobbes denies a highest good as the end of human desire, he seems to concur on a central aspect of desire presupposed, I suggest, by the idea of a highest good: the necessary unity of human desire, and therefore the reality of some unitary principle of desire—even if, in Hobbes's reconception of desire, it is

another kind of unity than that involved in the idea of the good as the term of desire. Aquinas' striking and difficult proposition—"If there were no last end, nothing would be desired"—can seem extreme in its all or nothing quality:

Now there is to be observed a twofold order in ends [*in finibus*]*—the order of intention and the order of execution... that which is first in the order of intention, is the principle, as it were, moving the appetite [quasi principium movens appetitum]; consequently, if you remove this principle, there will be nothing to move the appetite.... the principle in the intention is the last end [ultimus finis]; while the principle in execution is the first of the things which are ordained to the end. Consequently, on neither side is it possible to go to infinity since if there were no last end, nothing would be desired [appeteretur], nor would any action have its term, nor would the intention of the agent be at rest [quiesceret].*<sup>5</sup>

Desire requires a principle in the intention, or rational will.<sup>6</sup> Aquinas does not mean merely that each desire needs a principle of intention, though it is also the case that each particular desire considered as discrete begins in intention. He makes clear, here and elsewhere, that the principle or end must be one last, final end, "*finis ultimus,*" in light of which all the desires can be comprehended. If we understood each desire only as a discrete member of a series of separate desires, then there would be no end, only an "infinity" of desires. But this sequence of desires from the outset would have no direction, no order; desire would be as it were blind, not knowing where to step, and in this sense could not begin. Nothing would be desired. Without trying to resolve hard questions of interpretation in Aristotle or Aquinas, it is worth considering, as we inquire how Hobbes will navigate the territory, that the final end can be a principle of desire in two ways, perhaps both together: the final, complete goal at which all other desires ultimately aim as means; or, the final end can be the complete form of the good which we

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<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>6</sup> Intention for Aquinas is an act of will (*Summa*, First Part of Second Part, Question 12, Article 1). Intention or will in human beings is properly rational, in animals instinctive (Article 5).

actually seek in some degree in each object we desire (whether or not we are aware of this real cause or essence of our desires<sup>7</sup>).

Hobbes denies the “*finis ultimus*,” but it is a question whether, in conceiving desire, he abandons the idea of a principle of unity and the formal structure which it fulfills. It could be argued that Hobbes does understand human desire as discrete: a series of particular desires that neither form a chain of means to one complete end, nor are united as various forms of the desire for one good. This is one of the plausible paths that follow from rejecting final ends. And Hobbes, as we shall see closely, can appear to lean this way in, for example, his seeming reductions of rational will to prevailing appetite and of the good to apparent desire, and generally in his mechanistic presentation of desire and object. In this vein, even if he could be taken to identify a single motive of all desire, it would be pleasure, as many claim, but I do not think he relies on a crude hedonism. Nor, in casting away the highest good as an illusory basis of order, does he see desire dissolve into an aimless chaos whether despairing or liberating. Hobbes does not leave his account of desire at such points, but develops a more complete principle to unify and thus explain adequately desire. To anticipate, this principle will be desire for power. It may be a principle in a different sense, giving another kind of unity or form: non-teleological desire will proceed “ad infinitum,” and never “be at rest,” but for Hobbes does not become “futile and vain”; the infinite structure of desire is given a meaningful principle and trajectory. Hobbes’s psychology constitutes not merely a negation of the conception of a highest good, but a profound consideration of what must be replaced in the

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<sup>7</sup> One may be aware only or usually of the more immediate end—a kind of false consciousness (evidently understood in a purely non-Marxist sense) or more simply put lack of self-understanding, desiring without fully comprehending the final basis of our desires.

condemned structure being torn down if a total, compelling alternative is to be constructed.

Aquinas says the principle “as it were moves” the desire, literally “quasi-moves” the desire. The principle or purpose in the mind does not strictly speaking move, physically move the desire, but brings or motivates it to happen as the ultimate reason or explanation or goal or cause. As I discuss in the next section, Hobbes mocks this idea of “metaphorical motion” as part of his critique of final causality and ends. But since the classical idea of a psychological principle of all desire depends on this sense of formal or final cause, again it will be a task for Hobbes to explain a meaningful principle within the bounds of uniquely efficient-material causation that he accepts.

It is worth considering, now initially to frame the problem and later to analyze Hobbes’s positive account, what does Hobbes understand by a highest good—what exactly is he negating? In his most prominent declaration of this view, Hobbes includes two separate phrases: “There is no such *Finis ultimus*, (utmost ayme,) nor *Summum Bonum*, (greatest Good,)” Are these two different things, two distinct aspects of the same, or just two names for the same? And what is the essential character of the notion or notions? Regardless of their precise relation, it makes sense that Hobbes includes the two phrases “spoken of in the Books of the old Morall Philosophers” to ensure he has all main historical targets in his sights. Also there is a rhetorical force of emphasis to the pairing of famous expressions whether or not the second term adds meaning. Grammatically the “nor,” and similarly the “et” (and not “sive”) in Hobbes’s Latin version of *Leviathan*,<sup>8</sup> suggest some degree of separateness of the phrases. *Finis ultimus* can be taken to express

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<sup>8</sup> *Leviathan*, XI, OL III, 77.



the finality or completion of what is desired, *summum bonum* the goodness.<sup>9</sup> Perhaps the former indicates the final end for the sake of which other subsidiary objects of desire are pursued, while the latter indicates the greatest good, not necessarily but possibly one that includes all other goods or for the sake of they are all pursued. Aristotle's formulation (which includes "we wish the others only for the sake of this") suggests a greatest good that does subsume all other good objects of desire as instrumental to or incomplete forms of the greatest good. Aristotle himself unites these two terms *finis ultimus* and *summum bonum* in the concluding sentence of the passage quoted above, literally translated: "it is clear that this one [ultimate end]<sup>10</sup> must be the good, and indeed the greatest good." If finality without goodness is incoherent (why else would one desire nothing more, unless deluded or dead), and the greatest good by definition is final (nothing more to be desired), then the terms ultimately include each other, and are two aspects of one idea. Hobbes appears to affirm this unified relation between the terms in a passage from the *Elements of Law* describing appetite and its fruition: "*bonum* and *finis* are different names, but for different considerations of the same thing."<sup>11</sup> Though in this passage Hobbes is describing the limited fulfillment of a particular desire, not the whole of human desire, still the distinction and unity of the terms seems comparable.

Further, this same passage also points to the difficulty of strictly abandoning the language and sense of final causality in the account of desire:

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<sup>9</sup> *Finis* seems to be Cicero's Latin rendering of *telos*, end, completion, goal, even purpose; *finis* seems quite a close translation for *telos*, though arguably with a weakened sense of completion, perhaps rectified by Cicero and the tradition's adding *ultimus* where *telos* could stand alone; *bonum* seems to be a direct translation of *agathos*, good.

<sup>10</sup> Here the Greek is a pronoun *tout* 'an which refers back to *telos* from the first sentence. Rackham's translation "ultimate end" for *telos* adds an adjective, following with the Latin model, to bring out the completeness inherent in the Greek *telos*, but not evident in our usage of end, goal, or purpose.

<sup>11</sup> *Elements of Law*, VII. 5, 44.

As appetite is the beginning of animal motion toward something which pleaseth us; so is the attaining thereof, the End of that motion, which we also call the scope, and aim, and final cause of the same: and when we attain that end, the delight we have thereby is called Fruition: so that bonum and finis are different names, but for different considerations of the same thing.<sup>12</sup>

In this earlier work, *Elements of Law*, roughly covering the same topics as the First Part of *Leviathan*, Hobbes is willing to use the traditional phrase “final cause” for the aim of a desire, though he already denies the reality of the substantial meaning of final causality both in the earlier psychology of *Elements of Law* and in *De Homine*.<sup>13</sup> Still Hobbes concedes in *De Corpore* that final cause, though it should be dismissed from metaphysics and physics, remains relevant in the domain of psychology: “A final cause has no place but in such things as have sense and will; and this also I shall prove hereafter to be an efficient cause.”<sup>14</sup> In the account of desire in animals and humans, final cause has some “place.” I take Hobbes to mean that we cannot characterize at least the experience of perception and desire without some sense of purposive direction of our movement to a goal pictured, in Hobbes’s terms “imagined,” in the mind. So in at least this provisional, descriptive sense we need to refer to the language of purpose or final cause. Yet Hobbes right away promises to reduce this final cause to efficient: what we experience psychologically as the direction of our desire to a specific goal of which we are aware and often consider and choose, can be explained as really an outcome of physical motion within and outside us. We will return to this remarkable concession and claim. For now Hobbes shows he is at least highly aware of the special significance that final cause holds in psychology. We can wonder in what sense and degree Hobbes can achieve this

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<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>13</sup> *Elements of Law*, VII. 6, 44-45; *De Homine*, XI. 15, 53-54.

<sup>14</sup> *De Corpore*, X. 7, *EW I*, 131-32.

displacement of final by efficient cause in the account of desire in terms of power, itself a term closely bound up with his physics of motion and efficient cause.

Hobbes, then, significantly makes explicit both aspects, finality and goodness, to avoid diluted understandings of the end or good at stake. The greatest good is not merely the best of many goods, but a complete good, as Aristotle says, “one which we wish for its own sake, while we wish the others only for the sake of this.” Aristotle in this opening book of his *Ethics* goes on to identify the attainment of this “greatest good”—to make this picture somewhat less abstract or more experiential—with happiness,<sup>15</sup> or *eudaimonia*, a more capacious and absolute sense of the word than our current usage, again involving completion, a self-realization and active fulfilment of our nature worth calling in some sense perfect or even divine. Completeness gives finality, in the sense that nothing more is desired, and also that this good is the final one for the sake of which all others are wished. Hobbes’s inclusion of both terms (and his gloss on their unity) seems to affirm his understanding of the highest good in its full and strict sense. It is the reality of this kind of perfect good, and the corresponding human happiness, that is decisive and is decisively rejected by Hobbes. He does not necessarily deny that there is some kind of human good. Whether there can be a good in the absence of a complete highest good, and in what sense it is good, becomes a question for Hobbes’s account.

The strict perfection of the complete good Hobbes evokes and rejects can lead one to ask whether Hobbes is even ascribing too perfect an account of human possibilities to Aristotle and (at least in this life) Aquinas. Hobbes could be caricaturing the old thinkers into an “idealism” or optimism that he can more easily show to be at odds with imperfect human experience. Hobbes may sometimes present Aristotle or the Scholastics in this

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<sup>15</sup> *Ethics*, I, ii, 1095a15-20, p. 11.

light, but again his critique may also address a more qualified but genuine understanding of the highest good. It is not clear from the *Ethics* that Aristotle thinks we can absolutely attain the complete good in our human condition; but such perfect attainment may not be necessary to the notion of the highest good as an ultimate direction and end of human desire. Human beings can be directed towards a perfection that is progressively and significantly, if still only imperfectly, attainable, but is the completeness at which our nature aims. This direction toward a real completeness also seems to be denied by Hobbes's account, but we can keep in mind this range of possible understandings against which Hobbes draws his own account of our potential completeness.

## § 2.2. MOTION AND DESIRE

Hobbes's conception of desire for power may be understood as an interpretation of desire as much as a theory of power. I mean this not in the evident sense that any account of the leading motivating factor of desire must amount to an interpretation of desire, but that Hobbes's psychological idea of power emerges from his specific and radical reflection on the nature of human desire. Hobbes makes his idea of desire perhaps the sovereign faculty in the psyche, the prevailing human experience, and even the force that most binds together the individuated person in the flux of matter in motion.

Hobbes combines two terms, desire and power. Desire is introduced first and initially defined without reference to power as its object, both in the early works and in the early chapters of *Leviathan*. Hobbes begins, not by viewing desire in the light of any specific object, but by identifying desire with motion. In *Leviathan* this initial psychology of desire, or passion, is given in Chapter VI, "Of the Interior Beginnings of Voluntary

Motions, Commonly Called the Passions, and Speeches by Which They Are Expressed.”<sup>16</sup> Passion and desire become ultimately equivalent terms in Hobbes, even if they maintain subtle differences in resonance, since he collapses the traditional (and metaphysically grounded) distinction between action and passion, active and passive, in human thought and action.<sup>17</sup> Appetite and desire are also substantially equivalent, the former being more usually used to refer to a subset of more basic desires. In Hobbes’s account of passion, appetite, and desire in Chapter VI, power does not play a central role and is not used in its universalized sense; though, as in the earlier *Elements of Law*, it is at the root of some passions, most importantly desire for glory, or vanity or pride. Before examining this account of desire as motion, we must give it context within *Leviathan*’s overall argument and structure, more specifically within its prominent treatment of motion generally.

Hobbes is preoccupied with the concept of motion from the opening pages of *Leviathan*. Not only desire, but the senses and mind, are understood in terms of motion. It may strike readers as surprising that this book on psychology and politics opens with difficult and persistent assertions of the basis of all phenomena in motion. From the opening chapter:

All which qualities called Sensible, are in the object that causeth them, but so many several motions of the matter, by which it presseth our organs diversely. Neither in us that are pressed, are they any thing else, but divers motions; (for motion, produceth nothing but motion).<sup>18</sup>

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<sup>16</sup> *Leviathan*, VI, 27.

<sup>17</sup> See Susan James’s study of the philosophic treatment of this distinction in the early moderns and Hobbes specifically (pp. 124-156) in her *Action and Passion: The Emotions in Seventeenth-Century Philosophy*.

<sup>18</sup> *Leviathan*, I, 14.

Motion produces nothing but motion. This passage is part of an opening, polemical thrust against Aristotelian eternal essences or forms in nature, here specifically as a basis for understanding human sense perception as receptivity to form. The depiction of all human workings as motion is considered to represent Hobbes's scientifically based, mechanistic-materialist model of psychology. And the opening chapters give an account of human nature largely in the language of a modern science and physiology of motion. Some have observed, I believe accurately, that the mechanistic dimension as such does not exhaust or explain Hobbes's psychology, namely its subsequent account of the passions and moral qualities, more generally of the experiential content of consciousness.<sup>19</sup> The analysis of, say, pride cannot be deduced from the physiology of motion and, as we shall see, may even in a sense be dissolved by the uniquely scientific perspective. It is argued that the scientific basis is not only not exhaustive but not necessary for the moral or experiential account:

Though Hobbes does offer a mechanical account of appetite and aversion, he completely ignores this account when providing his analysis of more complex psychological phenomena. And though he thought one could build up a psychology from physics, he made no serious attempt to do so, and was perfectly aware that '...the cause of the motions of the mind are known, not only by ratiocination, but also by the experience of every man that takes pains to observe those motions within himself' [*De Corpore*, 73].<sup>20</sup>

Hobbes, Gert suggests, could have arrived at the same picture of human nature through only introspection and observation. It has been contended that he did precisely that in his earlier works, which express a similar human self-understanding without such explicit or extensive scientific grounding.<sup>21</sup> The scientific basis and language of human psychology

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<sup>19</sup> Strauss, *Political Philosophy of Hobbes*; Gert, "Hobbes and Psychological Egoism."

<sup>20</sup> Gert, "Hobbes and Psychological Egoism," 504.

<sup>21</sup> Strauss's argument in *Political Philosophy of Hobbes*.

in *Leviathan*, then, above all in the related concentrations on motion and power, has been interpreted as rhetorical effort to fortify the introspective account with the increasing authority of modern science.<sup>22</sup> Or the physiology of motion is a provisional attempt at scientific explanation of human phenomena, which has limited explanatory range and thus is left aside as Hobbes proceeds with his moral-political account. Such interpretations capture aspects of Hobbes's procedure and limitations of a physiological phenomenology of the mind and passions. But they do not adequately consider the significant extent of unity between Hobbes's scientific and psychological understandings of motion. Nor do they explain the scope of Hobbes's concern with motion early in *Leviathan* and, as I suggest, its necessity as part of his overall argument. If Hobbes's human sciences cannot seriously depend on this scientific foundation, why does he open the work with adamant scientific formulations?

The necessity of Hobbes's scientific doctrine in *Leviathan* may be explained both positively, as the grounds of his argument, and negatively, as the polemical weapon to clear the way for Hobbes's novel argument. In the passage from Chapter I quoted above,<sup>23</sup> Hobbes does not simply say, like Heraclitus, all is motion (though Hobbes himself does give such simpler and more positive formulations of the thought especially in his scientific work, *De Corpore*). Rather "Motion, produceth nothing but motion": Hobbes renders the idea suitably in the causal accent of modern science. More decisively he expresses it in a mode of negation or reduction, here twice like a refrain: our perceptions are not "any thing else, but divers motions; (for motion, produceth nothing but motion.)" Hobbes's polemical starting points again must be considered. Hobbes seeks

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<sup>22</sup> Strauss, 169.

<sup>23</sup> *Leviathan*, I, 14, as quoted on p. 44 above.

to destabilize the reigning Aristotelian science. His doctrine of physical motion nullifies the primacy of form over matter, of rest as the end point of motion, meaning metaphysical rest or completion as the endpoint of physical motion and of natural change which is not merely motion but realization of form. Hobbes seeks to clear away this metaphysical foundation of Aristotelian psychology of desire aiming at completion or rest, the final good. There is in *Leviathan* a thrashing, destructive current alongside the constructive. This is not simply a polemical mood or spirit but the structure of the polemical argument, which tends to reduce the more complex and formed reality to the simple and material: the apparent form is nothing but motion. Hobbes uses this “nothing but” formulation in this reductive sense 17 times in the First Part of *Leviathan*—most often “nothing but” motion.<sup>24</sup> One is tempted to call the repeated use of the phrase obsessive, but if motion is Hobbes’s ultimate principle, its defense can hardly be excessive. Still the difficulty of using motion as a basis for the subsequent psychology, may lead some to consider the opening chapters as mainly a negative polemic to clear the way for his teaching. I think this negative-polemical interpretation, while it explains a critical aspect of the difficult early chapters, can become excessive, and risks dismissing

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<sup>24</sup> “Neither in us that are pressed, are they any thing else, but divers motions; (for motion, produceth nothing but motion.)” (I, 14); “Imagination therefore is nothing but decaying sense” (II, 15); “the Discourse of the Mind... is nothing but *Seeking*” (III, 21); “When a man Reasoneth, hee does nothing else but conceive a summe totall” (V, 31); “Reason, in this sense, is nothing but Reckoning” (V, 32); “the reall effect there is nothing but Motion (VI, 40); “Contempt being nothing else but an immobility, or contumacy of the heart” (VI, 39); “By Naturall, I mean not, that which a man hath from his Birth: for that is nothing else but Sense” (VIII, 50); “Madnesse is nothing else, but too much appearing Passion” (VIII, 55); “[Knowledge of Fact] is nothing else, but Sense and Memory (IX, 60); “To praise, magnifie, or call happy, is to Honour; because nothing but goodnesse, power, and felicity is valued” (X, 64); “Such apparitions are nothing else but creatures of the Fancy” (XII, 77); “The motive, and end for which this renouncing, and transferring of Right is introduced, is nothing else but the security of a mans person, in his life, and in the means of so preserving life, as not to be weary of it” (XIV, 93); “Pardon, is nothing but granting of Peace” (XV, 106); “For in that they require nothing but endeavour” (XV, 110); “Morall Philosophy is nothing else but the Science of what is *Good*, and *Evill*, in the conversation, and Society of man-kind” (XV, 110).



the possible significance of the science of motion as a foundation in some positive sense for the psychology.

Hobbes's science of matter in motion is usually taken as representative of modern science, as reflected in the titles of materialist and mechanist applied to him. Clearly Hobbes participates in the modern scientific school of his time, and is in some sense a materialist and mechanist. But it may be helpful, first, to step back and consider that the centrality of the problem of motion is hardly unique to modern science. Quite aside from pre-Socratic philosophers of motion such as Heraclitus, in Plato the original problem may be said to be the apparent sovereignty of motion in the visible world. Plato attempts to overcome apparently universal motion by thinking through to an eternal formal structure underlying or beyond the phenomena, but the motion of all phenomena remains even then, even as a shadow, our immediate apparent reality. Aristotle integrates a principle of rest into human activity, but his solution is not without great difficulty and controversy even within the Aristotelian tradition. Indeed Hobbes's compelling argument for absolute motion attempts to drive a wedge into a difficult and sensitive part of Aristotle's doctrine on motion: How can it be that human activity as self-realization, *energeia*, can be at once complete, in a decisive sense rest, and yet also be the activity of a moving, embodied being (within nature, the science of which, physics, is the study of motion). Aristotelian physics can be said to depend on non-motional principles, such as form or pure intellect, from his metaphysics. Nonetheless it is hard to explain how a living being goes from movement toward *energeia*, to the achievement of *energeia* as significantly non-motional activity yet rest.

When considering in what sense Hobbes could be compelled by a theory of universal motion, I leave open the possibility that his path may follow generally early modern but also distinctly Hobbesian philosophic inquiry. Whatever its basis, the universality of motion as physical change can be seen as the intuition of reality most compelling to Hobbes, and he expresses it simply as such in many places, such as this sentence in *De Corpore*:

The causes of universal things (of those, at least, that have any cause) are manifest of themselves, or (as they say commonly) known to nature; so that they need no method at all; for they have all but one universal cause, which is motion.<sup>25</sup>

If Hobbes discovers this universal cause through analysis of observed effects, then it remains in a sense only a possible cause, the most compelling hypothetical cause. Yet the simplicity and absolute tone of this assertion, in a scientific not a political work, and use of the Aristotelian-sounding “manifest of themselves,” is characteristic of Hobbes’s reflections on universal motion as underlying principle of nature or reality.<sup>26</sup> Though this epistemological-metaphysical problem cannot be fully treated within the inquiry of this dissertation, later in Section 4.8 on knowledge as desire for power I will further discuss the question how Hobbes, within his skepticism and scientific methodology, might have recourse to such self-evident, pre-methodical first principles. I suggest further basis for considering the possibility that Hobbes’s motionism or materialism may be

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<sup>25</sup> *De Corpore*, VI. 5, *EW I*, 69.

<sup>26</sup> Taking this thought to its possible conclusion: Hobbes’s noumenal, as it were, is motion. This noumenal may fluctuate ambiguously between or share in two senses: 1) the original literal sense of the word, knowable by the mind as opposed to by the senses; and 2) a proto-Kantian sense as directly knowable only by the pure suprasensible intellectual intuition that human beings lack, yet still necessarily supposed or hypothetically thought by the human mind as an ultimate reality beyond the sensory or phenomenal, which latter can be more directly and certainly and scientifically known (in the Hobbesian sense, reasoned about in true propositions). Even taking Hobbes’s “noumenal” of motion in a proto-Kantian sense, it retains, compared to the more bare and formless Kantian idea, more clear and determinate content in relation to the phenomena, that is, to visible change or motion, which is a close image of this noumenal of invisible, in some sense indirectly knowable underlying universal motion.

meaningfully metaphysical, not merely methodological, to use the terms of a deep controversy in the scholarship. Certainly on the plane of the human sciences including psychology, Hobbes proceeds with effective conviction of his first principles. It seems true that he must, in the moral-political works, show conviction and certainty to the point of shutting off certain doubts and debates, in order to gain the assent required for his political understanding to be accepted and acted on. Yet I think this argument is based on genuine conviction of the principle of motion, nor is his tone so different in *De Corpore*, even if there he implies some difficulties or qualifications of the certainty of his theory.

More specifically, while Hobbes's formulation of motion turns out to be decisively modern, it may differ importantly from other and leading seventeenth-century ideas of motion. Indeed Hobbes seems to take the predominance of motion further than the main schools around him, including that of Descartes, for instance denying a principle of non-motional beginnings of human motion, and not ultimately relying on the prevalent, resurgent atomism of the time. Hobbes may not be well described simply with the general label of mechanist or materialist. Brandt's great work on Hobbes's science achieves a compelling motionalist characterization:

*Hobbes' conception of matter tends toward dissolution into a conception of motion.* Here again it is his unique insistence on and carrying out of the idea of motion which characterize him. The hardness and softness of the bodies which – seen from a primitive point of view – are accounted the primary properties of matter, are derived from motion.

So when Hobbes has been and is still called a materialist, this is in a certain sense misleading. The concept of matter plays an exceedingly small part and has a constant tendency to disappear. Hobbes should more correctly be called a motionalist, if we may be permitted to coin such a word. He is the philosopher of motion as Descartes is the philosopher of extension.<sup>27</sup>

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<sup>27</sup> Brandt, *Hobbes's Mechanical Conception of Nature*, 113.

Further, Hobbes may allow more scope for the internal motions of beings to act dynamically in relation to external motions. Herbert, while concurring emphatically with Brandt's motionalist view, qualifies Brandt's mechanistic and "kinetic" interpretation of Hobbes's motionalism, and builds on Wadkins' view of a more complex and dynamic understanding of motion:

For Hobbes, motion is not merely mechanical (though it may be discussed mechanically). The smallest and most fundamental of motions, *conatus*, is an endeavour. It is the nature of this smallest of motions to oppose and resist other motions (*DCorp*, ch. 25, art. 2, p. 391). Nature, so characterized, is opposition, resistance. Resistance already plays an integral role in the mathematical physics of Descartes, insofar as it is an adjunct of the doctrine of inertia. In Cartesian physics, a medium or another body may resist the movement of a given body, but the original body's motion is 'inert.' That is, the body itself is indifferent to the resistance or to any change in its motion. For Hobbes, on the other hand, resistance is not passive; it is dynamic and determining. Bodies come into being only through the interaction of motion, and motions are determinate only in opposition to other motions. The Cartesian doctrine of inertia has little to contribute to Hobbes's more dynamic theory.<sup>28</sup>

Hobbes may not follow a pure "kinetics" in which beings are, taken strictly, similar to perceptive billiard balls relying on inertial motion. For Hobbes, beings are dynamically in motion, exerting their own internal motions that continually determine their form and motion in dynamic interaction with external motions. This dynamic motionalism may allow Hobbes's scientific principles to play a more productive and plausible role in the formation of his psychology. This dynamic kind of motion might be a basis for explaining the character of the internal workings of beings in a way that accounts for more of the distinctly animal and human complexities and activities than the more mechanical bodies of pure kinetics. In this way motion may become a more precise image of desire; and, since power, in Hobbes's science, is the action of motion, then

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<sup>28</sup> Herbert, *Unity of Scientific and Moral Wisdom*, 53.

scientific motion may be a meaningful basis for imagining a being driven by and toward power. The interpretation of desire for power as the principle of Hobbes's psychology, to be clear, does not strictly depend on the scientific basis in motion. And I will suggest that the scientific sense of the term motion or power is not perfectly or literally transferrable or transferred by Hobbes from science to psychology, but receives a psychological rethinking in accordance with the character of human consciousness (yet remains substantially consistent with the scientific meaning). The psychology of desire for power may be enriched and grounded by an appreciation of significant basis or affinity in the science of motion and power.

It may be added, more generally, that the complete way Hobbes works out his idea of natural motion as universal principle may be a kind of model for his more general philosophic tendency, a radical pursuit of the first and simplest principle possible, not unlike Aristotle, who also continually reduces to principles. Indeed, while we tend to associate reduction with its modern tendency toward excessive disintegration of the phenomena under consideration, Aristotle uses the same term "reduce" to characterize his own analysis of phenomena to first principles.<sup>29</sup> Nagel characterizes two such modes, reductionist and reductive. Though his concentration on the criterion of materialist or non-materialist may not be the only way to distinguish the spirit of reductionist from reductive, it does seem the prevailing one, and relevant to Hobbes in his dialogue with Aristotelian and Scholastic thought:

There is a danger of terminological confusion here. I will use 'reductive' as the general term for theories that analyze the properties of complex wholes into the

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<sup>29</sup> "Now we see that the movers of the animal are intelligence and phantasia and choice and wish and appetite. And all of these can be reduced to thought and desire" (*De Motu Animalium*, 6, as cited by Monte Ransome Johnson with his modifications of Martha Nussbaum's translation in Johnson's *Aristotle on Teleology*, p. 269).

properties of their most basic elements. I will continue to use ‘reductionist’ for the more specific types of reductive theory that analyzes higher-level phenomena exclusively in terms of physical elements and their physical properties. Psychophysical reductionism is an example. The point to keep in mind is that it is possible for an antireductionist theory to be reductive, provided that the elements to which it reduces higher-level phenomena are not exclusively physical. That is the kind of reductive theory I am talking about here.<sup>30</sup>

Hobbes could reply that, materialist or otherwise, if his reduction is accurate, then it does not deserve the reductionist label but is the real reductive account. I will take up the meaning of Hobbesian reduction in Chapters 2 and 3 in the light of his explicit reduction of many desires to desire to power. There is in Hobbes’s philosophic quest a kind of pure search for clarity of principle—extending to his psychology, where it may be underappreciated amidst rhetorical and political presentation, and amidst the sheer difficulty of bringing such strict order to the seemingly ambiguous and contingent domain of the passions.

Hobbes continues a long tradition, including the Aristotelians, of discussing desire in terms of motion. Nor is this an originally philosophic analogy, as our word emotion reminds. But motion for Hobbes is absolute motion. In Aristotle, the motion of desire is a potentiality realized in the rest or completion of fulfillment or full activity. Pascal, a fellow seventeenth-century scientist and psychologist in some spirit of reduction, writes: “Our nature consists in motion; complete rest is death.”<sup>31</sup> Pascal accepts the modern scientific physics, though as a limited explanation of natural causes, not their final ground or origin. He may conceive our nature as motion insofar as we are a strictly natural being, or in his terms in the (hypothetical not final) perspective of man without God, which he dramatizes. Pascal may also be influenced, and more essentially than Hobbes, by the

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<sup>30</sup> Nagel, *Mind and Cosmos*, 14n, 54.

<sup>31</sup> *Pensées*, 129.

Augustinian picture of the sway of vain misdirected passions over fallen humanity. But for Pascal this natural motion is not final, but our heart and mind find, or may find, rest in God, in some measure in this life, and eternally. La Rochefoucauld, without explicit scientific foundation but aware of the seventeenth-century theories from his Paris circles, and with an Augustinian sensibility if not faith, but above all possessed by introspection of “continual waves” of passionate self-oriented impressions, portrays the tyranny of *amour-propre* over the soul as a “turbulent succession of its thoughts, and its eternal movements.”<sup>32</sup> La Rochefoucauld does not attempt to explain *amour-propre* scientifically or even (anti-)metaphysically; nor does he elaborate a psychological principle to give further content or direction to *amour-propre*. Nietzsche calls his will to power the “driving force,” but does not present this force in terms of motion, perhaps to avoid the sense of efficient scientific causality and motion which precisely he aims to overcome with this conception.<sup>33</sup> Hobbes, through his combination of introspection and science however cohesive, applies his same extreme or pure idea of natural motion to the human psyche as to the physical world, including the interpretation of the action of motion as

<sup>32</sup> *Maximes*, Maxim 1 in the first edition of 1664, suppressed in the following editions. My own translation.

<sup>33</sup> *Will to Power*, aphorism 688, p. 367. Nietzsche seems to conceive the will to power to overcome or displace the modern view (and the moral effects of the view) of a mechanistic universe governed by laws of efficient causality, which Hobbes expounds and within which he experiments with understanding the human. Indeed in *Will To Power* Nietzsche denies the truth of the whole modern understanding of causality. At times Nietzsche in a sense reverses Hobbes, suggesting that the notion of causality and power originates in our human self-understanding of intentionality, that we impose such concepts on inanimate nature by illusory analogy to ourselves. Nietzsche’s will to power remains, like Hobbes’s desire for power, a response to the problem of a mechanistic universe, of understanding man in such a context. But Nietzsche discards efficient causality as the basis for a psychological account, both as being illusory and unsustainable as an explanation of nature and as being an inadequate foundation for the range of human qualities or powers. He understands his concept of will to power to transcend and displace the mechanistic view as foundation for human existence and perhaps not only human. Nietzsche asserts the will to power as a cosmic principle; if one interprets this as his ultimate and metaphysical position, then he displaces strictly efficient causality universally. Perhaps Nietzsche’s formulation of will to power must itself presume a causal structure, but somehow one involving the directional and commanding character of will to power, not the directionless motion of modern efficient causality. Hobbes does not ascribe the desire for power to non-human nature, but power is his concept for the universal action of nature, the causal act of motion.

power. To the extent that Hobbes's view of motion originates in an acceptance of human sensory perception of continually changing effects (within and without us) as finally decisive information, then psychology is even the original home of Hobbes's motivationalism.

### § 2.3. DESIRE AND AVERSION

The problem of Hobbes's psychology may be further clarified and specified by considering his early or initial account, the elements of his psychology considered prior to, as I argue, his attempted unification and completion of these elements through a principle of desire for power. Whether prior in order of Hobbes's conception or written presentation, or in both respects, these elements form an already substantial Hobbesian psychology, in which the tendencies and insufficiencies point toward the further elaboration through desire for power.

Returning to Chapter VI of *Leviathan*, desire is introduced as voluntary motion, that which involves mental conception of the object or direction, as opposed to involuntary motion such as the movement of the blood. This essential human motion is shared with the animals, also capable of perception and desire, and thereby of "voluntary motion" in Hobbes's reduced sense which, in regard to freedom or unfreedom, seems to place rationality on a par with the other faculties, namely desire or passion. The Aristotelian and expected tri-partition is vegetal, animal, rational motions, with only the rational as human and voluntary. Hobbes counters with a partition between only the first two rungs. From the perspective of desire as such, it is not immediately clear that the



human difference is absolute. Hobbes will account for human difference, but he resists doing so through rationality simply, and certainly not through a special freedom.

Further Hobbes introduces the notion of endeavor, his English for *conatus*, the “small beginnings of Motion, within the body of Man.”<sup>34</sup> The *conatus* can be seen as Hobbes’s response to the problem of the beginning of particular motions of desire, which he solves, characteristically, through motion: there is no non-moving beginning of motion, only motion. The admittedly “invisible”<sup>35</sup> *conatus* is another expression of Hobbes’s absolutizing motion to the exclusion of rest or a beginning point of motion from rest. In this case, for instance, this point of rest could have been the non-motional stability of rationality moving the desire or will; or even the non-motional principle of essential form, that is, formal cause in nature, governing the movement of desire and will of animals and humans. Descartes, in contrast, does allow for a non-motional beginning of movement in human will. Hobbes’s *conatus* may be a kind of replacement for the Aristotelian solution he mocks a few paragraphs later:

For the Schooles find in meere Appetite to go, or move, no actual Motion at all: but because some Motion they must acknowledge, they call it Metaphoricall Motion; which is but an absurd speech: for though Words may be called metaphoricall; Bodies, and Motions cannot.<sup>36</sup>

Metaphorical motion is the non-physical way the final cause moves the desire; for example, one runs and eats well for the sake of health, but health does not physically move us to these activities. Hobbes makes the notion sound ridiculous by obscuring the problem it solves, or by his confidence that, as claimed, he can explain the real basis of this final-formal cause of motivation by efficient causes. Again Hobbes maintains his

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<sup>34</sup> *Leviathan*, VI, 38.

<sup>35</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>36</sup> *Ibid.*

absolutism on motion as physical motion. But to do so he must suppose a conatus that is as “invisible” to the senses as Aristotle’s metaphorical moving of the desire by final causes or ideas of good.

Hobbes more precisely divides human motion into two kinds or aspects: desire, endeavor toward the object that causes it, and aversion, endeavor away from the object. What is the relation between desire and aversion? Is one prior to the other? Or are they a neutral pair, like hot and cold? One could suggest that the motion of desire is in some sense more essential than that of aversion, the latter then being merely desire negatively considered, another name for negative desire. But on this basis, why not say that aversion, for example in the form of fear, is the more fundamental, with desire as merely the inclination to avoid the object of aversion. Motion as such does not give an evident solution to what is the essential direction of motion. The other possible disposition of this desire/aversion faculty, “immobility,” which Hobbes terms “contempt,” is absence of desire or aversion. But elsewhere he questions whether this is a genuine third category or only an apparent or relative immobility, which indeed seems the consistent or strict Hobbesian position given the unremitting motion within living beings.

If desire is simply motion, and Hobbes has denied that motion is governed by essential form, as in Aristotle, then what determines its direction? In a mechanistic or motional scheme, it is not obvious what constitutes the better or worse motion. That is, where can Hobbes find even the most elemental standard of good, that is, good from the perspective at least of the individual being composed of motions, from a principle of mere physical motion as such? If everything is motion, it is not even evident how essential is the individuation of one being from another and from the whole, since

motion, for Hobbes, is finally one causal motion which we divide into particular discrete observed causes and observed collections of accidents. Even our individuation seems to depend on the finally accidental arrangement of motions that we are: a fleeting equilibrium between our internal and the external pressures of motion, which lasts as long as we live, that is, our motions persist. The main expression of our motion is desire, both in that it moves us and we are aware of ourselves through awareness of desire arising from reaction to sense perception.<sup>37</sup> On this motional basis, Hobbes argues that motion itself tends to or wants continuity of motion, so the human analogue would be continuity of life. Hobbes appeals to the image of continuity of natural motion. In this vein he also uses the specific modern language of inertia. Even aside from controversies, into which we cannot enter, over whether Hobbes's view of motion is significantly inertial,<sup>38</sup> the overall analogy of continual motion to continual human desire for life seems powerfully compelling. It can be seen as imperfect because motion itself is indifferent to the continuity of one human life, one particular moving bundle of accidents in Hobbes's scheme taken raw. For nature, taken as motion itself or efficient causality—the two are inseparable for Hobbes—the end of one arrangement of motions in the death of a living being, is the beginning of another motion. Even to give the most basic direction to desire, the preference for life over death, or precedence of desire to aversion, Hobbes needs to leap from pure motionalism to a view of a nature that has special concern for that accidental form of motions comprising a living being. One could suggest that the very

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<sup>37</sup> The problem of explaining such consciousness, and the thinking that it includes, on grounds of motion may be the most grave difficulty of Hobbes's motional-material psychology. We leave this ultimate problem aside for now to proceed with our inquiry, but it is worth noting that Hobbes might be aware of the gravity of this problem and the possible mystery it leaves us to face in explaining consciousness (*De Corpore*, XXV. 1, *EW I*, 389). Whatever such difficulties he may or may not acknowledge, Hobbes does not seriously consider, but continually rejects, the alternative of a non-materialist or spiritual (in a non-religious sense that includes Aristotelian non-materialism or non-material mind) resolution of this problem.

<sup>38</sup> Brandt, *Mechanical Conception*, 333; Herbert, 53.

fact that these living arrangements of motion come to be, suggests that nature causes and therefore encourages them, but without a vision of forms or purposes in nature, to say nothing of a concerned God, this position seems ungrounded.

However, Hobbes's response in the argument of *Leviathan* is, without giving up the motional background in nature, to move the question to the psychological plane, the perspective of motion as we know it most immediately, desire within ourselves and in other animals. Here the appeal, for example to the priority of continuity of life, seems to have exceeding credibility. This psychological perspective may not violate the laws of Hobbesian motional nature, but it cannot be expressed uniquely in motional-physical terms. The difficulty is not so much that Hobbes needs to express every psychological nuance in physical terms. When Aristotle describes anger physically as boiling of the blood, he does not take this to be in tension with anger as desire to revenge, but makes two levels of analysis. But for Hobbes, the mechanistic or motional foundation seemed to already undermine the kinds of formal and final causes, the notions of form or good, that experientially appear to guide human desire, as he himself concedes in admitting final causes in a provisional sense for living beings in the *De Corpore* passage cited earlier. So Hobbes will posit psychological axioms he thinks not inconsistent with mechanism, but this constrains the possible axioms or definitions—though Hobbes could say, accurately constrains them to the real.

Hobbes begins from a notion of unitary desire, or desire and aversion. Before expanding his account to describe the many passions of the mind we know from experience in their variety of names, such as hope, anger, vanity, charity, etc., he notes

their root in a set of “simple Passions” from which he can derive all the variety of passions:

These simple Passions called Appetite, Desire, Love, Aversion, Hate, Joy, and Griefe, have their names for divers considerations diversified. As first, when they one succeed another, they are diversly called from the opinion men have of the likelihood of attaining what they desire. Secondly, from the object loved or hated. Thirdly, from the consideration of many of them together. Fourthly, from the Alteration or succession it selfe.<sup>39</sup>

Desire is given the various names of specific passions according to our ways of considering it: probability of attainment; positive or negative disposition to the object; collecting or grouping together according to resemblances; the fact of continual change which means succession of one form of the motion of desire by another.<sup>40</sup> Hobbes views the passions as significantly one, or few, from which many forms derive in the flux of experience and our attempt to analyze it into names. Hobbes appears to follow Descartes, whose *Passions of the Soul* he read as he wrote *Leviathan*, in reducing the passions to a set of originals. Descartes’s list differs slightly: wonder, love, hatred, desire, joy, sadness.<sup>41</sup> Both authors search for the simplest form or principle of the many passions. Both have collapsed the ruling Aristotelian-Thomistic distinction between concupiscent (desiring, averting, loving) and irascible (angry, resisting) passions, reducing the irascible to merely negative or resistive phases of desire.<sup>42</sup> This follows the Hobbesian tendency, perhaps partly in the modern scientific spirit shared with Descartes, to find precision in simplicity to the exclusion of plausibly revealing distinctions. Hobbes could argue that he

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<sup>39</sup> *Leviathan*, VI, 41.

<sup>40</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>41</sup> Descartes, *Les Passions de l’âme*, Article 69.

<sup>42</sup> Aquinas arguably concedes the derivative aspect of the irascible, but considers them significantly distinct enough to justify the distinction as a more illuminating, precise analysis of desire.

accounts for these distinctions in their more accurate place as derivative phenomena. At the least Hobbes puts superior emphasis on the aspect of original simplicity.

Regarding Hobbes's list, appetite and desire have previously been defined as substantially one, so there remain three pairs: desire and aversion, love and hate, joy and grief. But even these three pairs can be seen as forms of original desire and aversion in relative presence or possession of the object (love) and in expectation or foresight of the end or consequence (joy). Descartes has desire but no aversion (perhaps it is comprehended as the negative of desire), love and hatred, joy and sadness. The main difference is Hobbes's leaving out wonder, the first Cartesian passion and the basis for inquiry and thinking. Hobbes does subsequently include "Curiosity" among the many derived particular passions, as "Desire, to know why, and how,"<sup>43</sup> but for some reason chooses to consider it as a derivative of desire simply, not its own original, simple desire. Hobbes puts aside, at least in this stage of the account, the possibility of a distinctly intellectual principle of desire. We will consider the relation of thinking or reason to desire later. For now we note that Hobbes thus maintains a more thorough unity of original passion than even Descartes. This unity is concealed in the elaboration of the many passions, and perhaps challenged by the differences that come to light between them, particularly among the passions of the mind both social and contemplative. It is such a unity that Hobbes will attempt to recover or discover in the more elaborated simple principle of desire conceived through power.

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<sup>43</sup> *Leviathan*, VI, 42.

## § 2.4. THE GOOD AS THE DESIRED

Hobbes seeks axioms of human nature that are undeniable as the foundation of his psychology, as he declares in the opening of *Elements of Law*. He accuses previous political psychologists of under-appreciating the force of the passions over human action as well as over human understanding (and acceptance of doctrine).<sup>44</sup> In regard to desire and aversion, Hobbes implicitly gives priority to desire by expressing life itself as the continual progress of desire. But in Chapter XII he will express life as “perpetuall solicitude of the time to come,” and “perpetuall feare,”<sup>45</sup> which is a form of aversion. Surprisingly Hobbes does not, in this opening section on the passions, give thematic emphasis to a concept of self-preservation named as such; the term is not used until Chapter XIV, where the political doctrine of natural law is introduced. Similarly, there is no accent on fear of death in this depiction of the natural passions, nor does it figure prominently in, for instance, the “comparison of the life of [natural] man to a race” in *Elements of Law*.<sup>46</sup> These two famous Hobbesian axioms of the passions do receive some indirect, initial treatment through the pair of desire and aversion.

We notice that Hobbes conceives a plurality of postulates or principles he considers axiomatic in some sense. As we clarify them, we must consider their relation. If there are many axioms, they must be consistent with one another, and they must together give an adequate picture of human nature. If not, it could be that some are not meant by Hobbes as axioms, or it is possible his set of axioms, and thereby his account of human nature, does not cohere. The multiplicity of axioms can be a source of apparent tension

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<sup>44</sup> *Elements of Law*, Epistle dedicatory, 19.

<sup>45</sup> *Leviathan*, XII, 76.

<sup>46</sup> *Elements of Law*, IX. 21, 59-60.

between them. But such apparent tension or difference might be resolved in one of two compatible ways. The axioms could be thought through to a common, shared principle which is then more fundamental than the many axioms it explains. Or, consideration of their contexts may show that certain axioms bear mainly on certain aspects of human life, for instance the political dilemma or Hobbes's argument for his political solution. He may explain and emphasize a given axiom as the problem at hand requires. Different axioms capture best certain aspects of human nature. For example, in *De Cive* Hobbes declares:

Having therefore thus arrived at two maximes of humane Nature, the one arising from the *concupiscible* part [*cupiditatis naturalis*], which desires to appropriate to it selfe the use of those things in which all others have a joynt interest, the other proceeding from the *rationall*, which teaches every man to fly a contre-naturall Dissolution [to flee or avoid violent death, *mortem violentam*], as the greatest mischiefe [*summum malum*] that can arrive to Nature.<sup>47</sup>

Concupiscible desire or "greed" in Tuck's rendering,<sup>48</sup> and reasonable fear of death are Hobbesian postulates of human nature, but they do not explain the whole of human nature for him, nor perhaps even the most essential desires. They are, as here he makes clear, necessary axioms of his moral and political prescription. Neither, however, appears in the initial catalogue of the passions in Chapter VI of *Leviathan*, yet both will be asserted and dramatized in Chapter XIII on the state of nature, the first of the thoroughly

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<sup>47</sup> *De Cive*, Warrender ed., Epistle Dedicatory, 27. Latin from *OL II*, 139. Quotations from *De Cive* will be given in Warrender's edition of the 1651 English translation, for its closer affinity to Hobbes's own language; though in passages where this older version departs significantly from the original Latin meaning, I will quote from Tuck's recent, more literal translation. As with other quoted translations in this dissertation, I may add in brackets the original Latin for key terms or phrases, and occasionally also my own translation. This 1651 English version was previously thought to be plausibly Hobbes's own translation of his *De Cive*, but now scholarly opinion leans to this first English *De Cive* being more plausibly the work of another person's hand, perhaps not even reviewed by Hobbes, as Tuck argues with seemingly firm evidence in the introduction to his translation, to which I also refer ("The Translation," xxxiv-xxxvii).

<sup>48</sup> *De Cive*, Tuck ed., Epistle, 6.



political chapters. I think Hobbes's gradual unfolding of his psychology in *Leviathan* aims to reveal with increasing completeness and unity the range of axiomatic tendencies he discovers in human nature. The most clear and illuminating argument for unity would be a unifying principle, which as I argue he finds in desire for power. This does not mean the other axioms are negated, but they are not precisely first principles: they are on their own incomplete and their psychological causes not fully explained without a deeper unifying principle.

Hobbes in this opening account does seem to take the priority of life over death as a premise, in the same way that he begins from desire, the positive principle of life. He does not announce it as a premise, but perhaps it is so self-evident to most people that an argument on its behalf would already weaken its hold. Hobbes as a classicist is aware, among other forms of pessimism, of the tragic wisdom, better not to have lived, or to die. So the premise is not simply self-evident. Nor is Hobbes blind to the harshness of life and the limited nature of its joys, so I think Hobbes already takes a significant position here by favouring life over death, and one that is only partly traceable to his principle of motion. Indeed, if the preference for life is self-evident to us, does that not suggest some more final principle of good, beyond motion, governing our attraction to life over death? And now Hobbes, though he banishes the idea of a greatest good, brings in some notion of good:

But whatsoever is the object of any mans Appetite or Desire; that is it, which he for his part calleth Good: And the object of his Hate, and Aversion, Evill; And of his Contempt, Vile and Inconsiderable. For these words of Good, Evill, and Contemptible, are ever used with relation to the person that useth them: There being nothing simply and absolutely so; nor any common Rule of Good and Evill, to be taken from the nature of the objects themselves; but from the Person of the man (where there is no Common-wealth;).<sup>49</sup>

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<sup>49</sup> *Leviathan*, VI, 39.

What can be called good, is what appears as good to any person. As Hobbes says elsewhere, in the same person this may change, so the good is the apparent good at any given moment. Again the argument is polemical, and his definition of good negates as it reconstitutes (at least seventeenth-century) readers' idea of good. There is "nothing simply and absolutely" good. There is for us a Nietzschean resonance here in the polemic against good and evil (though Nietzsche, despite his perspectivist vein, would hardly express without contempt an identification of the good with anyone's perceived desire, still he may concede it as a step in argument towards redefinition of a hierarchical good under another name). Hobbes asserts positively that desire will find good in its object, which is to say, the desired is the good. This redefinition of good reinforces the rule of desire over the psyche.

Hobbes then relegates the political good to another sphere, the political or artificial as opposed to the natural order of desire described so far. Hobbes, in seemingly clearing from nature any adequate moral good, compels a division in his psychology, at least on the level of analysis and presentation, between the natural and political orders of desire (and of good). We will return to the question whether morality has a natural basis in the psyche yet cannot be generated in the natural circumstances of human beings, or whether morality is not natural, but merely an artifice conceived as an expedient to satisfy natural desires through political arrangement. Hobbes's scientific naturalism, whether taken as pure or extreme, leads to this potential tension between natural and social psychology.

## § 2.5. PLEASURE

Hobbes further elaborates his minimal and necessarily formless definition of the natural good as object desired:

The Latine Tongue has two words, whose significations approach to those of Good and Evil; but are not precisely the same; And those are *Pulchrum* and *Turpe*. Whereof the former signifies that, which by some apparent signes promiseth Good; and the later, that, which promiseth Evil. But in our Tongue we have not so generall names to expresse them by. But for *Pulchrum*, we say in some things, *Fayre*; in others, *Beautifull*, or *Handsome*; or *Gallant*, or *Honourable*, or *Comely*, or *Amiable*; and for *Turpe*, *Foule*, *Deformed*, *Ugly*, *Base*, *Nauseous*, and the like, as the subject shall require; All which words, in their proper places signifie nothing els, but the *Mine*, or Countenance, that promiseth Good and Evil. So that of Good there be three kinds; Good in the Promise, that is *Pulchrum*; Good in Effect, as the end desired, which is called *Jucundum*, *Delightfull*; and Good as the Means, which is called *Utile*, *Profitable*; and as many of Evil: For *Evill*, in Promise, is that they call *Turpe*; Evil in Effect, and End, is *Molestum*, *Unpleasant*, *Troublesome*; and Evil in the Means, Inutile, *Unprofitable*, *Unpleasant*, *Hurtfull*.

Hobbes subdivides the good into good in the promise, the beautiful; good in effect, the delightful; good as means, the useful. Again we have to consider what is left out. The beautiful, or honourable, is not good in itself, but as a promise of further good in delight. The useful also serves the end desired, which gives delight. “Delight” in its Hobbesian definition is foreseen or expected pleasure.<sup>50</sup> This passage is often taken as evidence for Hobbes’s hedonism. It may be true that he here excludes as good that which does not give delight, that is, promise pleasure. And the term most closely associated with goodness here is indeed delight, or pleasure foreseen. However, he does not even here simply identify the good with delight. More precisely the good is attainment of the end desired, which gives pleasure. This may seem an overfine distinction but I think

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<sup>50</sup> “[Delight] differs from pleasure, [annoyance] from displeasure, as being not yet present, but foreseen or expected” (*De Homine*, XI. 1, 45). The passage is cited more fully on p. 70 below.

Hobbes's account will subsequently be seen to bear it. There is a considerable sense in which Hobbes tends toward hedonism, by denying the kinds of intrinsic and final goods that are good in their specific form or activity, such as honour or contemplation, not merely for giving pleasure. And pleasure as the fruition of desire may be inseparable from the good:

This Motion, which is called Appetite, and for the apparence of it Delight, and Pleasure, seemeth to be, a corroboration of Vitall motion, and a help thereunto; and therefore such things as caused Delight, were not improperly called Jucunda, (à Juvando,) from helping or fortifying; and the contrary, Molesta, Offensive, from hindering, and troubling the motion vitall.<sup>51</sup>

Appetite, to be clear, is the same as desire, but desire is the “more generall name,” appetite sometimes referring to specific desires. So we can say desire. Remarkably, even in this increasingly psychological portrait, Hobbes begins with motion as the master term, motion which is “called” desire. Delight and pleasure are defined as the appearance and corroboration of motion or desire. In his account of desire, as in his model of perception, Hobbes distinguishes between the “real effect” of internal motions or endeavour-desire and the “appearance,” that is, the sensation of that motion as delight.<sup>52</sup> Since all nature and human nature is physical motion, delight and pleasure must be motions too and equally real, insofar as motion is a Hobbesian touchstone of reality. Hobbes characterizes the motions of the psyche, such as pleasure or perception generally or conception, as psychic appearances of underlying motions. The motion of our consciousness is a sensed or perceived or conceived appearance, perhaps psychic representation, of internal

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<sup>51</sup> *Leviathan*, VI, 40.

<sup>52</sup> “As, in Sense, that which is really within us, is (as I have sayd before) onely Motion, caused by the action of externall objects, but in apparence; to the Sight, Light and Colour; to the Eare, Sound; to the Nostrill, Odour, &c: so, when the action of the same object is continued from the Eyes, Eares, and other organs to the Heart; the reall effect there is nothing but Motion, or Endeavour; which consisteth in Appetite, or Aversion, to, or from the object moving. But the apparence, or sense of that motion, is that wee either call Delight, or Trouble Of Mind” (*Leviathan*, VI, 40).

motions of perceptive faculties or desire or thought (all originating in external motions in the world that are transmitted and transformed through our faculties into internal motions). The psychic appearance of motion, as itself a motion, cannot strictly be less real, yet Hobbes seems at times to present it at a kind of remove from the underlying motion, as if at a remove from the reality of the underlying motion (of in this case endeavour-desire). “Appearance” is not meant in contrast with “reality,” for the appearance is the real motion of psychic experience or the showing of the underlying motion, but the appearance is not identical with this motion that causes it. Hobbes considers delight and pleasure good as “corroboration of vital motion,” revealing the corroboration and help of underlying motion, and therefore the underlying motion itself of desire, to be more fundamental than the pleasure or pleasantness of its corroborating sensation.

Further, in the relation between motion and appearance of motion, it is not clear that through the appearance we can see or grasp or even infer the full nature of the motion. The complexity of the relation between motion and its appearance in the psyche, and more generally Hobbes’s possible phenomenalism, cannot be fully treated in this inquiry, where I focus on its relevance to the psychology of desire. But I could suggest there is a strangeness to this presentation. Hobbes’s motional-material monism prevents him from accounting for the mind as spirit or through any non-moving principle such as form or cosmic mind. Still he could have simply called the workings of the mind motions of the mind, but distinguishes them as appearances. I think Hobbes astutely acknowledges that his monistic motionalism requires refinement or analysis into a dualism of kinds of motion to account for the specific character of consciousness. The

motion of desire is not known to us directly, with perfect immediacy, as it were, but through its appearance in our consciousness as the sensation of delight or hopeful pleasure, or annoyance or despairing pain. Hobbes reserves for desire, whatever that invisible underlying motion ultimately is, the purer term of motion.

Pleasure, then, is not the good, rather it is the “apparence, or sense of Good,”<sup>53</sup> the sensation of the goodness of the progress and fruition of vital motion, or desire.<sup>54</sup> One might intuitively expect the appearance of pleasure to represent only fruition, but it is worth noticing that here Hobbes calls pleasure in the form of delight the appearance of desire simply. Desire itself in its motion produces pleasure. “All Appetite, Desire, and Love, is accompanied with some Delight more or lesse.” One could counter that desire, as a need, and a lack, is always accompanied by pain, as captured for example by Locke’s

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<sup>53</sup> Hobbes uses appearance of good or apparent good to mean the immediately sensed or perceived good, and this seems the initial meaning, but also to mean the perceived long-term good encompassing a chain of causes and effects and objects, that is, a complex or compounded conception of good. “But for so farre as a man seeth, if the Good in those consequences, be greater than the Evill, the whole chaine is that which Writers call *Apparent*, or *Seeming Good*. And contrarily, when the Evill exceedeth the Good, the whole is *Apparent* or *Seeming Evill*” (VI, 46). While the good apparent to sensory perception seems the initial sense of “apparent” good in Hobbes’s usage, since for Hobbes all desires and thoughts must not only originate in perception but remain within the range of the conceivable, i.e., the finite and imaginable which can appear to the mind as the perceived object or a conceivable re-arrangement of perceived objects or perhaps conceivable abstraction from perceived objects, then any properly conceivable good seems consistently described as apparent good, apparent to the conception (as indeed implied in Hobbes’s usage above for a whole chain of good and evil consequences). It is apparent or “seeming,” not because it is or tends to be merely apparent in the sense of false (in contradistinction to the real, intrinsically good object as in a classical apparent versus real distinction of true objects of desire), but simply because it appears or seems or is apprehended by the particular person at a particular time as good. It may prove, if the person’s conceived anticipation of future good be mistaken, to turn out to bring or be connected to more bad than good effects, but the term apparent good seems neutral with respect to the ultimate good or evil involved in the apparent good, and only describes the perception of its goodness by the person and inseparable desire for it. Hobbes begins the account of desire in Chapter VI with more emphasis on the immediately perceived object (sensed in animal as well as human desire), but in the catalogue of the passions later in Chapter VI, and then in the account of desires of the mind culminating in desire for power, Hobbes expands the range of the perceived object of desire clearly beyond particular sensory objects. These more complex objects of desire may be compounded or abstracted from particular sensed objects into a more complex but still (in the Hobbesian sense) conceivable object of desire, a perceived desire in this expansive sense. In the example of desire for power, it is possible that power may be considered an apparent good in the complex sense (and certainly instrumentally necessary to any apparent goods) insofar as, in desiring power, one conceives a chain of future goods, or a “whole” chain of consequences more good than bad, anticipated from one’s power.

<sup>54</sup> *Leviathan*, VI, 40.

conception of uneasiness.<sup>55</sup> And intensely so for Hobbes, since as we shall see he minimizes the aspect of fulfillment in desire. He makes desire the master term of appetitive motion, not love, which involves possession of the good to the extent possible in the Hobbesian scheme. Yet desire is presented as pleasurable. Hobbes does not make explicit the nature of this pleasure in *Leviathan*, but does so in a parallel passage in *De Homine*:

Appetite and aversion, do not differ from delight and annoyance otherwise than desire from satisfaction of desire, that is, than the future differs from the present. For appetite is delight, and aversion, annoyance; but the former differs from pleasure, the latter from displeasure, as being not yet present, but foreseen or expected.<sup>56</sup>

Desire is pleasant as anticipation of pleasure. Hobbes in both versions of the account suppresses the pain intrinsic to desire, the absence of the object. Hobbes presents desire itself as good, almost irrespective of the attainment of its object. The progress of desire brings pleasure, a kind of aliveness that is an awareness of moving towards, of future desire.

Pleasure, then, is treated with ambivalence as a secondary “good.” Hobbes would seem to be misunderstood as mainly a hedonist. Strauss ascribes to him agreement with the Epicurean view that “the good is fundamentally identical with the pleasant.”<sup>57</sup> Hobbes may be hedonist in the relative sense that he does not orient his ethics around an absolute, intrinsic moral right of the Biblical or Kantian kind. Hobbes’s political solution appeals to the more practical desires of human beings, which tend to be understood largely in

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<sup>55</sup> “Desire is uneasiness” (*An Essay Concerning Human Understanding*, Chapter XXI, “On Power,” section 32). “The motive for continuing in the same state or action, is only the present satisfaction in it; the motive to change is always some uneasiness: nothing setting us upon the change of state, or upon any new action, but some uneasiness. This is the great motive that works on the mind to put it upon action, which for shortness’ sake we will call determining of the will” (section 29). See sections 29-48.

<sup>56</sup> *De Homine*, XI. 1, 45.

<sup>57</sup> *Natural Right & History*, 188.

terms of pleasure. Perhaps Strauss means this in his formulation of Hobbes's "political hedonism."<sup>58</sup> Oakeshott, rejecting "sadly wide of the mark" hedonist interpretations, contends that:

Man, as Hobbes sees him, is not engaged in an undignified scramble for suburban pleasures; there is the greatness of great passion in his constitution.<sup>59</sup>

I concur with Oakeshott on the primacy of passion, not primarily because of an assessment of "the greatness of great passion," but in the precise sense just explained that Hobbes founds his psychology on motion-passions not governed but attended by pleasure. As argued above, the more fundamental good of progress of the "vital motion" of desire, or passion, is "corroborated" and helped by pleasure.<sup>60</sup> Such desires-passions would include Oakeshott's "great passion," but not only great passions. Oakeshott accurately evokes the range of Hobbes's account of the passions, which cannot be narrowed to smaller self-interested desires. Even his hedonism would be then a more bloodless one, but again, as Oakeshott reminds us, Hobbes accounts well for the extremes of human passion, which are rarely at the fore in hedonism, unless a hedonism so refined and derivative as to scarcely bear the name (and Hobbes may be such a case). But it is unclear so far in Hobbes what is the criterion of Oakeshott's "greatness" of passion, what is the greater and lesser, unless somehow sheer force of motion-passion. Force of motion is close to Hobbes's account of physical power in nature. Power of motion could be one way of evaluating the passions, and I will try to show that Hobbes goes remarkably far in Chapter VIII of *Leviathan* in making power or force of passion a decisive basis of human activity and ability.

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<sup>58</sup> *Ibid*, 169, 188-89.

<sup>59</sup> *Civil Association*, 78.

<sup>60</sup> *Leviathan*, VI, 40, as quoted on pp. 66-67 above.



The characterization of Hobbes as hedonist seems at best to partially capture one aspect of his psychology. Pleasure is a secondary effect rather than a constituent of good. (Even Aristotle, not a hedonist, says pleasure is inseparable from the good, the experience of the good, but not identifiable with it.<sup>61</sup>) Pleasure, but also pain, accompany all motion of desire as appearances of desire, or sensed representations of desire in the psyche (in what is roughly Hobbes's version of Aristotle's account of pleasure as an accompaniment of activity). But Hobbes cannot, as does Aristotle, refer to pleasure as a kind of perfection or completion, since desire and fulfillment are always radically incomplete, in motion. Pleasure then has a certain experiential universality in accompanying desire, but Hobbes does not, though he could, attempt to reduce or measure other apparent goods in terms of pleasure, as he does with power, and perhaps with self-preservation.

Moreover, sensual pleasure is not always presented by Hobbes as a sign or accompaniment of good: it does not indicate reliably the goodness of the desire or experience that causes it (though a nuanced hedonist would oppose or subordinate some pleasures as detracting from the real aim of total long-term, most stable, or most intense pleasure). On the contrary, for instance in the analogy of the race, the immediately "apparent," that is, sensed or perceived good of sensual pleasure seems a distraction or impediment from the ultimate apparent-perceived good of progressing toward supremacy or survival. Pleasure is inadequate as an indication of ultimate or long-term goodness.<sup>62</sup>

This unreliability reinforces its ambiguity or subordination to the consistent good, to the

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<sup>61</sup> *Ethics*, X, iv, p. 595-597.

<sup>62</sup> In *De Homine*, Hobbes opposes real apparent goods to false or deceptively apparent goods, which latter turn out to be causally annexed to more evil than good. In these terms, pleasure can equally attend a desire for a real (ultimately beneficial) perceived-apparent good or false (ultimately harmful) perceived-apparent good: "Emotions are called *perturbations* because they frequently obstruct right reasoning. They obstruct right reasoning in this, that they militate against the real good and in favor of the apparent and most immediate good, which turns out frequently to be evil when everything associated with it hath been considered" (*De Homine*, XII. 1, 55).

extent such is found, in the motion or progress of desire (some progressions of desire would seem subject to the same ultimate unreliability as pleasure). It is true that Hobbes often appeals to pleasure as a measure of goods, for example, the “perseverance of delight” in philosophy versus the “short vehemence of any carnal pleasure.”<sup>63</sup> And Hobbes reserves his two most compelling descriptions of pleasure for the significant activities of philosophy and proud glory, “contemplating their own power in the acts of conquest.”<sup>64</sup> While pleasure seems a derivative aspect of these activities, still pleasure remains inseparable from them, and a problem for Hobbes’s psychology, an irreducible and in some sense good naturalistic element but too ambiguously and indirectly good to be a first principle or axiom of his psychology.

Given the prevalence of desire and therefore also of painful lack of fulfillment, one could ask, why is desire for pleasure, rather than aversion from pain, the more fundamental? Locke, also rejecting a teleological greatest good, arrives at such an interpretation of our condition as avoidance of pain, characterized by Nathan Tarcov as “algedonism,” though in this understanding for Locke too neither pain nor pleasure are fundamental, but self-preservation.<sup>65</sup> In Hobbes’s more political presentations of his psychology, such as the state of nature, the presence of anxiety, misery, fear, and pain prevail and pressure the human consciousness. The reasonable transition to political life is dramatized as a flight from misery as much as a pursuit of happiness. I suggest that this algedonistic element is stronger in Hobbes’s thought than this initial presentation

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<sup>63</sup> *Leviathan*, VI, 42.

<sup>64</sup> *Leviathan*, VI, 42; XIII, 88.

<sup>65</sup> Tarcov, *Locke’s Education for Liberty*, 134. See Locke’s *Essay*, Ch. XXI, sections 29-48, e.g.: “And thus we see our all-wise Maker, suitably to our constitution and frame, and knowing what it is that determines the will, has put into man the uneasiness of hunger and thirst, and other natural desires, that return at their seasons, to move and determine their wills, for the preservation of themselves, and the continuation of their species” (section 34).

indicates, especially in his political philosophy. Still fundamentally Hobbes affirms some elemental natural good of desire even in its imperfect, continually incomplete form of human motion.

#### § 2.6. HONOUR, GLORY, VANITY

If desire in the earlier accounts is presented as a motion not toward any one ultimate, complete, or supreme object or good, but only toward the apparent good desired, still Hobbes in all his works portrays desire as revolving around one object in a sense, the self:

All the mindes pleasure is either Glory, (or to have a good opinion of ones selfe) or referres to Glory in the end the rest are Sensuall, or conducing to sensuality, which may be all comprehended under the word Conveniencies.<sup>66</sup>

If the mind cannot take its bearings from a complete goal, desire knows no direction or resting place, and is thrown back, as it were, on itself, on the subject of desire. Selfish desire seeks the series of goods required for survival or enjoyed for bodily pleasure, but Hobbes does not limit essential natural desire to such a practical plane, instead dwelling on our continual, passionate, evaluative awareness of ourselves. We chase apparent goods of the mind. The passage continues:

All Society therefore is either for Gain, or for Glory; (*i.e.*) not so much for love of our Fellowes, as for love of our Selves: but no society can be great, or lasting, which begins from Vain Glory; because that Glory is like Honour, if all men have it, no man hath it, for they consist in comparison and precellence; neither doth the society of others advance any whit the cause of my glorying in my selfe; for every

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<sup>66</sup> *De Cive*, I. 2, 43. Among many other passages in a similar spirit: “Sometimes the animal spirits are in concert transported by a certain joy that ariseth from their thinking themselves to be honoured (*eudokimein*); this elation of the mind is called glory, and hath this as its cause, that the spirits, because they feel that the things they say and do are approved, rise from the heart to the face as a witness of the good opinion conceived of themselves” (*De Homine*, XII. 6, 58).

man must account himself, such as he can make himself, without the help of others.<sup>67</sup>

Without an objective criterion of honour, no model of attainment or self-realization, there is no clear standard against which to understand or assess ourselves. There is nothing above us, not even our potential self-realization, our own true form. If honour were based, say, in an objective model of nobility or justice, its attainment would be worthy in itself (and, in the classical vision, involve intrinsically a flourishing and stability of mind attended by pleasure). It would not be true that “if all men have it, no man hath it,” since it is good prior to comparison. The generosity or justice or courage of a friend does not diminish mine strictly speaking. Insofar as honour depends on recognition by other human beings, there would remain the problem of others accurately and fairly discerning honour, but this is an accidental, practical problem. Honour involves a component of competition or desire to excel, not as its core content, but flowing from the genuine superiority of achieved qualities or activities. Essentially the underlying qualities that are honourable would be admirable in themselves and, if unrecognized (by minds thus by definition unsound), would retain reality for the honourable person herself and for those with eyes to see. But without a natural pattern of nobility or justice or goodness, that is, of character, honour may be hollowed out—nothing but the present, indiscriminate regard of others, the apparently honourable.

Hobbes turns the human perspective downward and more precisely sideways, as it were, to other human beings around us as the only term of comparison. This turn is consistent with his dissolution of teleological models of character and in this sense justified. What measure of human value remains but perceived human desire? But

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<sup>67</sup> *De Cive*, I, 2, 43-44.

Hobbes significantly here adds to his earlier formal account of desire the axiomatic assumption of a certain content or direction to human desire, the desire for pre-eminence. One could argue that this desire for pre-eminence is also practical and merely instrumental to the desire for preservation. It must importantly function at times as a gage of one's competitive standing in the effort to survive, and as a way of compelling the submission of others to one's service. But Hobbes depicts the passion for glory as naturally pervading the psyche and often as precisely in tension with the desire for mere self-preservation. Hobbes gives the strongest image of the desire for pre-eminence in his comparison of life to a race, the summation of his account of the passions in *Elements of Law*. He introduces the analogy in this way:

The comparison of the life of man to a race, though it holdeth not in every point, yet it holdeth so well for this our purpose that we may thereby both see and remember almost all the passions before mentioned. But this race we must suppose to have no other goal, nor no other garland, but being foremost.<sup>68</sup>

The race is not a strictly comprehensive picture of human life, but shows “almost all the passions” and supposes a clear goal, “being foremost.” The composition is worth citing in its entirety. Though Hobbes's samples of verse poetry pale next to the vigour and clarity of his marvellous prose, this unusual piece has, I believe, a hard dry beauty and graceful movement—something of the spirit of a stark, disillusioned, even modernist semi-prose poem:

To endeavour is appetite.  
To be remiss is sensuality.  
To consider them behind is glory.  
To consider them before is humility.  
To lose ground with looking back vain glory.  
To be holden, hatred.

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<sup>68</sup> *Elements of Law*, IX. 21, 59.

To turn back, repentance.  
To be in breath, hope.  
To be weary despair.  
To endeavour to overtake the next, emulation.  
To supplant or overthrow, envy.  
To resolve to break through a stop foreseen courage.  
To break through a sudden stop anger.  
To break through with ease, magnanimity.  
To lose ground by little hindrances, pusillanimity.  
To fall on the sudden is disposition to weep.  
To see another fall, disposition to laugh.  
To see one out-gone whom we would not is pity.  
To see one out-go we would not, is indignation.  
To hold fast by another is to love.  
To carry him on that so holdeth, is charity.  
To hurt one's-self for haste is shame.  
Continually to be out-gone is misery.  
Continually to out-go the next before is felicity.  
And to forsake the course is to die.<sup>69</sup>

Desire without end impels the human being through a race with no finish line. Death, the only end of the race, is merely an abandonment or disappearance from the field. Hobbes may have been familiar with this Biblical alternative among other metaphorical figures of a life's race: "I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course [race], I have kept the faith."<sup>70</sup> Hobbes gives no idea of a direction let alone an end; the only measure of direction is to be further along than the others: "Continually to out-go the next before is felicity." Hobbes's characteristic term "continually" is repeated in the first two of the three final lines, which conclude the piece in an altered poetic formula from all the preceding lines opening in infinitives. The whole series of lines, the rhetorical repetition with variation—the figure seems a kind of anaphora—conveys a sense of change and no change, continuity of motion. The infinitive is less motional than might have been the

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<sup>69</sup> *Ibid*, 59-60.

<sup>70</sup> 2 Timothy 4:7.

participle, but lends a more abstract and definitional tone. There is a Hobbesian force of inevitability and certainty to the determined motion and fate of these beings, impersonally depicted in an absolute formulaic tone.

The poem opens with appetite or desire: endeavour, the beginning of motion or attempt, is the beginning of desire. “Sensuality”, which seems to mean here ordinary and bodily pleasure, is treated as ambiguous at best, certainly not the goal; to chase sensual pleasure is “to be remiss,” to lose the way, be distracted. This is no hedonistic picture. Each takes her or his bearings by relative position to the others, behind or ahead. Glory is consideration of superiority, but there is a distinction within glory: vain glory is a deficient form of glory, indulgence in the pleasure of glory to the point of impeding one’s motion forward. Presumably proper glory can be a spur to further motion. The criterion of glory, metaphorically put in the race, seems to be space covered or motion. The real or practical criterion is not made explicit in the analogy. One conceivable candidate could be power, but, as I will discuss, power is not mentioned in the analogy. Hobbes does not yet conceive or present power as a generalized object of desire that could be the most general criterion of human striving. Though he does, in the preceding account of the passions, already indicate the fundamental importance of power as a basis for honour, closely related to glory, so perhaps there looms the relevance of power to this race for pre-eminence.

The racer seems at once isolated in solitary motion and intensely engaged with others in the psychological bondage of concern with relative place. From Hobbes’s state of nature one may expect violence, but there is little and poorly valued: to supplant or overthrow is envy, an unproductive emotion and confession of weakness, while

emulation is to overtake, which, unless it is a racing metaphor for killing, seems to mean to surpass by one's own efforts. More fundamentally, Hobbes balances the relations of competitive rivalry with generous and practically supportive human bonds. The racer takes pity on others "out-gone whom we would not," seemingly pity others for whom one has a particular attachment or perhaps whose difficulties seem undeserved (since there is also indignation for those succeeding whom we "would not"). Love is to "hold fast by another," to be attached; one seemingly shares one's fate in the race with loved ones. Charity is active care for another who loves. The cruel passion of laughter at fallen racers is balanced by love and charity for others. Love and charity are not universal, and love may involve practical mutual help rather than selflessness, but still both passions extend the self emotionally to others. Hobbes maintains some humane passions against the predominantly more severe background of selfish passions in the race.

Magnanimity brings a touch of nobility to the scene: to break through with ease, that is, to show such ability as to prevail with ease—again, to shine, to be glorious, not merely even to win practically. The race involves what we have seen Oakeshott call "great passion" alongside the more basic selfish desires. However to repent, a potentially redemptive mode of self-awareness, is reduced to a turning back, counterproductive. Repentant self-examination (perhaps though not evidently taken as self-critical concern with motive or purpose or purity as opposed to healthy striving and effect), seems effectively dismissed as useless or illusory, turning back in apparent confusion of direction, a waste of energy or motion.

Hobbes mentions that not all passions occur in the race. What is missing? Commentators have noticed that fear is strikingly not mentioned in this plausibly fearful



condition.<sup>71</sup> Despair takes its place as the opposite of hope; this represents the significant presence of drastic fear of a kind, seemingly fear of falling behind. For Hobbes despairing fear occurs in inevitable alternation with hope in all desire and attempt. Given the continual pressure to succeed evoked by the race, this prospect of despair, said to be the sentiment of weariness in the race, adds a layer of latent or present fear to the psychology of the race. Still one could suggest the race is not pervaded by fear, as is Hobbes's dramatization of the state of nature. And in the race fear is not specified as fear of a certain object, namely in Hobbes, not as fear of death. Indeed fear of death does not figure prominently in any of Hobbes's early or naturalistic accounts of the passions, but only in the more political versions. It does not seem plausible that Hobbes leaves out fear, specifically fear of death, merely because it would not fit within the analogy to a race. On the contrary, the wracking fear of death or miserable failure is nearly called for, as acknowledged in the possibility of despair. Rather it is the case that Hobbes's naturalistic psychology, prior to its more political presentation, tends not to depict fear of death as a principal, immediately natural passion. More precisely, fear is overshadowed by the natural enthusiasm for glorious victory over others. Similarly the positive desire for self-preservation does not highly figure in the analogy except as implicit means to remaining in the race for pre-eminence. If mere survival were the object, pace and victory would not be the pre-occupation and joy: to be alive but "out-gone, is misery." Reason, or calculation, is not mentioned (though it is not a passion). There is a certain prudence perhaps in not falling into the errors mentioned, sensuality or vain glory, but these failings are expressed as passionate ones. Reason does not seem to govern the person

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<sup>71</sup> Strauss, *Political Philosophy of Hobbes*, footnote 1, 150; Herbert, *Unity of Scientific and Moral Wisdom*, 93.

actively in this image of human nature. It is not clear what is the leading active faculty or desire beyond desire for victory. There is a kind of formality to the analogy: we don't know what is the underlying activity of the race, but this accurately captures the character of glory or pre-eminence taken as the goal without other standard.

Power, not a passion itself, is not mentioned in the race. The passion or desire for power as such has not yet been conceptualized by Hobbes. Power enters the account of the passions that precedes the race, though not as desire for power. Indeed the psychology of honour is introduced through the concern with power. Before defining honour, the first passion of the mind in this catalogue, Hobbes describes power:

And because the power of one man resisteth and hindereth the effects of the power of another: power simply is no more, but the excess of the power of one above that of another. For equal powers opposed, destroy one another; and such their opposition is called contention.<sup>72</sup>

Human power, like glory, is relative. Power does not signify potential for an intrinsically worthy development. And here Hobbes neglects what he seems to suggest elsewhere with his general definition,<sup>73</sup> that power can be considered as a pure ability to obtain what one wants in abstraction from other people's power, since not all goals involve competition. Perhaps power can be considered in such abstraction, but in the real circumstances of human life, it is rare or less common that one pursues a desire in sheer isolation from the effects of other people's power. When one appears to do so, for instance when one's own activity fulfils one's needs (e.g., even something so simple as hunting or getting groceries), the precondition for one's capacity to access this game or packaged food

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<sup>72</sup> *Elements of Law*, VIII. 4, 48.

<sup>73</sup> *Leviathan*, X, 62.

involves the competition for means within and between societies. So in human life, certainly in the political perspective, effective power is relative power.

Honour is then introduced in terms of this notion of power:

The acknowledgement of power is called Honour; and to honour a man (inwardly in the mind) is to conceive or acknowledge, that that man hath the odds or excess of power above him that contendeth or compareth himself.<sup>74</sup>

Honour, which was emptied of its classical content of excellence of character, receives a new kind of grounding in power. Honour is otherwise extremely vague and groundless, representing only the good opinion each has of the other without any idea on what it is based. Opinions can be illusions. Honour, or glory, can notoriously be an illusion or self-delusion. The philosophic critique of conventional honour, from Plato to Montaigne and on, and the Christian critique of worldly honour, imply that ultimately honour can tend toward empty or unclear criteria based on mere opinions or conventions. Now Hobbes asserts the true basis of what we have always called honour: relative power. Power gives a solid, natural, and real basis for honour. If motion is the touchstone of reality, and power is the action of motion, then power takes on a physical reality in nature, which Hobbes discovers as the true basis of human opinion on honour.

And honourable are those signs for which one man acknowledgeth power or excess above his concurrent in another... Beauty of person...being signs precedent of power generative...to teach or persuade are honourable, because they be signs of knowledge.<sup>75</sup>

Signs of power are honourable. Hobbes does not yet say that desire for honour is desire for power, let alone that the range of desires of the mind can be reduced to desire for power. But he puts power at the root of honour as its hard core. One can still distinguish

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<sup>74</sup> *Elements of Law*, VIII. 5, 48-49.

<sup>75</sup> *Ibid.*

between desiring power as power and desiring honour on the basis of its signifying power, so the one kind of desire has not been strictly reduced to the other, but honour has been reduced or explained as a sign of the opinion of power relative to another person. In this way Hobbes's concept of power is at the root of the thoroughly social and political concern for honour. Indeed the definition of honour as merely relative renders it more purely political than a definition of honour with potentially non- or trans-political criteria.

This definition of honour, in the race and in the account of the passions, also seems to concentrate, not on immortal honour or memory, as the grander notion of honour traditionally does, but on honour as concern for immediate opinion and signs of superiority compared to living human beings around us. This neglect of the immortal dimension of honour harmonizes with Hobbes's account or affirmation of the natural trajectory of desire generally as limited to this life, as well as with power as an object of effective use in this life. In the concern with honour and comparison, the concept of power finds another line of development, as it were, within Hobbes's psychological elements, to combine with the analysis of desire as motion in a dual genesis of the conception of desire for power. This basis in concern for relative honour and power brings a more uniquely introspective or pre-scientific grounding and a fully political dimension to the conception.

#### § 2.7. REASON

Our opening explanation of Hobbes's denial of teleological conceptions of psychology already involves his questioning of the sovereign place of reason or intellect over the psyche. In the Aristotelian-Thomistic view, among many others, reason is

considered the absolute human differentiating power and the natural master of the soul. Hobbes undermines this absolute hierarchy of reason over the passions and perhaps even the absolute nature of the distinction between the human and animal mind. Hobbes criticizes the pre-eminence of practical reason over human decisions and actions. His skeptical current of thought questions the ability of the intellect for what was previously considered pure contemplation of first causes, or suprasensible intuition or knowledge of reality.

In the account of the passions in Chapter VI of *Leviathan*, Hobbes begins by assimilating human deliberation to animal deliberation under the new name of voluntary motions or passions. In terms of freedom, previously understood to be comprised by the uniquely human rational capacity or will, the thoughts of the human mind are thrown into the deliberation process as one more factor along with various desires, with the outcome being the decision or will. Moreover, in Chapter VIII, Hobbes famously subjugates reason to the passions:

For the Thoughts, are to the Desires, as Scouts, and Spies, to range abroad, and find the way to the things Desired: All Stedinesse of the minds motion, and all quicknesse of the same, proceeding from thence.<sup>76</sup>

Desire seems to rule with reason as its servant. Hobbes compels us to consider that desire may be the governing force over the human being. His political teaching starts from acknowledgement of the force of desire over most or all human beings. And his account of human nature does not explain a harmonizing of the passions by reason, but a kind of prudent use of reason to allow the passions to proceed. Hobbes will call his laws of nature, his doctrine of natural political right, the laws of reason. And reason will help lead

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<sup>76</sup> *Leviathan*, VIII, 53.

human beings out of the state of nature. But even here, where prominent interpretations of Hobbes's political doctrine give a positive role to reason, it may respond to passion rather than mold it:

“Reason,” here, as Hobbes understood it, is not an arbitrary imposition upon the passionate nature of man; indeed, it is generated by the passion of fear itself. For fear, in human beings, is active and inventive... fear of the mischances that may befall him in the race awakens man from his dreams of vainglory (for any belief in continuous superiority is an illusion) and forces upon his attention the true precariousness of his situation.<sup>77</sup>

Oakeshott puts reason in quotes to express its undermined stature. Spurred by fear or otherwise, reason acts, not to harmonize or govern the passions but to select among them for the sake of a political remedy. Perhaps select is too strong, and reason only undermines one passion, desire for glory, allowing the other, fear, to come to the fore. Still reason somehow will be given a role in the orchestration of the passions, including the management or limitation of desire for power in a political context.

Hobbes's humbling of reason, however, leaves the human being as a trajectory of desire without clear direction. Perhaps this is in great measure our condition. But Hobbes also, having banished reason as monarch, seems to concede or bring back the powers of mind in some form as he rebuilds the human form. I will suggest that reason may not be so radically depreciated in Hobbes as often claimed. The first use of the word virtue in *Leviathan* occurs in Chapter VIII, “The Vertues called Intellectual.”<sup>78</sup> This chapter includes the “scout and spie” passage and attempts to account for intellectual strength through the passions. The heart of this account is the reduction of the differences in wit to differences in the mental desires which are reduced to desire for power. It is questionable

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<sup>77</sup> Oakeshott, *Civil Association*, 92.

<sup>78</sup> *Leviathan*, VIII, 50.

whether the passions can replace the determining role of reason. I will show that Hobbes's account of the rule of desire over reason may hit limit points in Chapter VIII, and that he effectively grants a kind of shared sovereignty to desire and reason. Hobbes gives in Chapter III a radical account of causal thinking which can be seen to attempt to integrate desire for power with thinking<sup>79</sup>; and in Chapter VIII he reduces desire for knowledge to a form of desire for power. If desire is the new principle of the psyche, it has to in some sense explain or include the power of reason, and the interpretation of desire through power allows Hobbes to attempt to re-integrate thinking into the ruling trajectory of desire.

#### § 2.8. SELF-PRESERVATION

Hobbes does not use the term final cause in the *Leviathan* counterpart to the analysis of desire in the *Elements*, where the term still appears.<sup>80</sup> In *Leviathan* he does use the term in the opening lines of Part 2, “On Commonwealth,” to describe the aims of those forming a political body to escape the miseries of the state of nature:

The finall Cause, End, or Designe of men, (who naturally love Liberty, and Dominion over others,) in the introduction of that restraint upon themselves, (in which wee see them live in Common-wealths,) is the foresight of their own preservation, and of a more contented life thereby.<sup>81</sup>

Hobbes somewhat surprisingly allows the use of “final cause,” though he has already emptied the term of its traditional and full sense expressing a complete end. Here “finall Cause, End, or Designe” seems to mean the main purpose or goal in establishing a

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<sup>79</sup> *Leviathan*, III, 21.

<sup>80</sup> *Elements of Law*, VII. 5, 44.

<sup>81</sup> *Leviathan*, XVII, 117.

commonwealth. The purpose, self-preservation and a more contented life, the latter in Hobbes's limited notion of happiness, are not final ends in the previously understood sense. Still one can, even in Aristotle, speak of the final cause of a particular desire without that desire's goal being the complete one, but again in Aristotle that usage depends on the reality of a truly final good which holds the natural structure of finality together. Hobbes could be precisely using the term in a diluted sense to transform its meaning and neutralize its stricter meaning, rather than simply dropping the term from use as irredeemable. More positively stated, we have seen that Hobbes concedes that in at least an experiential sense, desire and will and sense involve a kind of purposiveness, even if not directed to a truly final, complete end or *telos*—and even if, as Hobbes claims, ultimately explicable in terms of efficient causation. So the modified use of final cause has some role in the accurate depiction of a certain level of experience of desire. The goal of self-preservation can be considered a possibly ultimate motive and candidate for a new kind of incomplete final cause of human activities.

It is striking that Hobbes does not thematize self-preservation in the initial analysis of the passions in Chapter VI of *Leviathan*. He does describe the continuation of the motion of desire, which in a way amounts to continuation of life and hence self-preservation. But self-preservation, as the term emphasizes, concentrates most acutely on maintaining, while progress of desire involves motion and will be seen to seek increase as well as continuation. The motion of desire for power seeks infinite increase. So there are two kinds of fundamental motion described by Hobbes, or two modes or goals of human motion-desire.



Regarding the basis in scientific motion, it does not seem possible to deduce from universal motion the specific form of the principle of human motion of desire, that is, to determine whether motion-desire aims at self-preservation or at power. That is, in terms of Hobbes's analytic-synthetic method, Hobbes can analyze effects, including human desire, down to motion as a universal cause. Then, in synthetic demonstration, he can attempt to show that universal motion is a possible cause of human desire of a certain non-teleological kind that conforms to the basis of physical motion; yet both the desire for self-preservation and for power share this character of non-teleological and continual motion. Hobbes cannot show from universal motion, what the specific human motion must be, since we do not have access to the full chain of causes from motion itself to the formation of human beings. It is not impossible, for Hobbes, that further scientific discovery could fill in some of the missing causal steps, even if hypothetically. For instance, something along the lines of Darwinian fluidity of species not only fits but is needed for Hobbes to demonstrate that motion itself, without substantial form, can produce the apparent order of individuated beings from assembled accidents of motion. So in determining the relative primacy of desire for self-preservation and desire for power (both being in harmony with the science of desire as motion), Hobbes remains consistent with his method by also relying on specific introspection and observation. Hobbes's scientific notion of power still plays a role by helping clarify what he means to express by power in desire for power.

On a more intuitive and psychological level, one could approach the question of self-preservation as the good by asking how much of the human good such a goal can explain. It seems clear that self-preservation is a good for all living beings in all but the

most hopeless and tormented circumstances, and perhaps even then. Indeed, the attention given to the possible primacy of self-preservation as good in Hobbes and other early moderns, and the later modern revolt against such a limitation of the human good, above all in Nietzsche, may lead us to forget that Hobbes was far from the first to present this desire as fundamental. Aquinas begins his account of human inclinations from self-preservation:

Because in man there is first of all an inclination to good in accordance with the nature which he has in common with all substances: inasmuch as every substance seeks the preservation of its own being, according to its nature: and by reason of this inclination, whatever is a means of preserving human life, and of warding off its obstacles, belongs to the natural law. Secondly, there is in man an inclination to things that pertain to him more specially, according to that nature which he has in common with other animals... such as sexual intercourse, education of offspring and so forth. Thirdly, there is in man an inclination to good, according to the nature of his reason, which nature is proper to him: thus man has a natural inclination to know the truth about God, and to live in society: and in this respect, whatever pertains to this inclination belongs to the natural law; for instance, to shun ignorance, to avoid offending those among whom one has to live.<sup>82</sup>

One could perhaps suggest that in the extended sense of the word, self-preservation includes even the second level of inclination involved in care for the species. But even that would be imprecise in Hobbes, where the egoist beginning point of both his psychological presentation (in this opening account we have seen little of the social aspect, though such some layer will be added) and picture of the state of nature fail to give a compelling motive of concern for species. In any event, the real limitation of self-preservation as a psychological principle comes in light of the more distinctly human activities, such as the arts, politics, and contemplation. It is not impossible to try to explain these as instrumental to self-preservation, and Hobbes at times may appear to do so, emphasizing their practical benefits. But even if these activities have beneficial effects

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<sup>82</sup> *Summa*, First Part of Second Part. Q 94, A2.

for self-preservation, it seems difficult to explain the desire for them only on that basis. Further, Hobbes mentions not only survival, but “a more contented life.” Even instrumentally, such activities may be good not merely for self-preservation, but also for amplification of various other activities. Moreover, these activities themselves seem to generate increased degrees of desire-happiness in Hobbes’s redefined sense of the term. It is worth considering that Hobbes does not think he has adequately characterized the range of human desire or activity through the mere inclination to continue living. Hobbes does not clearly give to reason, and the rational desires, the governing and explanatory role they play in Aristotle. Still in the structure of his psychology he may search for a replacement for the third level of Aquinas’s inclinations, taking him beyond self-preservation to a principle of power.

When Hobbes in the *Leviathan* Chapter VI passage quoted above denies anything to be “good” by nature “simply and absolutely,”<sup>83</sup> one could ask whether he is not on some level contradicting himself. We had supposed that he takes continuation of life as good. Presumably this good is desired by any person of healthy mind. So there may be a basic level on which there is for Hobbes something good simply for human beings. And Hobbes writes just this in *De Homine*: “The greatest of goods for each is his own preservation.”<sup>84</sup> This is one of many Hobbes statements of various axioms, which, taken in isolation, seems to represent a final view. Yet the presence of many various such statements across different books or within the same work requires us to balance and analyze them to attempt to put Hobbes’s various statements into order. In this case, several pages later Hobbes writes:

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<sup>83</sup> *Leviathan*, VI, 39.

<sup>84</sup> *De Homine*, XI, 15, 48.

For of goods, the greatest is always progressing towards ever further ends with the least hindrance. Even the enjoyment of a desire, when we are enjoying it, is an appetite, namely the motion of the mind to enjoy by parts, the thing that it is enjoying. For life is perpetual motion that, when it cannot progress in a straight line, is converted into circular motion.<sup>85</sup>

Self-preservation does not intrinsically involve progressing to ever further ends, though some such progress may help ensure self-preservation, or also endanger it, depending on the ends pursued. Hobbes here describes another kind of trajectory of desire altogether. “Ever further ends” suggests progressive increase or extension of some kind.

The movement from desire to desire, the extreme eclipse of any stable fulfillment—“Even the enjoyment of a desire, when we are enjoying it, is an appetite”—gracefully expresses the restless impulsion of Hobbesian desire. This picture of infinite progressive desire, moving further but without final direction, resembles closely the passages on desire that form the basis in *Leviathan* for Hobbes’s characterization of desire for power. Hobbes does not so name this vision of desire in *De Homine*, where the concept of power is less present than in *Elements of Law* let alone *Leviathan*. This could be explained by the early composition of *De Homine*, though the date is controversial (and in any case not a perfect explanation). But even without the term power, this conception of desire already goes beyond the desire for self-preservation, and shows a fundamental Hobbesian conception of indefinitely progressive desire which points toward desire as desire for power.

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<sup>85</sup> *De Homine*, XI. 15, 54.

## § 2.9. THE IMPOSSIBILITY OF HAPPINESS

Hobbes replaces the classical movement of desire toward rest by permanent motion. In Aristotle, it is unclear whether human beings achieve perfect rest in the sense of a pure activity of happiness. But a degree or approach to perfection can be achieved, such that Aristotle will call the fulfillment of desire, or the summation of activity, a kind of rest or completion. That kind of total flourishing is what he means by happiness. Hobbes's doctrine of desire as motion fractures the idea of any such happiness. The psychological account we have been following in Chapter VI of *Leviathan* culminates in this way:

Continuall successe in obtaining those things which a man from time to time desireth, that is to say, continuall prospering, is that men call Felicity; I mean the Felicity of this life. For there is no such thing as perpetuall Tranquillity of mind, while we live here<sup>86</sup>; because Life it selfe is but Motion, and can never be without Desire, nor without Feare, no more than without Sense.

“Perpetuall tranquillity of mind” is one of Hobbes's more absolute formulations of complete happiness, perhaps aimed especially at the serene human flourishing evoked by Aristotelian contemplative *energeia* or Stoic *ataraxia* or *tranquillitas*<sup>87</sup> or *beatitudo*.<sup>88</sup>

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<sup>86</sup> As Curley notes, the OL leaves out “here” (*Leviathan*, ed. Curley, p. 34, footnote 6).

<sup>87</sup> Cicero's translation of *euthymia*, which seems to have been used closely with *ataraxia* within the Stoic school (*De Finibus*, Book V, section 23).

<sup>88</sup> One of the terms Augustine uses prominently in his presentation and critique of the Stoics; he seems to extend a similar sense of the term in some ways to other ancient schools including that of Aristotle. See among other places *City of God*, Book XIX, Chapters 4-5. Hobbes, like Montaigne, shares, if on radically different foundations, main lines of the Christian critique of ancient philosophic conceptions of perfect happiness in this life. Hobbes may or arguably may not share Christian faith in eternal personal happiness or an afterlife. Hobbes does not discuss the prospect of eternal happiness in his account of human nature in the First and Second Parts of *Leviathan*, except to say that such happiness would not in any case be conceivable (to the finite human mind). Still, even if a potential afterlife is said to belong not to human nature but to a supernatural sphere, and therefore cannot be discussed within Hobbes's natural psychology, still the genuine prospect, let alone faith in, an afterlife of eternal happiness may be thought to have a profound effect on the human disposition toward the happiness of this life, i.e., the relative importance of human concern with and motivation in thought and action to achieve eternal happiness as opposed to securing what partial happiness is possible in this life. There seems to be no such effect of any eternal perspective of happiness on the human concerns or motivations for happiness in this life as explained by

Hobbes's critique here, like his more measured denial of "the repose of a mind satisfied" which accompanied the rejection of the *summum bonum* from which we began our inquiry, applies precisely to Aristotle's model of completely realized and satisfied activity of the intellect (and in some significant degree also practical or ethical activity). Hobbes redefines happiness as perpetual desire, or a kind of succession of momentary joys to be taken as limited goods.

For if the end be final, there would be nothing to long for, nothing to desire; whence it follows not only that nothing would itself be a good from that time on, but also that man would not even feel. For all sense is conjoined with some appetite or aversion; and not to feel is not to live.<sup>89</sup>

Hobbes reverses the *reductio* of Aristotle: If there is a final end, then there would be no desire. Therefore, there cannot be a final end in the full sense. No good can even be imagined without desire. The absolute continuity of motion is axiomatic for Hobbes.

Insofar as there is any continuity of some ambivalent joyfulness, it may be in the unified contemplation of a potentially joyful future progress of desire: not merely the anticipation of one desire that disappears into the next as in the previous depiction in *De Homine*; but the thought or hope of sustained flow of such joys and perhaps their increase in magnitude or probability. Happiness is transformed from the realization in fulfilled activity of a potentiality in desire, to the enjoyment of potentiality of desire. Such an interpretation of happiness as potential desire is the coherent foundation, nearly the expression, of a main current of desire as desire for power.

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Hobbes in his psychology. Rather Hobbes concentrates on and directs our energies to understanding and improving the possible enjoyment of desire in this life, including drawing or constraining its objects—even worldly objects such as human honour and glory, previously seen as ultimately immortal glory—within the perspective of this life. All effort at continuation of desire seems to focus on extending the progress of desire by self-preservation of this human life in the face of death.

<sup>89</sup> *De Homine*, XI. 15, 53-54.

### 3. THE CONCEPT OF DESIRE FOR POWER

#### § 3.1. OPENING DEFINITION: POWER AS MEANS UNIVERSALIZED

Hobbes gives his first and most direct definition of the term power as relates to psychology in *Leviathan* in Chapter X, entitled “Of Power, Worth, Dignity, Honour, and Worthinesse.” The latter four qualities—along with a catalogue of other qualities as well as abilities and attainments—turn out to be presented here in terms of power, the ultimate subject of this chapter. Hobbes opens:

The Power of a Man, (to take it Universally,) is his present means, to obtain some future apparent Good.<sup>1</sup>

Hobbes’s sentence can seem simple but he succinctly both empties and expands the philosophic notion of power.

In this definition Hobbes considers “the Power of a Man,” the entire power as one, not many powers; and that power as possessed by the whole person, not by parts or aspects of the person. Classically, Aristotle, the first to conceptually elaborate the philosophic term power or potentiality, *dynamis*, speaks of the whole power of a human being, and within it also the various particular powers of parts. There are specific powers or abilities, that of eyes or the intellect, corresponding to a specific realization or act or activity, *energeia*, of seeing or thinking. Such power as *dynamis* is inconceivable except in relation to its corresponding *energeia*, as the potential ability for the specific activity of seeing. The potentialities of the parts are only comprehended in light of the potentiality and realization of the whole human being, the human form, whose perfect activity is the

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<sup>1</sup> *Leviathan*, X, 62.

joint purpose of the parts; and its totality, the realization of natural potentiality, is human happiness or flourishing. This activity includes, in a hierarchy of means to ends to final end, various activities which involve various powers, for instance the powers of prudent deliberation and persuasion in political excellence, the power of thinking in theoretical contemplation, or more basically the powers of breathing or digesting or walking for health, itself instrumental to further activity (such as politics or contemplation). These various powers are distinct but unified through the unity of their direction and end of human perfection or happiness.<sup>2</sup>

When Aristotle, as well as Thucydides and the Greeks generally in everyday language, speaks of a person's power without specification, and not the potentiality of soul and body, but rather as an acquired possession or attribute, this refers specifically to political power of an individual or group<sup>3</sup> (perhaps also indirectly to social influence through relations to the politically powerful). In this usage the same Greek word *dynamis* can take on a meaning similar to our English power, but decisively it is not generalized or generalizable across all the abilities of the person, but concerns their power in the domain

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<sup>2</sup> If there is a tension between, say, practical powers and excellence in politics, and theoretical excellence in contemplation, this could mean, taking the tension radically, that there are two human models or ends in Aristotle. But in the more orthodox and accepted understanding, practical excellence is a less perfect or complete form of excellence than theoretical; the achievement of the latter may be in tension with, in the sense of displace and recast the significance of, practical excellence, but it would not oppose it, and may include its principal excellence, prudence of the intellect, in its more complete form as theoretical wisdom. This question of Aristotelian interpretation is not to be resolved here, but in either case, the many human powers or abilities are comprehended under the one highest form of perfection, even if there be two such forms in human beings, to which they contribute as means or stages of self-perfection.

<sup>3</sup> “Wherefore those who are or seem highly successful are insolent, contemptuous, and rash, and what makes them such is wealth, strength, a number of friends, power [*dynamis*]” (*Art of Rhetoric*, II, v, 14). “Those men are worthy of commendation who following the natural inclination of man in desiring rule over others are juster than for their own power [*dynamis*] they need” (*Peloponnesian War*, Hobbes trans., Book I, section 76, 44-45); “you likewise, and others that should have the same power [*dynamis*] which we have, would do the same” (Bk. 5, 105, 2, 368). In this instance Aristotle adds the adjective “political” to emphasize the political specification of power: “Many noble actions require instruments for their performance, in the shape of friends or wealth or political power [*politikēs dynamēs*]” (*Ethics*, I, 8, 1099b2, p. 43). As one translator of Aristotle's *Rhetoric* notes, powers in the plural, *dynamis*, may mean “capacities of mind and body” or “positions of authority and influence,” political position; see footnote 27, pp. 122-23 below regarding this passage from the *Rhetoric*.



of politics (of course including, especially in the case of groups, military force). The political may be the domain in which the greatest human power is exhibited, but remains a specific kind and context of power. For Hobbes, more so than for Aristotle, this originally, naturally political sense of power will be a root of his philosophic development of the term.

This Greek political usage, as in English, lends itself to the adjectival form, a powerful person or country, whereas Aristotle's philosophically conceptualized power-potentiality does not: a person as human person has potentiality, of which the true measure comes in its degree of realization. One does not have more or less potentiality, but actualizes human potentiality. In a sense a naturally gifted person has greater potentiality, but again power thus understood, *dynamis*, is not really even possessed as "powerful" until realized in *energeia*. A person becomes what we might call powerful, in command of their powers and perhaps external powers, in realization of power-potentiality.

Power can evidently also mean, in both Greek and English, bare ability or capacity in the simple, naturally used sense, as in the various powers of sight or singing or fighting. And such power as ability seems most of all to be the original everyday meaning from which Aristotle conceptualizes *dynamis* within his metaphysical *dynamis-energeia* structure of being. Power as capacity is one of the core meanings for Hobbes as he conceptualizes power, but his conceptualization will involve a prior de-conceptualization or destruction of Aristotle's *dynamis-energeia* structure of meaning,

from which point he re-launches a concept of capacity in a new sense, incorporating further elements beyond capacity as such.<sup>4</sup>

Hobbes does not, and cannot plausibly, deny the intuitive impression of a certain purposive function, or range of possible functions, in the human being and especially the analyzable parts of the human mind-body, e.g., eyes have the capacity for seeing. He does not deny the phenomena of such powers, but radically reinterprets their nature and basis. Even on the basic biological level of body and organs he does not explain the power-ability of, say, the eye as a potentiality that is only realized as *energeia*. He rejects and lets fall away this dual *dynamis-energeia* structure of reality, power-potentiality to act-reality, physical and metaphysical. Neither does Hobbes deny that the mind in some sense has the power of thinking, or that the body and mind, ultimately in Hobbes's

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<sup>4</sup> It is worth considering the ancient and modern sources of the word power as received, selected, and modified by Hobbes. I suggest these five as most relevant in the lineage:

1) Aristotelian *dynamis-energeia* structure. As per the exposition in this chapter, Hobbes's notion of power repudiates and reworks Aristotle's model of *dynamis-energeia* or *potentia-actus*, collapsing purposeful potential-realization into his more abstract, open-ended, and universalized term power, for which there appears no ancient equivalent at least as relates to human capacities. Plato lets us consider a conception of being as *dynamis* in his *Sophist*, though it does not seem to be Plato's own understanding, but rather closer to that of a proto-Hobbesian metaphysical materialist (see the Eleatic Stranger's speech, 247e).

2) Hobbes integrates into power something of the more concrete and common political usages of *kratos* and most directly *potestas*, or political authority, which are present in the English word power before Hobbes, this being mainly the power of the sovereign, civil or ecclesiastical power, "the powers that be" as in the King James translation.

3) Augustinian *libido dominandi*. Another premodern source for Hobbes's conception of desire for power, and the rule of desire simply, is Augustinian concupiscence, especially one of its forms *libido dominandi*. Also relevant may be the tyrannical impulsion of desire in certain forms of Platonic Eros and on the mainly political plane in Livy's *cupido regni*.

4) Theological concept of omnipotence. Insofar as omnipotence is a theological, not strictly Biblical, concept, it may also point to classical metaphysical notions. Hobbes reflects on power as a divine attribute, but it is uncertain whether as knowable, postulated hypothetically, or ascribed by human reverence. Hobbes's assertion of desire for power may in some sense imitate, usurp, or strictly disregard divine power real or imagined. Hobbes may have taken his theological notion of omnipotence from a wide range of authors, such as Augustine, Aquinas, Scotus and Ockham, and Luther and Calvin.

5) Modern scientific understandings of power. Power is a key term in the modern science which Hobbes accepts and expounds, most fully in *De Corpore*. The spirit of the scientific usage seems present in Hobbes's application of power to the human subject: the non-teleological sense, predominance of efficient causality, motion over rest; overall, the reductive mode. As discussed in Chapters 1 and 2, I argue Hobbes genuinely intends and significantly achieves a psychological account of human inclination to power that harmonizes with his scientific principles with due adjustments for differences in subject matter.

account the body including mind, have the power of desiring.<sup>5</sup> On the contrary he begins with his account of human nature in *Elements of Law* by defining human nature as a sum of powers:

Man's nature is the sum of his natural faculties and powers, as the faculties of nutrition, motion, generation, sense, reason, etc. For these powers we do unanimously call natural, and are contained in the definition of man, under these words, animal and rational.<sup>6</sup>

Hobbes here uses powers synonymously with faculties in the sense of capacities. This definition at first glance could nearly be written by Aristotle, but in regard to the order or organization of the powers, "sum" has a possibly leveling quantitative neutrality. In contrast Aristotle presents the powers in clear hierarchy: throughout nature as a hierarchy of three kinds of soul, nutritive, perceptive, and rational; then within the uniquely rational human animal, in hierarchy with reason sovereign over desires, or harmonizing desires to its rational order of ends, in both practical and contemplative activity. Hobbes follows a general distinction nutritive, perceptive, rational, but the hierarchic relation between bodily motion, desire, and reason is not so clear or absolute. Hobbes gives no clear hierarchy of ends for the desires, nor does he make reason naturally sovereign, leaving a lack of order among the human sum or bundle of powers. This characterization of human beings as a sum of powers is an initial statement, minimally suggesting the general character of these powers but requiring substantive definition in the accounts that follow in *Elements of Law* and fully in *Leviathan*.

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<sup>5</sup> Desire or passion seems to be a power in the sense of capacity and power in the causal sense, since desire moves or motivates; for Hobbes capacity may be understood simply or primarily as causal capacity. Desire is traced to "small beginnings of motion, within the body of man... commonly called Endeavour," his English rendering of *conatus* (*Leviathan*, VI, 38). Hobbes will elaborate on desires as a mix of such bodily motion and thoughts or motions of the mind, which are ultimately an analyzed and meaningfully distinguished aspect of the bodily.

<sup>6</sup> *Elements of Law*, I. 4, 21.

However this sum of powers may be composed, Hobbes presents the powers as natural abilities. In the case of especially the distinctly human capacities, reason and the complex passions, the explanation of intended activity and direction of our powers becomes more problematic. For Hobbes neither specific powers nor the whole human activity are explained as aspects of a nature governed by form. In his scientific reformation of formerly metaphysical terms, the generation of a human being is not the embodied, in-mattered realization of an eternal human form, a non-moving pattern beyond the flux of matter in motion. Generation and continuation of life is somehow a set of accidental motions so combined as to maintain their cohesion, a kind of effective form, in motional interaction with the external motions of the world. On this scientific basis in *De Corpore*, arguably grounded in a new scientific metaphysics, Hobbes allows that this living arrangement of motions constituting a human being be called “form,” which is said to “proceed all from the same beginning of motion, namely, that which was in his generation.”<sup>7</sup> As “motion produceth nothing but motion,” Hobbes reduces the cause of form to the efficient and material, that is, the motion of matter, appearing to render human form and its organic functions ultimately contingent<sup>8</sup> or fluid.

In more immediately psychological terms, there may be no fixed model of what the human form should be, what form of development and activity is best for this being—if the human form, in the Hobbesian sense of formative undirected motions, can strictly be said to take on coherence or goodness. Nature, including human nature, seems not to

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<sup>7</sup> *De Corpore*, XI. 7, *EW I*, 137-38.

<sup>8</sup> By contingent here I mean that the human form, not having any formal reality beyond its many particular embodiments in time, is subject in its origin, generation, and form to fluctuation or disappearance to be explained only by Hobbes through the cause of undirected but efficiently directing motion. But in Hobbes’s strict and deterministic scientific terms, no motion in nature, i.e., nothing that happens in the universe, can be “contingent” in the sense of not absolutely determined by the causal force of motion. Events can appear contingent to us because we cannot know all their causes.

be taken axiomatically as tending either to well-constituted order (in human terms, completion or happiness), or on the contrary to chaos (simple vanity or futility). Motion somehow orders motion sufficiently to produce significant patterns of form whatever their ultimate grounds and imperfect coherence. Within the human form of motions, then, the parts such as eye or mind are not ordered to act by receiving form or “species” from the external world, as Aristotle puts it, which account of sensation Hobbes rejects with mockery as a sample of the “insignificant speech” of the university of his time, to be replaced by his account of “so many several motions of the matter” which aims to explain the eye’s function as interaction of finally accidental, that is, undirected, internal and external motions.<sup>9</sup> We may be in Hobbes’s new sense a bundle of powers, but the definition of their order and direction, most notably for the powers of mind and passion, cannot be drawn from the architecture of a complete human form. Even on the level of perception, it may be obvious that the eye sees, but not how, especially in the full formal sense that includes the relation of seeing to our awareness of sight; nor ultimately why, to what end beyond the act of perception itself, which in Aristotle is ultimately inseparable from the formal-final order that explains the seeing, where perception, in the rational animal, is ultimately in the service of rational ends.<sup>10</sup>

Hobbes’s idea of pure motion recasts even the most basic biological functioning, which he and Aristotle both call the nutritive. Hobbes’s “involuntary motion” in the

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<sup>9</sup> *Leviathan*, 1, 14.

<sup>10</sup> One could suggest that for Aristotle, human perception, though we share perception with the animals, can never be the same as animal perception, can never be perception simply, since it functions through or in relation to a mind or consciousness that is rational. A human being, seeing an object, is aware of the object rationally in some degree, e.g., wonders what it is. Even in being aware that we see an object, we have a more than animal self-awareness, in saying to ourselves, this is a cat or whatever else. For Aristotle, rationality, as it were, goes all the way down, pervades all levels of the being in actual functioning or at least in the final end of the functioning. Hobbes will give his version of a distinctive human rationality. I will suggest that for Hobbes also reason may pervade the senses and passions, if in a different way, at least mixing with them if not naturally governing them.

account of Chapter VI of *Leviathan* involves the unconscious motions, such as breathing, nutrition, excretion, the immediate purpose of which is obvious enough. The first motion Hobbes mentions, “the *course* of the *bloud*,” brings to mind the historical controversy over the circulation of the blood. Hobbes, not much given to praise of his contemporaries, admires the discovery of his countryman Harvey that the blood circulates continually.<sup>11</sup> Here Hobbes finds most visceral corroboration for his intuition of absolute motion. He thus affirms an explanation for the continuation of biological motion, which does not start from a formal principal of non-motion or rest, such as the Aristotelian soul.

Hobbes looks for the same kind of motional explanation for even the seemingly less visceral “voluntary” powers of desire and mind. Hobbes distinguishes them in *Elements of Law*, referring back to his definition of man’s nature as the sum of faculty-powers:

And by this power I mean the same with the faculties of body and mind, mentioned in the first chapter [cited above], that is to say, of the body, nutritive, generative, motive; and of the mind, knowledge. And besides those, such farther powers, as by them are acquired (viz.) riches, place of authority, friendship or favour, and good fortune; which last is really nothing else but the favour of God Almighty.”<sup>12</sup>

Hobbes identifies the power of the mind with knowledge. He does not clearly place the desires-passions. If they are considered as powers motive, then they are with the body: the desires, motions themselves, also move or motivate, but by “motive” here it seems Hobbes means physical movement. He does not place the desires in the body or mind. They seem, as even the dualist Descartes maintains in his *Passions of the Soul*, which Hobbes read as he composed *Leviathan* (but after *Elements of Law*), to involve a mixture

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<sup>11</sup> *De Corpore*, XXV. 12, *EWI*, 407.

<sup>12</sup> *Elements of Law*, VIII. 4, 48.

of mind and body. In Hobbes's monism the mind-body distinction is not absolute or substantial, but a mode of analysis, strictly speaking, for various functions of one bundle of motions-powers. The ultimate mixedness of human desire and thought may be exemplified more thoroughly in Hobbes than in Descartes or Aristotle through the combination of the two main kinds of human powers in desire for power.

What, then, if not a specific realized form of its potential activity, gives definition to human power or powers? Hobbes's opening definition of power in Chapter X as "present means" gives no vision of what a person's power becomes, as for a potentiality known through its realization, but only what it aims to obtain, "some future apparent Good."<sup>13</sup> Hobbes puts distance between the power, which is no longer capable of a realization, and the object or end of power. Hobbes speaks of the entire power of a human being, but this entirety is not a naturally whole potentiality-power of a human being. Or, if the person's power may be a natural whole in some sense, Hobbes must discover or construct this whole by, as he puts it, "taking it [power] Universally."

Taking power universally means considering all particular kinds of power or powers through one universal concept of power. Hobbes needs to take power universally because in ordinary, pre-scientific experience and language we become aware of power through many and different phenomena, which we name separately or name by grouping together similar instances into kinds. Borrowing examples from Hobbes, we understand physical strength, seen through many particular acts or at least appearances of strength, as an attribute of its own at least first of all; similarly knowledge or wealth. Even natural capacities such as seeing may be known through many or repeated instances of seeing,

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<sup>13</sup> *Leviathan*, X, 62.

though there is a probable continuity of capacity<sup>14</sup>; in any case, seeing is a particular ability or power, as is thinking which may be further divided into kinds of thinking. It may not be self-evident that knowledge or wealth or physical strength are all kinds of power, but even when considered as such, they remain distinct, particular kinds of power, comprehended and named as such. To take a person's power universally is to conceive of a person's general power encompassing all particular kinds of power as one uniform term of power. To form this generalized meaning of power, Hobbes abstracts from particular human actions and kind and ends involving power.

It may be helpful to consider that, even before we consider the abstraction from particular kinds of observed human power, there is a separate, more primary abstraction required to consider power itself simply as a concept. In Hobbes's science, the action of power in nature cannot be seen, but only inferred from its effects. Power is strictly speaking invisible, or its conception in our minds depends on inference from the visible to the invisible. Hobbes's psychology of mind excludes, in principle, an intellectual intuition that is suprasensible or capable of intuiting directly the first principles of nature through or beyond perception of sensibles as can Aristotelian mind, or *nous*. Whether Hobbes requires or implicitly relies on such an intuition in his conviction of grasping undemonstrated first principles, namely motion, seems an ultimate problem in his thought. But on his professed principles of mind and perception, one can conceive of power not through intuition directly, nor strictly from the senses, but on the basis of immediate and intuitive inference from the sensation of effects, e.g., that a person or animal or wind is causing some perceptible change, which we call exerting power.

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<sup>14</sup> For Aristotle we may require experience to intuit the eternal human form which includes powers such as seeing and thinking, but the power is then known as an aspect of the human or the rational form, not merely as an ability observed in many particular human beings at particular times.



Power, as the causing of change, is the casual action of motion, but considered in regard to the future. We abstract or generalize this future causing of effects from its particular and various occurrences to form the abstract and universal concept of power.<sup>15</sup> In the case

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<sup>15</sup> One may also wonder about the status of the basic abstraction of the power concept itself, since Hobbes's philosophy of language strictly denies the reality of universals, that is, denies that our words for universal abstract concepts correspond to a real universal in nature. It then seems a question in what sense he can speak of a universal—to be clear, this concerns the grounding of a separate order of abstraction from our immediate subject of Hobbes's "taking universally" the various kinds of human power: the kind of abstraction involved in the concept "power" or other universal names is simply necessary to human thinking; Hobbes's generalizing of various human powers to a universalized notion of human power, is a second order of abstraction, not necessary to the human mind simply but one interpretation of human powers. Hobbes does not consider the act of abstraction or its product, the abstract name or concept, as natural in the strict sense of conceiving or seeing a direct form of reality. Of course this problem applies to any universal term used by Hobbes, including "human being," but power, like motion, as an abstraction or conception of an originally universal first principle of nature, and an invisible force inferred from particular events not from particular beings, makes for an especially interesting case (I will touch further on the universal human being in § 3.4, footnote 42, p. 135). Hobbes clearly proceeds to speak of power (or human nature) as a general concept, and in his qualified sense he can coherently describe the set of common accidental elements observed in many particular actions of power (or particular human beings) as characteristic of power (or the human being). Perhaps Hobbes would argue that in the case of power, while there is no self-subsisting universal of power, there is a universality across all instances of power, as there is not across all human beings, because power is the action or expression of the universal force of nature, motion. The particular or accidental, then, belongs to the various forms taken by matter in motion, such as various human beings, but not to motion or causality or power itself. As such motion or power can be intellectually distilled or abstracted with more universality than human nature, even if there is no eternal form in the platonic or Aristotelian sense of motion or power. As primordially universal, the action of motion-power has a uniformity and indeed is the basis of the uniformity or order across all natural phenomena.

Still, and on the level of psychology, the abandonment of an absolutely real universal, here the form of power or human nature, as we have suggested through comparison with Aristotelian form, may affect or accord with the substance of Hobbes's psychological picture. If, as I might argue, the core basis of Hobbes's epistemology can be traced not to a self-sufficient analysis of language, but to Hobbes's scientific metaphysics and its critique of classical metaphysics, then the interpretation of language should be in some accord with any possible metaphysical foundational layer of the psychology. One common underlying problem or rather root cause of Hobbes's interpretation of mental abstraction may be the manyness of the "knowable" (in the Hobbesian, qualified sense of reasoning from sensation) phenomena of matter in motion, and absence of any knowable universal, or stable supra-sensible idea of which the moving phenomena is an image. Power may be considered a special or ultimate case of Hobbesian abstraction, since the abstraction power seems inseparable from the abstract concept of motion, which Hobbes argues from as his first principle of nature. Hobbes could maintain that every particular movement of matter is real, but the human conception of unified motion abstracted from the sensation of these movements does not have its own reality, but is a mere image or name in human thought for the character of reality. There may be a possible chasm of intelligibility between the reality of moving matter and of the human conception of motion, arguably beginning from the principle of universal absolute motion itself, i.e., the lack of any non-moving principle of form or mind or intelligibility. It is beyond the scope of this dissertation's inquiry to fully explore this problem of Hobbes's epistemology and metaphysics, though we will consider it further as relates to his psychology of desire for power in § 4.8. It is worth noting for now Hobbes's self-aware concentration on the constructive abstraction involved in universal concepts simply, including that of power itself.

of oneself, each can introspect, for example, an awareness of power to lift an object, or to affect someone by kind or sharp words—including the sense of intentionality which might make the psychological concept of power, inseparable from cause in Hobbes, intelligible. These are particular instances of power exerted. We group together instances to distinguish particular kinds of more or less stable personal powers: one can see that a person has the specific power of eloquence or mathematical reasoning, or holds power in the parliament, or has the wealth to obtain or effect certain things. Hobbes abstracts from this everyday understanding of particular human powers to bring a unified, universalized idea of power into his psychology.

Hobbes's psychological concept of power as universalized means or causal capacity may find foundations in his understanding of power in nature simply from *De Corpore*. Hobbes conceives personal power in abstraction from any particular instances or kinds of that person's power, and from the various ends of these instances or kinds. In his opening definition, the personal power from which he abstracts is first specified as a "present means... to obtain some future apparent Good." This idea of power as means to a future effect follows closely the definition of power in nature simply from *De Corpore*, that is, his strict scientific definition of power.

Correspondent to cause and effect, are *power* [*potentia*] and *act* [*actus*]; nay, those and these are the same things; though, for divers considerations, they have divers names. For whensoever any agent has all those accidents which are necessarily requisite for the production of some effect in the patient, then we say

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Again to clarify, since our context is Hobbes's universalizing of a psychological concept of power: Hobbes's abstraction in "taking power universally" within his psychology is of a different and derivative order from the abstraction involved in forming a universal concept: in taking power universally, Hobbes is giving a general meaning to the various kinds of a (already universal by definition) concept, that of the various kinds of human powers. The universalizing of personal human power involves, as it were, *the abstraction of an abstraction*. But precisely this quality of derivative, strictly speaking "double" Hobbesian abstraction, which he chooses to announce as "taking universally," may capture something of the constructive character of Hobbes's attempt to unify the particularly human phenomena of power into a universalized conception.

that agent has *power* to produce that effect, if it be applied to a patient... Wherefore the *power of the agent* and the *efficient cause* are the same thing But they are considered with this difference, that *cause* is so called in respect of the effect already produced, and *power* in respect of the same effect to be produced hereafter; so that *cause* respects the past, *power* the future time.<sup>16</sup>

The efficient cause of all motion and mutation consists in the motion of the agent, or agents... the power of the agent is the same thing with the efficient cause. From whence it may be understood, that all active power consists in motion also; and that power is not a certain accident, which differs from all acts, but is, indeed, an act, namely, motion, which is therefore called power, because another act shall be produced by it afterwards.<sup>17</sup>

Power is the future causing of motion. One could metaphorically call power nature's means, but the instrumentality seems only clearly intentional in the human being (or in living beings). Power is the present means or instrument or capacity to "obtain some future Good." Hobbes emphasizes or absolutizes, perhaps provisionally, the formal or instrumental character of power. Thus considered, in abstraction from particulars, power can be conceived as a uniform force of capacity, the sum of all capacities that might be exerted for whatever aim desire commands. This is, psychologically speaking, the pure idea of power as means.

Hobbes's psychological conception of power may require some modification of his scientific concept of power. Human capacity implies ability to use or not use this power. Human awareness of power is awareness of a perceived total of power that might be used for future effects, future obtaining of some good. We do not know whether, or how much, or which parts of this power will actually be exerted to cause effects. This actual future use is not strictly included in our notion of a human being's power. The person would be powerful even if this power were not exerted but held in store as

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<sup>16</sup> *De Corpore*, X. 1, *EW I*, 127-128.

<sup>17</sup> *De Corpore*, X. 6, 131.

potential means. But on Hobbes's strict scientific principles of determined causation, there can be no possible future cause or possible power, only the cause that simply will be or the power that will act.<sup>18</sup> Present power is power that will be activated, that will be power; otherwise, if it will never be a cause, then it was never power. It would be merely "possible" power, but that is not properly speaking power, is not real power, the action of power: possible power is the name human ignorance gives to perceived present means or possible future causes. The future cause only appears possible to us because of human ignorance of the entire chain of causation past, present, and future. But in the real natural motion of causation, the possible has no place, it is simply is not, except in the human imagination. In Hobbes's science, then, there can be no such thing as power that might be used in the future, "potential power," which is the only way human beings can conceive of our present power for possible future use. There is scientifically speaking, on the account in *De Corpore*, only power that will or will not be exerted; if it won't be, it is not strictly power, but only our ignorant supposition of possible power.<sup>19</sup> Since what we are considering human power may turn out to be exerted, we may be naming it correctly insofar as it turns out to be used, but much of what we call power may be merely potential power in scientific, physical terms of actual use. This difference can be taken to reveal a discrepancy in final meaning between the psychological and scientific concept of power. I do not believe such a conclusion is necessary. The psychological concept still takes as its ultimate term of reference the actual causing of effects. Hobbes simply adjusts the usage of the concept to the difference between human awareness or consciousness of power and the scientific or physical reality of power and causation. This necessary

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<sup>18</sup> *De Corpore*, X. 4, 129.

<sup>19</sup> *De Corpore*, X. 5, 130-31.

modification of usage of the concept does not disrupt the fundamental unity of the idea of power across Hobbes's science and psychology, but only affirms it by clarifying the ways in which the human mind and imagination must conceive of power given our limited knowledge of the "entire cause" across time.

Moreover, one could argue that in human life the awareness of power which we have qualified as "potential power" is not merely future causal power in reserve, but actually exerts an effect continually in the present, since the perception of a person's power by herself or by others affects relations between individuals or groups. Since Hobbes will describe power as in great measure relative power versus other human beings, then the relative perception of power is actual power, acts continually on the psyche and the actions of both the more and less powerful. In this sense, the "imagined" power is also real. And scientifically speaking, though Hobbes can be seen to privilege physical motion as the paradigm of real motion, still the mind's activity too is a real form of motion, and therefore imagined power is ultimately a physical cause of real effects. In light of the full scope of Hobbes's idea of natural motion-power and the range of human awareness of power and its effects, then, the scientific account can be seen to ground the interpretation of human psychology through power. This very scope, or the universalizing of both concepts and especially the psychological one, may be extreme or problematic, or pure and accurate, but Hobbes achieves a significant measure of consistency across this depiction of nature and human nature in terms of power.

Hobbes conceives an idea of power as purely potential instrumentality. It includes no intrinsic form of activity to realize. Compared to Aristotelian *dynamis*, this power is radically abstract and formal. Radically instrumental, it externalizes the field of cause and

effect, emphasizing the human efficient causal capacity for external effects, as opposed to the more internal spirit of growth and self-realization inherent in classical formal or final cause, or the power-potentiality to develop into the specific form of a good human being. Nor does Hobbes's redefinition of power even indicate the path of future instrumental use, rather describing the mind's conception of possible ability to cause whatever future effect desired. The future effect desired is specified as "some future apparent Good." If the human good were known or agreed to be, say, one kind of activity, such as political rule, or scientific inquiry, or a stable good such as wisdom, this definition of power would be unproblematic but almost trivially instrumental. Hobbes would simply be saying that power is the ability to obtain the good, including possibly a series of subsidiary goods.<sup>20</sup> Hobbes says only "some apparent Good," which we have seen defined in Chapter VI as whatever a particular person desires at a particular time. So power in this opening definition in Chapter X does not receive content or potential form from any object, but is precisely emptied of teleological formation and expanded into a universal and potentially indefinite means.

### § 3.2. REDUCTION OF THE PASSIONS TO DESIRE FOR POWER

Universalized instrumental power has no intrinsic direction or realization. Hobbes's definition combines power as pure and generalized means with an object of some undetermined future apparent good. As it stands this definition is entirely formal regarding means and open-ended regarding ends. Yet before thus defining power, Hobbes

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<sup>20</sup> While the core meaning of Aristotle's *dynamis* is the internal principle of potential for self-realization of the human good, of course in Aristotle too there are external instrumental powers, also called *dynamis*, that give one the capacity to obtain a good, including external goods. Still this external means to a good serves the overarching self-realization, which may benefit from subsidiary external and internal goods that are ultimately also means to the final and specific intrinsic good or self-realization or *energeia*.

in Chapter VIII introduces his conception of desire for power in another, not strictly definitional, but defining statement:

The Passions that most of all cause the differences of Wit, are principally, the more or lesse Desire of Power, of Riches, of Knowledge, and of Honour. All which may be reduced to the first, that is Desire of Power. For Riches, Knowledge and Honour are but severall sorts of Power.<sup>21</sup>

Hobbes expands the scope of power through this tri- or quadri-partite specification of particular ends of desire and their reduction to one comprehensive end-means. Closely considered, Hobbes states his reduction in two ways: The “Desire of Power, of Riches, of Knowledge, and of Honour” may be reduced to the “Desire of Power”; and, “Riches, Knowledge and Honour” are “sorts of Power.” The latter reduction of the various ends to power on its own may imply a unity in the desire through a unity in its ends, but Hobbes already makes the prior, more absolute reduction of desire to desire: the four passions, or desires, are reducible to one desire, the desire for power.

Wealth, knowledge, and honour could be considered as kinds of power for their instrumental value, insofar as each can sometimes be used as a power or means to attain or effect something further. While Hobbes points here and in the earlier part of Chapter X’s catalogue to this initial instrumental sense in which many desired goods serve as powers, this analysis would not constitute a substantial reduction to power, but only an indication of the way these goods or ends may function as a means or power, and indeed does not adequately characterize Hobbes’s absolute reduction here. The possible role of goods such as honour as means does not necessarily exhaust the character of these goods as an end. One can desire honour, for instance, for its uses as a form of power to effect some other desired good, and also as an end or good in itself desired—and Hobbes can be

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<sup>21</sup> *Leviathan*, VIII, 53.

seen to account for this duality of main goods as end and means, precisely through an expansive understanding of power.

Hobbes reduces the desire for any of these goods to a desire for power. Taking this reduction as strictly an analysis of goods to means, one might indeed understand Hobbes to claim that we never desire wealth, knowledge, and honour for themselves, but *only* as means or power to obtain some other future good. Hobbes does not intend this possibly absurd conclusion. What is desired, what is good in Hobbesian terms, in each of these particular goods, is the general good of power. If power is the common element in our many distinct objects of desire, then it comes to light as in some sense the real good or more precisely the ultimate basis for what we consider good. Hobbes first defines power as a means, beginning from its original sense and what remains a core sense of the concept. But as Hobbes will make more clear in his third and culminating defining statement on power, the proposition on desire for power after power in Chapter XI, in the absence of a final good the desire for power becomes the sovereign desire and power expands from mere means to a term for what is most desired as means and in some sense for itself. Therefore the goods here reduced to power, wealth and knowledge and honour, also participate in this dual kind of “goodness” as means and ends, including as means to further “apparent” or perceived goods beyond themselves, including the basic goods necessary for survival and pleasant living. It remains a question whether Hobbes can explain the goodness of honour or knowledge in itself through its reduction to a form of power, but the reduction will include an account of how we desire honour and knowledge as goods.



In Aristotle's hierarchical account of goods, it is not only the architectonic or final good that is desired for its own sake. Subsidiary goods are also said to be desired as partial ends and as instrumental to other goods, in this case ultimately and coherently the final good. Hobbes collapses the hierarchy of goods, at least the qualitative hierarchy, by analyzing the leading goods in terms of the uniform factor of power. This new basis of goodness, or at least desirability, cannot be a final or architectonic good in the same sense, but it may be an ultimate term of desire, both because we desire useful means indefinitely to obtain further goods and because we desire power as relative power or superiority or pride. It may then be objected that Hobbes commits the absurdity of attempting to turn a means into a principal term of good, and we will continue to consider this problem. Hobbes may counter that he transforms an absurd or impossible vision of the good into a more limited and possible concept of the good or desirable, which never completely transcends the character of a means, according more accurately with the range of sane human desire.

The reduction of desire for wealth, knowledge, and honour to desire for power could be taken in the spirit of unmasking or destructive reductionism: the desire for honour is illusory, what we really desire is power. In this way Hobbes risks effacing or neglecting the known and experienced differences between various desires and goods and strivings. We will consider at more length the relation between power and these specific goods such as honour, but to begin with a general suggestion: Hobbes may not do absolute violence to these experienced phenomena even as he recasts them. He does not so much reject the integrity of honour as one kind of good or object of desire, as show the true basis of desire for honour, or the most complete way of conceiving its basis.

Whatever their relation turns to be, power can be conceived only through the apprehension of these diverse goods. They are the many conceivable or apparent forms of power, using apparent not with any implication of falsity, but as the perceptible or intelligible form through which we come to comprehend power. The idea of power comes to light indirectly, through analysis of intuitively heterogeneous experiences and concepts, and remains, in a sense, invisible. More precisely, the action of power can be perceived in the world only through the effects of these goods from which effects we infer their causal power, e.g., the use of wealth to effect or obtain something. Further, we recognize the human concern or desire for power, in this case relative power, through the human concern for possession of wealth or of honour, which latter Hobbes will call a “sign” of power, since through pride and mutual competition for goods we are concerned with the *awareness* of relative power at least as immediately as with actual absolute power.

Hobbes does not seek to replace the term honour with acknowledgement of power, or to efface the distinctions between honour and money and knowledge. He does intend a radical reconsideration of their basis. Honour, for instance, may usually be taken to involve admiration for objective moral qualities. By characterizing and re-conceiving honour as a sign or acknowledgement of power, Hobbes suggests the basic inadequacy of our everyday understanding in its neglect for the true criterion of honour, power rather than objective moral excellence (or, an objective excellence based on power, if such is possible). Still honour as a concept is preserved as the form in which our regard for power becomes manifest. There is not an inherent tension between Hobbes’s continued meaningful usage of such concepts (of honour and wealth and knowledge) and their

recast basis in power, though their new common basis in power may spread a homogenizing foundation under the concepts and dilute their independent integrity of meaning. There is a radical tension or difference between the accepted usage of these terms and the new meaning Hobbes gives them. Hobbes's reduction has a destructive edge, displacing the core content and potentially eroding the integrity and force of terms such as honour.<sup>22</sup> But Hobbes's reduction allows in principle a reconceived integrity of the different reduced desires as still differently experienced (given a re-interpretation of these experiences through power).

If power is the common element desired in wealth, knowledge, and honour, this can mean both that in desiring knowledge, we desire its powerful uses, and also we desire it intrinsically as a form of power, that is, as the cause or power producing power. We are drawn to power itself as good. Hobbes even describes the pleasure of the contemplation of power, power itself, which may include its possible uses but is not a contemplation of its uses but of either its potentiality as cause or its sign of one's relative superiority—or both, perhaps the latter proud concern with relative power as the decisive term of superiority being based in the love of power as potential cause.<sup>23</sup>

Of these three goods, wealth can be seen as most closely analogous to power as means. Especially in the form of money, wealth has a kind of universality, however specious, as money tries to make itself a measure of value for all things. Money, or wealth of any kind since it is exchangeable if less conveniently, is a means, but again, many stores of wealth are not merely means. And money itself can become viewed and

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<sup>22</sup> Such has arguably been the effective historical outcome, as evidenced by our frequent recourse in everyday and academic speech to the term power as a perhaps abstract and monotonal explanation for a range of desires or motives in place of the more precise use of a varied range of terms such as those, including honour, which Hobbes reduces to power.

<sup>23</sup> *Leviathan*, XIII, 88.

desired as an end, a sign of ability and power. I will consider the relation of a psychology of power to a political science of wealth in Section 4.6 on the proto-economic aspects of Hobbes's conception of power. For now it can be said that the assimilation of desire for wealth to desire for power seems the most direct of the three reductions, but for the same reasons the least consequential. Honour and knowledge, especially the latter, are harder to conceive thoroughly in terms of power, but as we shall see Hobbes makes a compelling attempt, even integrating the motive and causal structure of power into a mode of human thinking—exemplifying the extent and seriousness of his reduction.

Within the kinds of human desire that are known to us from observation, the desires for wealth, knowledge, and honour are taken by Hobbes as central among particular desires. Aristotle includes these three goods in listings of main human goods, though in a clear ascending hierarchy wealth, honour, knowledge. It is hard to draw any meaningful order from Hobbes's listing: wealth, knowledge, honour. One could venture a reading that the list reaches its peak in honour as the most important insofar as it is the most general, involved in all activities significant enough to contribute to one's relative superiority, or relative power. Knowledge though could be the most privileged particular activity, as considered in Section 4.8, though Hobbes does not clearly thematize its superiority or distinction from other goods. The more well-founded and important point is rather that the thrust of Hobbes's reduction is to flatten the traditional hierarchies into the uniform plane of power.

Hobbes clearly does not deny that there are further "apparent Goods" beyond these primary goods related to mental ability, including the goods necessary for survival and comfort, namely material goods and the good of security. Power generally, and each

of these primary goods of the mind here reduced to power, must be desired as means to these further goods. These more basic goods are not included in this reduction and not desired as forms of power, but for themselves, even if their goodness or satisfaction is fleeting. Hobbes does not forget such necessary and appealing goods; on the contrary, especially in his political model of desire, they are prioritized. Still Hobbes's depiction of the natural passions seems to give precedence to passions of the mind, including honour or concern for relative power, not instead of desire for basic goods, but with arguably more immediacy and intensity. Further, the structure of Hobbesian desire seems directed more to future desire than current fulfillment, rendering conceived goods of the mind more primary.

Hobbes does not subsume simply all kinds of desire here under desire for power. First of all, the reduction concerns "The Passions that most of all cause the differences of Wit." The subject of this Chapter VIII is the "vertues intellectual." The intellect is not much explained in the Chapter VI account of the passions, and now Hobbes adds this critical layer to his psychology. This is also his first mention of virtue, though he opens with a reference to "vertue generally, in all sorts of subjects," so intellectual virtue may not be the only natural virtue, but it is the only one elaborated as a named virtue in the part of *Leviathan* on natural psychology. It is in this context Hobbes that first writes his concept of desire of power into *Leviathan*. Desire for power enters to explain intellectual virtue, the difference of wit between human beings. Hobbes tries to explain difference of wit through the passions, but specifically passions of the mind, such as are those included in the reduction to desire for power. Desire for power is not such a universalized conception as Nietzsche's will to power, which aims to explain all human striving and

even non-human striving. Hobbes conceptualizes desire for power to explain, within his psychology of the passions, the passions effectively based in the mind. These passions, not all passion or desire, are reducible to desire for power.

Among the passions of the mind, Hobbes attributes the difference of wit “principally” to the passions for power, wealth, honour, and knowledge. He allows that other passions may play some role. So exclusion from this reduction does not necessarily imply exclusion from causing difference in wit, nor exclusion from the reduction to desire for power. Especially given Hobbes’s general understanding of the various named passions as derived from simple passions, he does not need to list in this reduction every one of the plausibly nameable passions, which in a different context he calls “innumerable.”<sup>24</sup> He needs to list only the principal reducible passions.

Still it is worth wondering why certain passions are not included as principal or perhaps as at all reducible to desire for power. From the main elements of Hobbes’s psychology we have sketched, at least two leading objects of desire are excluded from the reduction, desire for self-preservation (or its negative form, fear of death) and desire for pleasure, especially pleasures of the sense discussed in Chapter VI. This list comprises passions of which variance in strength among men most causes differences of wit, so one could suggest that desire for pleasure and desire for self-preservation do not vary in strength among human beings, and so do not qualify for this list on that basis; or similarly that they do not affect the level of wit, that is, intelligence in Hobbes’s seventeenth-century English. But, intuitively, it seems most plausible that desire for self-preservation

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<sup>24</sup> “For the things that please and displease, are innumerable, and work innumerable ways; but men have taken notice of the passions they have from them in a very few, which also are many of them without name” (*Elements of Law*, VIII. 1, 46). If one were to strictly distinguish every distinct passion or nuance or variety of passion, one could subdivide them nearly to the number of particular instances of pleasing and displeasing things, desires and aversions, in the world.

and for pleasure do vary in strength or extent of predominance over the psyche in different people, and that they can motivate some activities of the mind. The question is left, in considering the scope of Hobbes's reduction of the passions, what is the relation of pleasure and self-preservation to desire for power.

In my discussion of pleasure in Chapter 2, I argued that pleasure is a derivative accompaniment of the motion of desire, not its principle; and, as a good, again derivative of the good of progress of desire. In relation to desire now taken as desire for power, the same points stand. One could add that, if pleasure accompanies desire for power, it seems to accompany one's opinion of present power or anticipation of future increase in power. As such, given the difficulty of assessing one's power, there is a possible lack of agreement between the degree of pleasure and of power, but this will be a problem for the measure of the psychological concept of power altogether.

More basically, one could say about pleasure, as a candidate for the list of desires in the reduction, that Hobbes would simply deny that there exists properly a desire for pleasure. We may want pleasure, and loosely Hobbes may talk of desiring pleasure, but in the progress of our desire, the object imagined is not pleasure itself. This seems another way of saying that pleasure is a derivative good that flows from or attends the other goods. If pleasure were really what we wanted from all other goods, one could argue for it as "un-imagined" principle of desire hidden from consciousness. But Hobbes's excavations of consciousness—more precisely, his refinements of awareness and understanding and naming of perceptions, thoughts, and desires—depict motion, or desire, as the most fundamental, with the object either an apparent good, which is not pleasure itself, or the reduced form of desired goods as power (whether we are aware of

them as such or not). Moreover, as we have seen, Hobbes shows pleasure to be often an unreliable and deceptive sign of good, that is, deceptively desirable considered in the longer chain of cause and effect to the furthest desired apparent good imagined.<sup>25</sup>

Self-preservation, the more ultimate rival to desire for power as basis of Hobbes's psychology, may be left out in this passage simply because Hobbes is treating, not even all the passions that affect strength of wit, but a cohesive triad of particular human goods of this world, wealth, honour, and knowledge. Hobbes is starting from our actual desires as we know and name them, and trying to show the reduction of these apparently various desires to one. We may readily agree we desire self-preservation, but in our self-consciousness it is somewhat taken for granted and rarely named as such. More fundamentally, desire for self-preservation is of a different order. It is itself a general desire. So its exclusion may not reflect its status exactly in relation to desire for power. It is also not exclusively a passion of the mind, or the human mind, since it animates animals in some sense, and unconsciously plants. In human beings, it is unclear whether it is a passion of the mind. Perhaps we become aware of it mainly through the negative alert of fear when preservation is threatened or anticipatory fear stirred by anxious opinion. Hobbes's conceptualization of self-preservation seems to render it increasingly central to our self-awareness, but it may not be originally so, rather closer to an aspect of our involuntary motions such as breathing, of which we are aware only on deliberate reflection or when breathing is threatened. Further, Hobbes does not attribute to desire or awareness of preservation as such any positive sensation of pleasure, as will Rousseau in the stably joyful sentiment of existence.<sup>26</sup> In Hobbes the elemental joy in our aliveness

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<sup>25</sup> See § 2.5, footnote 53, p. 67 above.

<sup>26</sup> Cf. Aristotle, *Politics*, 1178b25-29.



comes from pleasurable awareness of desire. The progress of desire could be identified with self-preservation, but is not as such by Hobbes in his account of the passions. The progress of desire involves and seeks its own extension and increase in the mind; it may subsume but is not identifiable with desire for self-preservation, which seems to straddle passion of mind and body (in the analytical distinction Hobbes applies between them).

Hobbes never gives a reduction of various desires to desire for self-preservation. He may not do so because desire for power is the more ultimate principle of reduction. He may not do so because it may not be plausible that, say, a range of desires such as wealth, honour, and knowledge are reducible to desire for self-preservation, even if self-preservation can be one aim served by these desires. Desire for honour seems in plausible sharp tension with desire for self-preservation, especially military or high political honour, which tend to risk preservation in the attempt for maximal honour. To be clear, self-preservation in Hobbes is taken to mean preservation of this life in this world. One could say that desire for immortal honour is a form of desire for eternal self-preservation, following Plato's ascent of Eros in the *Symposium*. Whether or not this is the true definition of the natural human desire for preservation, it is not the one Hobbes gives. Hobbes is aware that life is often sacrificed for honour, but he is precisely trying to counter this tendency by presenting the reasonableness of fear of death or self-preservation. It is hard to consider desire for self-preservation as animating the desire for knowledge, unless we narrow knowledge to a basic level of prudence. Hobbes, even in his political *Leviathan*, gives precedence to desire for knowledge as continually joyful pursuit of causes, hardly an image of thinking merely for survival. It is not simple to explain desire for knowledge as desire for power either, but power as a motive has more

range. And Hobbes gives in Chapter V of *Leviathan* a radical account of knowing as causal knowing which may show a basis for curiosity in desire for power.<sup>27</sup>

There is another possible explanation for why desire for self-preservation need not be included in this reduction. It may be considered by Hobbes already comprehended within desire for power. Their relation is hard to specify. The following three scenarios seem worth considering: 1) desire for power, desire for increase of power beyond the necessary, is essentially in risky tension with desire for mere preservation; 2) desire for power merely serves self-preservation; or 3) desire for power subsumes self-preservation, meaning includes and assures it, but as a mere necessary condition of the more fundamental striving after power—perhaps also, as Nietzsche writes of Spinoza’s notion of self-preservation in relation to the will to power, as “one of the indirect and most frequent *results*.”<sup>28</sup> I have been arguing for an imperfect combination of 1 and 3. I maintain that 2 captures a key dimension and goal of desire for power, but not its moving principle, and therefore I attempt to include what is true of 2 in 3. Self-preservation cannot achieve for Hobbes an adequate grounding of his psychology: it cannot account for the range of human potentialities, nor does it credibly represent the leading desire of all human beings. It may represent the most reliably immediate human desire. Self-preservation, or fear of violent death, receives an exceptional degree of emphasis in Hobbes’s elaboration of his political solution and re-ordering of the passions. Self-preservation may be the most effective general political motive, and in this sense the greatest shared good, or condition of whatever good life is possible, among all human beings, and specifically shared among all those contracting in political union. The desire

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<sup>27</sup> *Leviathan*, III, 21.

<sup>28</sup> *Beyond Good and Evil*, aph. 13, p. 21.

for self-preservation, or the continuation of one's particular human motion, the particular life, remains an essential layer of the foundation of Hobbes's psychology. The conception of desire for power attempts to comprehend the goal of self-preservation. To the extent desire for power cannot simply subsume self-preservation, and there is tension, then desire for power is qualified as a psychological principle within Hobbes's fully realized political psychology.

### § 3.3. KINDS OF POWER

The reduction of several passions to desire for power is followed by a catalogue of qualities, passions, abilities, and attainments described in various ways in terms of power. Prior to this catalogue, Hobbes continues his opening definition of power in its application to the human subject:

The Power of a Man, (to take it Universally,) is his present means, to obtain some future apparent Good. And is either *Originall*, or *Instrumentall*. *Naturall Power*, is the eminence of the Faculties of Body, or Mind: as extraordinary Strength, Forme, Prudence, Arts, Eloquence, Liberality, Nobility. *Instrumentall* are those Powers, which acquired by these, or by fortune, are means and Instruments to acquire more: as Riches, Reputation, Friends, and the secret working of God, which men call Good Luck. For the nature of Power, is in this point, like to Fame, increasing as it proceeds; or like the motion of heavy bodies, which the further they go, make still the more hast.<sup>29</sup>

The distinction in power between original and instrumental is surprising in two respects. Original is replaced by natural, perhaps an equivalent in this context, perhaps a clearer more final term. We can take the distinction as original or natural versus instrumental, which is repeated in a pair with natural. First, one expects, as opposed to original or natural, either "external" as in Aristotle or, directly opposed to natural, "artificial," or

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<sup>29</sup> *Leviathan*, X, 62.

“acquired” which Hobbes uses in his explanation of the instrumental powers and seems neatly opposed to original.<sup>30</sup> Second, instrumental seems at first glance almost redundant, since power is a means and therefore instrumental. Power may not be exclusively a means, so in this sense the term is far from redundant. Natural power includes properly natural abilities of body or mind, and extends the range of the natural to include even virtues such as liberality or nobility. Natural seems to mean internal more definitively than natural, given Hobbes’s reservations about the strictly natural basis of social virtues such as liberality, but the virtues may be in an extended, effective sense natural, in any case a development of the nature of the person. The instrumental powers are acquired means. Natural abilities considered as powers also seem to have an instrumental role. Natural strength, for instance, tends to be put to use in its causal capacity for some purpose.

But Hobbes may be insisting on maintaining the complete definition of natural powers: they may not be exclusively means or considered as means, as indeed his contrasting them with the instrumental seems to imply. Natural power can be, as he calls it here, a relative eminence—Hobbesian eminence, which represents a superiority in power of which one is aware, gloriously aware. Natural eminence in power may be worthy in itself in the qualified sense of itself reflecting honour on the subject, a sign of

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<sup>30</sup> Aristotle distinguishes between internal and external in reference to human goods, not power; though the goods of the soul and body encompass human activities, which are actualizations of potentialities-powers in the Aristotelian sense. “Now things good have been divided into three classes, external goods on the one hand, and goods of the soul and body on the other; and of these three kinds of goods, those of the soul we commonly pronounce good in the fullest sense and the highest degree” (*Ethics*, I. vii. 23, p. 37). “Internal goods are those of mind and body; external goods are noble birth, friends, wealth, honour. To these we think should be added certain capacities [*dynamis*] and good luck; for on these conditions life will be perfectly secure” (*Rhetoric*, trans. Freese, I. v, 5); here the translator’s footnote suggests two possible translations of “*dynamis*”: “i.e. of mind and body; or *dynamis* may mean ‘positions of authority and influence.’” Since goods of the mind and body seem to consist in capacities, the alternate sense of *dynamis* seems more plausible as an addition.

power considered as an end. One could say that external powers, what Hobbes calls instrumental, are also signs of power and sources of glory; this seems true, though less stably so. Hobbes seems to use natural to mean in some sense essential to the person, not merely instrumental, but constitutive of the human being. He maintains this aspect of the definition of the person as a collection of powers from beginning to end. And insofar as relative power is an intrinsic end crowned by glorious pleasure, then superiority in power is not merely instrumental but integral to the human being.

At the same time Hobbes, in calling the external the instrumental, accentuates the instrumental aspect of power. Since natural powers themselves also have a considerable instrumental aspect, the external powers can seem instruments of instruments. As instruments acquired, they can be increased without the apparent limits to increase in natural powers. Instrumental power may be emphasized partly to highlight the potential growth in this aspect of human power. Indeed Hobbes caps this distinction with a metaphor of increase of power, here compared to the accelerating motion of bodies. It seems an imperfect metaphor, since power, indeed human as natural, may or may not increase as it proceeds, sometimes suffering reversals or exhaustion (and in the human case not experienced, at least, as so inevitable as the moving natural body). Hobbes seems mainly to use this image as a kind of exhortation to consider the possible increase in power; and, as ever, to ingrain the idea of motion and outward extension of motion-power in our self-understanding.

Hobbes moves suddenly from this psychological level to the potential increase of another kind of human power:

The Greatest of humane Powers, is that which is compounded of the Powers of most men, united by consent, in one person, Naturall, or Civill, that has the use of

all their Powers depending on his will; such as is the Power of a Common-wealth: Or depending on the wills of each particular; such as is the Power of a Faction, or of divers factions leagued. Therefore to have servants, is Power; To have friends, is Power: for they are strengths united.<sup>31</sup>

Hobbes here makes his most directly political statement, that is, statement not only on political psychology but on the political body of the commonwealth, since the Epistle Dedicatory and Introduction in *Leviathan*. It is by no coincidence that civil authority returns to the fore in the chapter devoted to power. Hobbes establishes the unity between human desire or will expressed through power and the united powers of many wills in the “Abstract” “seat of Power” as he calls the civil power in the Epistle.<sup>32</sup> The citizens considered through a uniform factor of power can be conceived as a united or unifiable group. The human being considered primarily, as in Aristotle, as one of a range of qualitatively different human and social types—lover of honour or of pleasure, farmer or merchant, scientist or athlete, democrat or aristocrat, with different desires and kinds and levels of excellence—is more difficult to reduce to one political order. Rather the different political orders become in some measure expressions or sources of particular human forms. Hobbes’s psychological term of power in its uniformity can be measured across many particular human beings; in principle, there is only quantitative difference, which can be negotiated and summed in the sovereign.

Hobbes then begins a catalogue of many powers. He begins with the power one can gain from the addition to one’s own power of friends’ powers summed. Then he proceeds to consider individual qualities and virtues:

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<sup>31</sup> *Leviathan*, X, 62.

<sup>32</sup> *Leviathan*, Epistle Dedicatory, 3.

Riches joyned with liberality, is Power; because it procureth friends, and servants: Without liberality, not so; because in this case they defend not; but expose men to Envy, as a Prey.<sup>33</sup>

Wealth is power but not simply so. Wealth without a certain virtue, liberality, is not power. Hobbes cuts somewhat against Machiavelli's critique of the self-defeating character of liberality,<sup>34</sup> though presumably Hobbes would concur that excessive liberality would not enhance but undermine the power of wealth. No external good, and perhaps no moral virtue conventionally understood such as liberality, seems intrinsically or unambiguously good in the perspective of power, but must be evaluated in terms of its producing or magnifying power.

Reputation of power, is Power; because it draweth with it the adhærence of those that need protection... Also, what quality soever maketh a man beloved, or feared of many; or the reputation of such quality, is Power; because it is a means to have the assistance, and service of many.<sup>35</sup>

Power may be ultimately grounded in something real, the potential causal capacity to effect what one desires, but the perception of it produces a human opinion of power. The general opinion makes a reputation, which in turn becomes another layer of power at one's disposal, that is, the power of affecting others through love or fear or other emotions. Power effectively depends not only on underlying "physical" realities, but on the human opinions of them, which not only represents that power politically but actually

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<sup>33</sup> *Leviathan*, X, 62.

<sup>34</sup> *The Prince*, Ch. XVI, trans. Mansfield, pp. 62-63. Machiavelli, to be more specific, criticizes the efficacy of liberality with one's own wealth as opposed to with that captured from others; he affirms the benefit of being held liberal if not at the cost of one's wealth and of raising unsustainable expectations of continual generosity. Since Hobbes here is interested in the effect of wealth on power, he praises liberality not for its intrinsic moral worth, but as a means to rendering maximally powerful the possession of riches. Therefore he would presumably limit any such liberality to a moderate level that is sustainable without unduly eroding one's riches. Still he seems to give a somewhat more positive appraisal of the practical benefit of liberality.

<sup>35</sup> *Leviathan*, X, 62.

becomes part of it, including part of its physical potential to cause effects. Indeed the common sense distinction between “real” physical power and the emotional power of reputation, while useful in analysis of human situations, cannot strictly be sustained as a distinction between real and less real: both forms of power have effect, and especially on Hobbes’s principles of nature, all causes-effects, including those acting on the human psyche through passions such as love or fear, consist in the movement of matter and are therefore physical. Power, then, is inextricable from social comparison by human beings. Thus there is inevitably human error in its assessment as well as a dependence on the impressions of others. Power in this practical sense does not detach itself from some of the imprecision or lack of self-sufficiency inherent in honour or other traditional terms of social superiority or admiration.

Hobbes does not begin this catalogue with definitions of other qualities in terms of power, nor with their reductions to power. Wealth has already been reduced to power in Chapter VIII, but here, along with liberality and reputation, it is merely listed as a form power can take, or in its role as a power or instrument. This is a mode of understanding the world in relation to power, but not yet a strict reduction. Hobbes does not, as Eachard and others accuse him of doing, precisely reduce form, or beauty, to power, but states that it can be a kind or source of power. Nonetheless Hobbes is considering all these abilities and qualities uniquely as powers, so there is a kind of reductive perspective applied.

Moreover, given the reduction already established, and the parallel understanding of desire as universalized motion toward power, then these qualities are already in a sense subsumed under the auspices of desire for power, at least those concerning passions of the mind; and all the catalogued phenomena seem based on passions of mind. Hobbes



does not acknowledge in *Leviathan*, say, an independent desire for the noble or beauty, but in Chapter VI subsumes it under desire for apparent-perceived good, with beauty as a “promise” of good.<sup>36</sup> If the real or ultimate (long-term apparent) good is understood as the progress of desire toward indefinite power, then there is a kind of indirect reduction to power at work even with beauty as the promise which moves desire toward goods in this progress. But it can be said that Hobbes does not make all these reductions as explicit or absolute as the fundamental ones such as honour (and its related terms), wealth, and knowledge. As such he leaves open the possibility that the reduction may not be meant to apply absolutely across all desires of the mind, except in the limited sense that these objects of desire, such a beauty, can take on close instrumental status in relation to power.

While it can seem hard to draw a neat, final line constraining the reductive formulations in this catalogue, Hobbes elaborates precisely and progressively the relation between power and especially the most closely related goods or qualities, such as honour. Of the three goods reduced to power in Chapter VIII, honour is given the most extensive treatment in the catalogue of Chapter X. Honour is initially defined in relation to the immediately prior definition of the value of a person in terms of power:

The *Value*, or Worth of a man, is as of all other things, his Price; that is to say, so much as would be given for the use of his Power: and therefore is not absolute; but a thing dependant on the need and judgement of another... let a man (as most men do,) rate themselves at the highest Value they can; yet their true Value is no more than it is esteemed by others.

The manifestation of the Value we set on one another, is that which is commonly called Honouring, and Dishonouring. To Value a man at a high rate, is to Honour him; at a low rate, is to Dishonour him. But high, and low, in this case, is to be understood by comparison to the rate that each man setteth on himselfe.<sup>37</sup>

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<sup>36</sup> *Leviathan*, VI, 40.

<sup>37</sup> *Leviathan*, X, 63.

Honour is the manifestation of the value one sets on the use of a person's power. The human person has been reduced or measured as a factor of power. Honour is the manifestation or sign, not of power itself, but of the value of the person as measured by the use of their power. As such it is a sign of the opinion of someone's power or more precisely here the value of the use of this power. Honour is here seen not only as an acknowledgement of power, but this acknowledgement includes the consideration of the use of this power, that is, takes the other person's power as possible instrumental power. Honour is not here defined as itself a form of power, which aspect of honour was brought out in the reduction in Chapter VIII. Rather honour relates to power as the sign of its value. Honour is not precisely reduced to power, but takes its bearing from power as its criteria or basis. Honour here is said to depend not only on another person's opinion of one's power (relative to others), but on the relative level of the person's valuation and one's own. Honour is vain-proud, comparative awareness of one's power, such that perceived undervaluation relative to one's idea of one's relative level of power is a dishonour, i.e., an insult to one's opinion of oneself or one's power. Elsewhere Hobbes seems to say that acknowledgement of power, i.e., of superior relative power, is a way of honouring someone, apparently even if the value is merely equal to the person's idea of their honour—which seems plausible, at least as an expression of honour from the one bestowing it, who may not even be aware of the other person's self-valuation. But here Hobbes perhaps completes the account by accentuating the subjective or opinion-based character of not only the giving of honour but its acceptance. The social manifestation of the value of a person's power, the effective political manifestation, seems doubly relative—consisting not only of one's relative power, but of another's valuation of this

power relative to one's own opinion of it. A such the concern with honour and power binds the person to continual social comparison and to dependence on the unsteadiness of human opinion, both society's and one's own.

In this catalogue generally, Hobbes seems to move from considering phenomena in their instrumental capacity as power, to their being "signs" of power, to grounding them in power as the cause of their goodness. The instrumental aspect of honour as a form of power was brought out in Chapter VIII's reduction. The first definition of power in Chapter X brings out its status as a manifestation or sign of the instrumental value of one's power to others. Hobbes completes the definition of honour in terms of power:

*Honourable* is whatsoever possession, action, or quality, is an argument and signe of Power. And therefore To be Honoured, loved, or feared of many, is Honourable; as arguments of Power. To be Honoured of few or none, *Dishonourable*.

Dominion, and Victory is Honourable; because acquired by Power; and Servitude, for need, or feare, is Dishonourable.<sup>38</sup>

An action or quality is honourable as an argument or sign of power. That is not the same as saying honour is a form of instrumental power, but perfectly consistent with it as another aspect of the reduction of honour to power. We honour possessions or qualities as signs of power, signs in our opinion of power. To be feared is honourable, not because being feared is an exertion of one's power, but a sign that power is present or thought to be present. Again honour finds its basis in power or opinion of power. The reduction to power is in a sense reflected in the circularity of the statement, "Therefore to be Honoured... is Honourable; as arguments of Power." Hobbes proceeds: victory is honourable "because acquired by power." The actual exertion of power constitutes the

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<sup>38</sup> *Leviathan*, X, 65.

character of the honourable in the victorious. The cause of the honourable character of victory is the power expressed in its achievement (not only the power reflected in, say, being feared). This formulation represents again the more complete account of power as cause of what is good in another named good, honour. Power, as in the reduction from Chapter VIII, is revealed as the essential cause or form of the goodness of honour (and of all other objects of passions of the mind reducible to desire for power).

Finally, since we discussed the increasingly political discourse of this chapter on power, and have earlier raised the problem of Hobbes's two orders of nature and society, this clarification is worth noting:

All these wayes of Honouring, are naturall; and as well within, as without Commonwealths. But in Commonwealths, where he, or they that have the supreme Authority, can make whatsoever they please, to stand for signes of Honour, there be other Honours.<sup>39</sup>

Hobbes affirms the naturalness of honouring, that is, of the desire for honour and the inclination of human beings to honour. This leading form of desire for power is natural. The natural sign of honour has been expressed as power. The commonwealth, or society, can provide a further layer of artificial signs, "to stand for signes of Honour," such as titles or decorations, but the psychological desire and phenomena of honour is natural and acts both in the natural and social condition of human beings.

#### § 3.4. POWER AFTER POWER: THE NON-TELEOLOGICAL END

After the increasingly full account of the passions and their reduction to desire for power from Chapter VI to VIII to X, Hobbes's presentation of his psychology can be

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<sup>39</sup> *Ibid.*

seen to culminate in the opening pages of Chapter XI. The Chapter is entitled “On the difference of Manners,” in Hobbes’s Latin version “*Mores*,” which might be rendered as “ways” or “manner of behaving” or even “ethics” in a broad sense.<sup>40</sup> Hobbes specifies that his concern is not small matters of decency and etiquette, “but those qualities of mankind, that concern their living together in Peace, and Unity.”<sup>41</sup> Hobbes frames the discussion of with a reminder of the political concern and stakes of his inquiry. He specifies the overarching political goal, peace and unity. One wonders whether these are two goals or two inseparable aspects of one. For Hobbes, unity may plausibly be valued essentially for the sake of peace. In any case unity is a condition of peace, which seems the more ultimate principle of Hobbes’s politics. With this political consideration in view, Hobbes gives his third and most final definitional statement on desire for power as a kind of summation or conclusion to his argument on the good, desire, and happiness:

To which end we are to consider, that the Felicity of this life, consisteth not in the repose of a mind satisfied. For there is no such *Finis ultimus*, (utmost ayme,) nor *Summum Bonum*, (greatest Good,) as is spoken of in the Books of the old Morall Philosophers.

Nor can a man any more live, whose Desires are at an end, than he, whose Senses and Imaginations are at a stand. Felicity is a continuall progresse of the desire, from one object to another; the attaining of the former, being still but the way to the later.

The cause whereof is, That the object of mans desire, is not to enjoy once onely, and for one instant of time; but to assure for ever, the way of his future desire....

So that in the first place, I put for a generall inclination of all mankind, a perpetuall and restlesse desire of Power after power, that ceaseth onely in Death.<sup>42</sup>

Hobbes’s denial of a “greatest Good,” as I have maintained, underlies the polemical aspect of his argument from the beginning of *Leviathan*—against Aristotelian teleology,

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<sup>40</sup> One helpful translation in the French of Hobbes’s time may be “la morale,” morals or ethics in the widest sense, the subject of the “*moralistes*” such as Montaigne, Pascal, and La Rochefoucauld, who attempt precise depiction of moral psychology and the best way or ways to live.

<sup>41</sup> *Leviathan*, XI, 69.

<sup>42</sup> *Leviathan*, XI, 69-70.

eternal forms, and the *dynamis-energeia* structure of nature—and serves as dialectical starting point for the development of his own psychology on a non-teleological basis. Hobbes could have opened *Leviathan* with this declaration of Chapter XI, his most clear and dramatic dismissal of the *summum bonum*, but reserves it for this later, more complete explication of his principles. Perhaps the explicit and categorical statement of such a radical break with accepted views is most effective and intelligible after his already having explained much of the basis for this rejection and his alternative account. The rejection of a *summum bonum* is both a polemical starting point and a conclusion shown or affirmed by his own explanation of human nature.

Happiness cannot be one stable or specific activity, nor any pattern of fulfillment, but the “continuall progresse of the desire,” the motion itself of desire. The “attaining” of the “object” is not described as even a distinct experience of fruition, “but the way to the later” or subsequent desire. In the Latin version of *Leviathan*, Hobbes excludes mention of the object: “Felicity is a continual progress of one desire to another [*una Cupiditate ad alternam*].”<sup>43</sup> As seen in the earlier analysis of desire in Chapter VI, continual sensation of pleasure in desire seems to virtually eclipse the partial and fleeting pleasure of actual fulfillment. Hobbes maximally suppresses the aspect of rest in the human balance between motion and rest. He denies perfect (and metaphysically grounded) rest as a qualitatively superior form of self-realization. Rest, in scientific terms, become zero acceleration of motion or relative deceleration. But even the psychological or experiential form of decelerated motion, a sense of relative rest or stable enjoyment, is minimized.

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<sup>43</sup> As translated by Noel Malcolm, *Leviathan Vol. 2*, Clarendon Edition Vol. IV, p. 150-51 including note 6, page 151. The Latin sentence: “*Felicitas progressus perpetuus est ab una Cupiditate ad alternam*” (*Leviathan*, XI, OL III, 77).

Yet for Hobbes the energy of desire is not diminished by disappointment in the minimal character of fruition, but rather desire continually projects itself ahead in time: “the object of mans desire, is not to enjoy once onely, and for one instant of time; but to assure for ever, the way of his future desire.” Desire seems to conceive its own future possibility as the ultimate or at least simultaneous object even as it pursues particular objects or goods. Therefore we need above all power as the perpetual means or condition for sustaining and renewing the sensation of desire.<sup>44</sup> In this way Hobbes’s statement on desire for power after power follows from his interpretation of desire as its summation. The conjunction at the beginning of the sentence, “So that,” underlines the logical flow from his condensed account of desire to its most defining proposition.

The Hobbesian redefinition of happiness as the “continuall progresse of the desire” with no final end makes it coherent to posit an indefinite desire for power as the fundamental human drive: power as continually instrumental to desire’s progress, and also power in some sense intrinsically as the object of limitless desire for superior relative power, or pride. Hobbes conceives a dual genesis of desire for power from two natural, ultimately inseparable sources or aspects of the psyche: the infinite structure of desire as motion simply and the specifically social, comparative desire for superiority, pride.

Taking Hobbes’s thought to its extreme conclusion: if our joy is in the progress of desire, and fruitions relatively limited, we desire further desiring at least as fundamentally as any stage of fulfillment. The pleasure of desire depends on anticipating fulfillment, and we do practically seek power to obtain a series of particular goods, but we can become attached to the intense joy of anticipation, not only of specific fulfillments, but of

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<sup>44</sup> Cf. “Wherefore all conception of future, is conception of power able to produce something; whosoever therefore expecteth pleasure to come, must conceive withal some power in himself by which the same may be attained” (*Elements of Law*, VIII. 3, 48).

the general future possibility that is secured and increased by ever greater power. Living in the element of desire more essentially than fulfillment, we are bound to the perpetual and desirous conception of future possibility or potentiality, “power after power,” and to its pursuit in every imaginable form of human power. Since effectual human power is in great measure relative power, both practically to compete for goods against others, yet more finally as an intrinsic social concern with superiority, we come to desire power in itself as the basis of pride or vanity. Hobbes discovers a non-teleological end, as it were, the motion toward indefinitely expanding “power after power.”

Hobbes calls desire for power “a generall inclination of all mankind.” While Hobbes generally tends to speak of human beings or human nature with a tone of scientific universality, here he strongly emphasizes the inclusiveness and universality of the subject of his statement.<sup>45</sup> His usage of “all mankind” is equivalent to all human

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<sup>45</sup> As discussed above in § 3.1, pp. 104-105, Hobbes argues from a universal idea of human nature while denying, in his strict epistemology and method, the naturalness or reality of the universal except in speech, or in the artificial construction of the human mind. There is no universal human being for Hobbes, only many particular humans from the perception of which we abstract common qualities or accidents and construct a notion of a human being simply. This allows Hobbes to make use of the universal term to build propositions on apparent human qualities. There is no necessary contradiction between his using universals in his qualified sense and his denial of their reality beyond the mind, and, again, it is beyond this inquiry to properly explore the ultimate coherence of Hobbes’s philosophy of language, his professed method, and his expression of his own thoughts on nature and human nature. (For an admiring but radically critical appraisal, see Heidegger’s one direct commentary on Hobbes, “The Being of the copula in the horizon of whatness (essentia) in Thomas Hobbes,” in *The Basic Problems of Phenomenology*, pp. 183-192).

Still it may be useful to make a few comments here on the question of universals as relevant to this psychological inquiry. The universal human being is said to exist only in its human conception. And even in the mind, it is not an ideal or perfect human being, but a collection of what is common to all. Perhaps the universal must tend inevitably toward relatively good and healthy form, since one cannot recognize the range of what is common through a failing specimen, as it would exclude qualities of the others, whereas one can more easily subtract to account for the unhealthy. If so, this may be one kind of inherent suggestion, against Hobbes, of the naturalness of the ideal universal. In any event, if Hobbes were to literally describe the universal human being when drafting a definition, he would perhaps have to write: “If this here existing particular collection of accidents be what we call a human being, then this human being would desire power.” Hobbes of course cannot mar his prose, and the force of certainty he gives his rhetoric in especially his moral and political writings, with such ridiculous pedantry, but that is what his universal strictly speaking would express. The sentence is conditional because the being is identified by us according to our discovery and comparison of common accidents, not by our receiving the form as form through the senses; and any description is strictly dependent on the existence of this particular creature which may or may not be alive in a moment. I suggest that the ultimate foundation of the non-reality of



beings, that is, inclusive of men and women. While in *Leviathan* Hobbes speaks more of men in regard to power, his theory of desire for power can be said to describe all human beings. The psychology of desire for power appears fundamentally neutral in regard to gender as well as many other possible human differences. The generalization of human motivation to desire for power abstracts from or depreciates the importance of differences in human types, including hierarchies of types based on their animating desires or activities. The distinction of different types or natures does not disappear, but may be relegated to secondary significance. Hobbes's universalizes human motivation, finding in the desire for power a more defined "similitude" among the passions.<sup>46</sup> He accounts for difference among the passions, indeed in the sentence preceding the proposition on desire for power, but precisely as a second order distinction among the inclinations.<sup>47</sup>

Hobbes uses the term "inclination" to describe this concept of desire. He does not define inclination in relation to desire, appetite, passion, and love in Chapter VI. In Aquinas, inclination is the more fundamental term; the inclinations are the governing directions of human nature, within which there are the desires and passions.<sup>48</sup> There is no basis for thinking Hobbes restores this primacy to inclination, but one could say he uses a term with resonances of the fundamental human drives or direction. The adjective "general" is more clearly decisive. The desire for power is a general inclination, not one particular inclination or tendency among many. Hobbes does not say "universal," as for

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universals is Hobbes's denial of form as metaphysically prior to matter in motion, and thereby his denial of a stable or eternal human form or essence, natural or divine in origin. Human nature has no fixed nature or form, so much so that Hobbes can speak only in hypothetical abstraction of the human as human; therefore the same for human desire. There is a radical indeterminacy in the foundation of human nature. If all human beings existing now share an identifiable character, it is finally fluid, even if Hobbes delineates a provisionally or hypothetically firm outline of human nature. Indeed this firm outline includes an ultimately indeterminate determination of desire through an abstracted and open-ended idea of power.

<sup>46</sup> *Leviathan*, Introduction, 10.

<sup>47</sup> *Leviathan*, XI, 70.

<sup>48</sup> *Summa*, First Part of Second Part. Q 94, A2.

instance in his universalizing a person's many powers into one summed power in Chapter X. "General" may have the equivalent force of universal in its opposition to particular. Or perhaps Hobbes wishes to distinguish this desire as general, encompassing many or most desires, but not strictly universal, not explaining all human desire or not explaining all human desires completely. In accordance with my overall interpretation, I lean to the latter reading, but in itself this word choice is not conclusive. Hobbes writes "I put" this inclination "in the first place." It has been suggested that Hobbes's "put" has a deliberate sense, put rather than purely think: he decides to present this desire as the primary one for largely political reasons. This view may not deny that Hobbes has strong theoretical basis for this thought on power, but emphasizes the rhetorical function of the assertion of power as general motive. As discussed, Hobbes does accentuate the generalizing of power as motive as part of his political project, both negatively in the polemic against political recourse to notions of the good as basis for claims to power or rule, and positively as basis for his political psychology. While it is not necessary to suppose Hobbes to be exaggerating his theoretical psychology, he may display it with special force in the political context of *Leviathan*. But it is unclear that this "I put" in itself here signifies more than I consider or think, in this case, "I put in the first place," I consider primary, which phrase Hobbes also uses elsewhere.

Hobbes uses "desire" as he has done for all the defining expressions of desire for power. This passion can only be desire as opposed to love. Hobbes distinguishes love from desire in the definitions of Chapter VI of *Leviathan*. Desire "signifie[s] the Absence of the Object," love "most commonly the Presence" or the having of it.<sup>49</sup> The incomplete, unsatisfied, striving character of desire is essential to desire for power, which as an

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<sup>49</sup> *Leviathan*, VI, 38.

infinite object-means cannot be possessed completely even for a moment. Hobbes uses the phrase “love of power” in a few places, but not in rigorous passages defining the concept.<sup>50</sup> He seems to use love of power in the ordinary sense that we do to describe love of anything one wants intensely. Strictly speaking, the inclination for power is not love, as all of Hobbes’s definitional passages on the concept make clear. Hobbes abandons love as the master concept of human inclination or longing that it is, for instance, in Plato and Augustine, where love means final love of an absolute, perfect object (if object can describe the Ideas or the Good or God).

Hobbesian desire, as distinguished from love, is accordingly depicted in the arch desire for power after power as “perpetualle and resteless.” There is an accent of suffering in this depiction of an inevitable human fate of needing and lacking and striving after power, power after power. When Hobbes says this desire “ceatheth onely in Death,” he seems to provide a term of relief as much as loss in limiting the otherwise perpetual condition. In describing human emotion Hobbes repeatedly turns to these same terms: continual, restless, perpetual, always terms of unending movement. This movement is not necessarily suffering, but always mixed. While Hobbes tends to emphasize the prevailing excitement of hopeful delight-pleasure in desire, in his precise account of the passions, “*hope* and *fear* so alternate with each other that almost no time is so short that it cannot

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<sup>50</sup> “For considering the love of Power naturally implanted in mankind” (*Leviathan*, XLII, 394). “Love, if it be conspicuous, may be divided into almost as many passions as there are objects of love. Such as love of money, love of power, love of knowledge, etc. The love of money, if it exceeds moderation, is called covetousness; the love of political power, if immoderate, ambition; for these perturb and pervert the mind” (*De Homine*, XII. 8, 60). Hobbes uses “love” but then refers to the division of love into “passions,” so here he does not seem to use love in its precise sense as distinguished from desire or passion as defined in Chapter VI of *Leviathan*. Hobbes uses the phrase love of power (*amor potentia*) among a list of objects loved, then specifies “love of political power” (*amor potentiae civilis*). Here he does not seem to describe the generalized desire or passion or love of power, which is not conceptualized in the at least originally earlier composed *De Homine*. In *De Homine*, as in *Elements of Law*, the underlying psychology of desire is already developed, as exemplified in the passage from *De Homine*, XI. 15, p. 54 quoted in § 2.9, p. 91 above.

encompass their interchange.”<sup>51</sup> Hopeful desire then seems inseparable from its inevitable negative opposite of fearful desire or despair in Hobbes’s definitional catalogue,<sup>52</sup> such that hopeful desire and fear are in a sense an alternation within the one trajectory of desire, “named after the prevailing emotion, simply *hope* or *fear*.”<sup>53</sup> Hobbes does not dwell on fear in Chapter XI, but in the following Chapter XII portrays fear as essential to human experience and in some similar terms: “perpetuall solicitude of the time to come,” “perpetuall feare”:

So that man, which looks too far before him, in the care of future time, hath his heart all the day long, gnawed on by feare of death, poverty, or other calamity; and has no repose, nor pause of his anxiety, but in sleep.<sup>54</sup>

Fear is also interpreted as relentless conception of the future, restless and continual, and in the face of death. Fear also turns to conception of power, often to “invisible powers” for enlightenment and support. The affinity of the accounts of continual desire and lead one to wonder if, for Hobbes, we live between desire and fear, desirous hope and fear. Translating fear into fear of inadequate power, the more tormented Hobbesian images of fear balance the vitality and pleasure he affirms in desire for power to give perhaps a more whole picture of his conception of human passion. Desire remains the primary concept in relation to aversion and fear in Hobbes’s account, but can be said to incorporate within the continually incomplete desire for power its inevitable accompaniment by fear.

At the outset I suggested the “nearly tragic gravity” of Hobbes’s portrait of desire for power.<sup>55</sup> The desire may be tragic insofar as it leaves a continually fatal distance

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<sup>51</sup> *De Homine*, XII. 3, 56.

<sup>52</sup> *Leviathan*, VI, 40.

<sup>53</sup> *De Homine*, XII. 3, 56.

<sup>54</sup> *Leviathan*, XII, 76.

between desire and fulfillment, any degree or kind of acquired power giving way to further desire for the same and awareness of impossibility of satisfaction. But the desire for power is not precisely tragic insofar as there may be no tragic loss, no fall or loss of a previous or potential happiness or fulfillment or whole good, since such does not exist except in our imagined conceptions. Hobbes attempts to disillusion our imagination. His understanding of desire for power seems to be finally a non-tragic, grave but healthy acceptance of the naturally limited condition of human desire and the possible, partial enjoyments of the motion of desire toward power. If Hobbes must redirect this motion with a moral limitation on the forms of power, this would not be a recovery of tragically lost internal harmony or external harmonious relations with others, but a judicious self-limitation of desire to avoid harmful effects.

It seems a problem for Hobbes whether he would simply deny that we properly, ultimately love completion or rest, even if it is impossible to realize in our imperfect human condition. That is, can we be aware of suffering restlessness, without on some level desiring or loving rest in a significant sense? Perhaps Hobbes would say we cannot positively love rest, but we might, negatively as it were, desire the illusion of no longer suffering from desire. We cannot really conceive or know rest, and so cannot desire it properly speaking. Hobbes cannot accept rest as a real aspect of the cosmos in universal motion. Such a denial or forgetting of rest seems to be the presupposition of dismissing any idea of completion even as a meaningful idea of perfection towards which we can move though impossible to fully realize in human experience. Hobbes seems admirably consistent in his conception and acceptance of a psychology of pure motion.

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<sup>55</sup> See § 1.6, p. 24 above.

The basic character or structure of desire for power remains complex if not ambiguous: Is it a desire to accumulate discrete means to a succession of specific and finite, limited goods, or rather an unlimited and in some sense intrinsic desire for power? After giving his most comprehensive formulation on desire for power after power, Hobbes explains one of the possible causes or motivations:

And the cause of this, is not alwayes that a man hopes for a more intensive delight, than he has already attained to; or that he cannot be content with a moderate power: but because he cannot assure the power and means to live well, which he hath present, without the acquisition of more.<sup>56</sup>

Hobbes seems to want to rein in our imagination from the more radical forms of desire for power suggested by his “power after power”: it is not always longing for ever more intensive delight or immoderate power, but can be a sound concern for future welfare. Hobbes describes, here and elsewhere, a prudent desire for moderate power as a means to secure life and goods. This kind of justification of reasonable degrees of power sets up what we may call the initial, prudential level of Hobbesian desire for power. One requires increasing power to live and preserve future life against the inevitable natural threat of competition and danger. Mere self-maintenance requires moderate increase of power in a defensive spirit. Within moderate bounds, power aims at a solid good, self-preservation. Such controlled desire for power seems merely instrumental to the desire of self-preservation, and accords with Hobbes’s political morality based in natural right, which includes the right to exercise such power. This justified desire for power leads human beings to recognize and follow the natural laws necessary for peace, the political aim with which Hobbes frames the inquiry of Chapter XI. In this justified form, desire for power can be taught or intimidated to lead toward peace.

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<sup>56</sup> *Leviathan*, XI, 70.

Yet this rational concern with self-preservation and therefore peace does not exhaust the phenomenon of desire for power. Such a minimal notion of desire for power would diminish it toward the scope of a more limited and even more abstract early modern concept, self-interest. Some scholars thus interpret desire for power, or minimize it further by neglecting the element of natural competition or necessity that justifies the expansive element of even this prudential level of instrumental desire for power. But Hobbes does not develop a theory of self-interest. Submission to laws of nature in political form, whether guided by reason or fear, activates something like self-interest in Hobbes, who contributes much to the groundwork of this modern theory.<sup>57</sup> Hobbes resists a concept of self-interest, but rather elaborates desire for power. He preserves a more plausibly complete explanation of the human passions including the extreme, complex, absorbing ones that become, as it were, their own goal or cause. In Hobbes's account, desire somehow can attach itself more essentially to the means, increase of power, as an indefinite end than to the goods it may secure.<sup>58</sup> In this sense one can speak of an indefinite or infinite structure of desire. It is worth clarifying, without attempting an analysis of infinity beyond the present scope and purpose, that desire for Hobbes cannot be strictly infinite. I suggest Hobbes's picture of desire may be considered infinite in two ways: 1) a stream of endless desire for an infinite series of finite, partial goods, none of which significantly satisfies desire or relieves the desire for future security of the path of desire; and, 2) as I have used the term indefinite to mean, desire for an unlimited degree of power. Since for Hobbes we can strictly speaking desire the conceivable, and the

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<sup>57</sup> See Mansfield, "Self-Interest Rightly Understood."

<sup>58</sup> C.B. Macpherson takes the opposing view (*Political Theory of Possessive Individualism*, 42). Strauss points to Hobbes's "repeated and emphatic statement that human appetite is infinite in itself and not as a result of the infinite number of external impressions...the animal desires only finite objects as such, while man spontaneously desires infinitely" (*Political Philosophy of Hobbes*, 9).

infinite is only conceivable (or knowable) negatively as lack of limit, then we cannot desire infinite power. But we can desire power without limit, perhaps more precisely put, potentially infinite power. Hobbes's account of desire seems to combine the sense of limitation, or boundedness, of the Aristotelian picture, in which the desire is bound to the object conceived,<sup>59</sup> and only the possible is desired, with the indefinite character of a desire that ultimately has no final end or form but rather an endless series of incomplete objects or a formless non-end of power.

A second decisive ambiguity follows: Is the phenomenon of unlimited desire for power natural<sup>60</sup> to the structure of human desire, such that one primordially desires power

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<sup>59</sup> Among other differences, for Aristotle, as opposed to Hobbes, conception involves more immediate and thorough formal intelligibility of the object.

<sup>60</sup> To be clear, the "second decisive ambiguity" concerns the naturalness of desire for power as means versus as end. This must be distinguished from the different question of the naturalness of desire for power in the absolutely strict sense of being innate and active from birth. This latter level of inquiry is worth considering here: Hobbes depicts the activity of desire, not only from birth and early infancy but in the womb. But in these earliest stages of life human desire may not be fully developed into what desire naturally becomes in a mature human being. Specifically, for Hobbes the strictly innate or infant desire may be principally for discrete goods rather than a general desire for power relative to others as means—here Hobbes seems ambiguous, as per the quotations below—let alone a desire for power itself as end. I do not maintain that for Hobbes desire for power is properly active from birth; nor does the argument for the essential naturalness of desire for power in human beings depend on its activity from infancy. The conception of power, and certainly for power as an end, seems to require the development of the mind to conceive the causal character of power and project this desire as the form of all desires (or indeed the form of desires related to mind, since, again, the desires Hobbes reduces explicitly to desire for power concern intellectual ability, and this ability may not be sufficiently engaged from birth). The classical definition of, say, man as the rational animal in Aristotle, does not suppose that reason is fully active from birth but innately present as a potential that naturally develops with the maturation human form. I suggest a similar measure of naturalness for Hobbes's desire for power. Still it is worth noting that Hobbes affirms that desire animates the human being from birth and even in embryo. In the four relevant passages below, Hobbes seems at times to depict desire merely for discrete objects nearly on the animal model, at times to suggest that infant desire already tends toward domination of other people's wills—even if, as Tarcov suggests in his comparison of Hobbes to Locke on this point, the latter might be interpreted as "merely instrumental" to the latter, this again being left unclear by the various passages (*Education for Liberty*, footnote 6, p. 242; see also pp. 131-132). Even if the desire to influence or dominate other people's wills appears in the infant as instrumental to desire for objects, this merely instrumental desire for power (which indeed remains an *aspect* of mature human desire for power) transforms or expands with the development of human capacities of mind and awareness (of vanity, death, causality, etc.) and range of desires into the more comprehensive and intrinsic desire for power.

Hobbes traces the "vital motion of the blood, perpetually circulating" back to "the very first endeavour, and found even in the embryo; which while it is in the womb, moveth its limbs with voluntary motion, for the avoiding of whatsoever troubleth it, or for the pursuing of what pleaseth it. And this first endeavour [*conatus*], which it tends towards such things that are known by experience to be pleasant, is called



as an end; or is this somehow a distortion of a naturally healthy desire for ever-expanding power *only* as a means? Hobbes seems to ascribe to human beings a natural desire for indefinite increase of instrumental power relative to others, to anticipate potential threats to security and goods from potentially powerful rivals. In this view, the prevalent human attachment to power as an end appears a displacement or forgetting of the rightly merely instrumental character of one's desire. This compels the question: What causes man's "forgetting," if it is well-characterized as such? Pride seems a possible explanation for Hobbes, yet what is the cause of pride, or is it a properly natural passion? Is not pride, intrinsic concern with superiority, inextricable from the original and essentially social causes of human striving for ever-increasing relative power even as means? If so, then the desire for relative power as an end (at least as measure of superiority pursued as an end) seems prior to or, more precisely, inseparable from the desire for ever-expanding instrumental power.

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appetite, that is, an approaching; and when it shuns what is troublesome, aversion, or flying from it (*De Corpore*, XXV. 12, *EW I*, 407). The motion of desire animates for Hobbes the earliest embryo or form of human life, here as desire for specific goods; which intuitively makes sense for the embryo certainly and also the infant, and reminds us of the first layer of Hobbes's account of human desire simply in *Leviathan*, Chapter VI. Accordingly in *De Cive* early desire seems to be of sensual objects, though it immediately gives rise to desire to have others obey their will for some object (though not necessarily or apparently yet continual domination of others' wills): "for though from nature, that is from their first birth, as they are merely sensible Creatures, they have this disposition, that immediately as much as in them lies, they desire and doe whatsoever is best pleasing to them... Unlesse you give Children all they aske for, they are peevish, and cry, aye and strike their parents sometimes, and all this they have from nature" (*De Cive*, Preface, Warrender ed., 33). Elsewhere crying is seen as awareness of weakness, or lack of power to get what one wants: "Weeping, is the sudden falling out with ourselves, or sudden conception of defect; and therefore children weep often; for seeing they think everything ought to be given unto them which they desire, of necessity every repulse must be a sudden check of their expectation, and puts them in mind of their too much weakness to make themselves masters of all they look for" (*Elements of Law*, IX. 14, 55). Hobbes's use of the phrase "make themselves masters of all they look for" does not here refer to mastery over others, but still the phrase may evoke more than merely a series of discrete objects desired, rather a desire to be able to have all that one may desire, which seems to foreshadow desire for power. Finally Hobbes does assert, through his spokesperson in a dialogue, an innate, explicit desire for mastery over all others: "men from their very birth, and naturally, scramble for everything they covet, and would have all the world, if they could, to fear and obey them" (*Decameron Physiologicum*, *EW VII*, 73).

Hobbes, in the dominant image of “Power after power,” characterizes a single trajectory of desire. Desire for power is “perpetual and restless.” In the Latin version, Hobbes writes “*potentiam unam post aliam*,” literally “power one after another” or more naturally “one power after another.”<sup>61</sup> This phrasing brings out the continual movement of desire for power, also accentuated elsewhere,<sup>62</sup> from one kind of power to another in the attempt to attain all of them. No one form of power is sufficient or complete. No aggregation of powers can be sufficient or complete, yet the desire for power seeks the maximal degree of all powers as one expansive form of power. The English “Power after power” can be said to include the movement from one kind of power to another, but to more fundamentally express—as it would be difficult to do in any equivalent Latin formulation—the limitless increase of power as power, the many kinds of power in one universalized stream of power. Desire for power is “perpetual” or continual: its motion is absolutely without rest. The seemingly discrete desire is absorbed in the continual flow of one form of desire. Desire is unified across time in this one motion. It approaches a unity in content: many principal desires of the mind, but not all human desires, may be forms of desire for power. Insofar as the mind is moved by desire for power itself, it seems to approach a unity of desire and thoughtful conception. Desire in its determination as desire for power seems to integrate the mental conception of power, especially as power is an end requiring the complexity of causal thinking. If so, then perhaps even thought is in some measure determined and unified by this desirous master thought on progressive

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<sup>61</sup> The latter as translated by Malcolm, *Leviathan*, p. 151, including note 1, p.151. The Latin sentence: “*Primo ergo loco pono, Morem omnium hominum esse, ut perpetuo atque indesinenter Potentiam unam post aliam per omnem vitam persequantur*” (151).”

<sup>62</sup> Cf. *Elements of Law*, VII. 7, 45, as quoted more fully on pp. 150-51 below: “When they are come to the utmost degree of one kind of power, they pursue some other, as long as in any kind they think themselves behind any other.”

power. Hobbes's psychological monism attempts to unify desire and thought in one uniquely human motion.

Hobbes conceives a structure of desire that attempts a total answer to Aristotle's and Aquinas's demand that desire have a principle from beginning to end, as desire cannot even begin, and certainly not find any worthwhile way, without an end. Hobbes develops such a unified, comprehensive, infinite principle of desire, that one is tempted to suggest that, for all his fierce bluster and dismissal of a greatest good, he has replaced one vision of the final good with another, and founded a new modern teleology. Nietzsche makes something of this stricture against Spinoza's alleged "superfluous teleological principle" of the "instinct for self-preservation."<sup>63</sup> This would be no ultimate criticism of Hobbes. He could simply concede he needs a sweeping destructive polemic to clear the modern mind from illusory teleological language—Greatest Good, final cause—in order to express his more true and politically beneficial idea of unlimited desire and limited happiness in the bracing, accurate terms of power. Even if power were really a new greatest good, still Hobbes may say it remains judicious to leave aside the overloaded and exhausted phrases of the old moral philosophers. But to begin with the portrayal of Hobbesian power as a new greatest good cannot hold up against a precise comparison of the two kinds of notions of the good. If teleology is to keep its original meaning, and for Aristotle or Aquinas its coherence, the *telos* or end must be complete, perfect, final. Hobbes's perpetually incomplete, moving means-end of power cannot strictly be a *telos* or idea of the good. The means-end of power is rather conceived to sever our hopeful thoughts of attaining any such completion or happiness that aims to transcend the motion

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<sup>63</sup> "In short, here as everywhere else, let us beware of superfluous teleological principles—one of which is the instinct of self-preservation (we owe it to Spinoza's inconsistency). Thus method, which must be essentially economy of principles, demands it" (*Beyond Good and Evil*, 13; p. 21).

of desire. Hobbes gives desire a newly unified self-understanding, and a trajectory and even dynamic aim if not direction, but this can be called at most a non-teleological end.

Desire for power thus tends, primordially or derivatively, toward desire for power as an end. This end of universalized power, while abstract, is in Hobbes's terms an abstract concept "not of vain use"<sup>64</sup>; power is not an unfounded or useless abstraction. The conceptualization of universalized power abstracts from particulars, but may illumine the causes of a range of particular effects, and can be the basis for understanding concrete causes and effects in the world. Power in a significant and intelligible sense is accumulated through various discrete actions related to particular objects—as in our everyday sense of the word, power over people, animals, nature, things. That these objects are means not merely to satisfaction of finite desires, but finally to expansion of power as power, only renders the desire more insatiable and tyrannical—and equally indifferent to the welfare of these objects, above all fellow human beings.

Many interpreters resist accepting that Hobbesian desire for power is just this, an articulation of tyrannical passion as it affects real men and women.<sup>65</sup> They often claim it describes a calculated striving for means to the goods we need or want.<sup>66</sup> This view assimilates Hobbes's concept of desire for power as the essence of human nature to

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<sup>64</sup> *De Corpore*, VIII. 24, *EWI*, 118-19.

<sup>65</sup> On the tendency among recent scholars' interpretations to underplay or render harmless the selfish passions in Hobbes's psychology, see Herbert, *Scientific & Moral Wisdom*, ix, 8-9.

<sup>66</sup> Dominique Weber acutely perceives the centrality of desire for power: "l'amour de soi est amour, non directement de soi-même, mais de sa propre puissance" (*Hobbes et le Désir des Fous*, 60). However he takes desire for power regulated by judgment as the solution to "le problème posé par l'amour-propre... celui des moyens adéquats et des moyens inadéquats de réalisation des désirs: en d'autres termes, il est celui des calculs à long terme et la gestion du temps future" (102). Is the problem of self-love so circumscribed? And is desire for power, if thus controlled (not served) by a principle external to itself, here long-term calculation, still desire for power in Hobbes's full sense? Why precisely then is this concept of desire for power necessary? Weber situates man's orientation to the future within his interpretation of Hobbes's genuine "eschatology," arguing that Hobbes does not simply annul love of God for love of self. I find unclear the basis for such eschatology in Hobbes and specifically in his assertion of desire for power. Why, for example, within eschatological religious belief, are we mainly concerned with the problem of maximizing long-range practical power to satisfy a train of future desires?

something like the author's political prescription for the citizen's more regulated pattern of desires. Hobbes grants that in some human types the desire for power may be moderate by nature, but not in the politically decisive, the tyrannical types who impose their mode on others (not only "tyrants" but members of parliament, intellectuals, priests, scientists). Nor perhaps is desire for power moderate in the intellectually decisive, those with highest potential intellectual virtue, which depends for Hobbes on the natural vigor of this desire.<sup>67</sup> Hobbes's ambivalent admiration for some extreme forms of desire for power, however problematic, comes through in his dramatic appreciation of exhilarated, proud awareness of power, e.g., the conquerors' "pleasure of contemplating their own power,"<sup>68</sup> or the prevalence of love of victory over self-preservation and sensual pleasure in the analogy of life to a race.<sup>69</sup>

Human power can be understood, in its precise scientifically grounded form, as a totality of efficient causal capacity. Still, again, power can decisively appear and act in human life through its conception in our self-understanding, most effectively our social or comparative self-understanding:

Glory, or internal gloriation or triumph of the mind, is that passion which proceedeth from the imagination or conception of our own power, above the power of him that contendeth with us...This imagination of our power and worth, maybe an assured and certain experience of our own actions, and then is that glorying just and well grounded, and begetteth an opinion of increasing the same by other actions to follow; in which consisteth the appetite which we call Aspiring, or proceeding from one degree of power to another.<sup>70</sup>

We are aware of our sense of power as an imagination or conception. As such it is subject to imperfect perception, the emotional distortion of self-love in assessing ourselves and

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<sup>67</sup> *Leviathan*, VIII, 53-54.

<sup>68</sup> *Leviathan*, XIII, 88.

<sup>69</sup> *Elements of Law*, IX. 21, 59-60.

<sup>70</sup> *Elements of Law*, IX. 1, 50.

comparing to others, and uncertain opinions of relative value of goods in the absence of an agreed ultimate good beyond power itself. Desire for power, like pride, appears self-regarding; power is a mirror in our consciousness. Still power, unlike vain pride, refers to effective capacities, however imperfectly known and reflected in glory-honour, and however bound to the relative context of contention with others. Power is the real basis and standard for pride. The accurate concern with power attempts to purges pride of its false element of vanity.

Oakeshott's statement that "pride is illusion about power," an effective objection to this naturalistic recovery of pride from sin or error, seems unfounded.<sup>71</sup> Vanity is indeed illusion about relative power, but Hobbes distinguishes justified, accurately estimated pride from groundless vain conceit of one's power (perhaps Oakeshott means here by pride, overweening pride or vanity). Desire for power as relative power seems inseparable from awareness of superiority of power, or pride. It may be possible, however rare in human beings, to have awareness of relative power without pride, meaning without concern with this superiority. This awareness would not be an overcoming of illusion about power, but an overcoming of concern with power. One is tempted to say that the philosopher or saint strives for such a state, but these types may be, in Hobbes's understanding, concerned with other, less commonly appreciated forms of power. It is a question whether any form of desire for power, say desire for wisdom, could ever be desire for absolute and not relative power. And even then, one could suggest that the philosopher is proud of his very freedom from concern with relative power between human beings.

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<sup>71</sup> *Civil Association*, 18.

Insofar as pride as desire for relative power, or honourable acknowledgement of relative power, can be freed from false vanity, then the grounding of pride in power affirms on naturalistic grounds one aspect of Hobbes's critique of conventional pride, its illusory quality. But in revealing the basis of pride and glory in power, the conception of desire for power also specifies and focuses Hobbes's radical moral critique of excessive pride as a critique of power, more precisely the excessive forms of desire for power that have damaging effects, i.e., that undermine the motives and conditions for peace.

Desire for power is not only potentially dangerous in its political effects, but expresses the profoundly imperfect and mixed condition of human desire simply. Desire for power is "perpetuall and restlesse," unsatisfied. Hobbes often paints desire as permeated with vanity and anxiety. In two parallel passages explaining the course of desire for power, Hobbes combines psychological analysis with historical political examples. The first passage is the immediate continuation of the text quoted above from *Leviathan*, Chapter XI explaining why increase of power is necessary to assure the means to continue to live well. Now Hobbes's explication of this rational desire for power to maintain oneself proceeds from solid political consolidation and expansion of powers to pursuing a further range of objects including the less necessary or unnecessary. I quote additionally a parallel passage from *Elements of Law*, which further dramatizes the extension of desire for power through all kinds of power each to their maximum:

And from hence it is, that Kings, whose power is greatest, turn their endeavours to the assuring it at home by Lawes, or abroad by Wars: and when that is done, there succeedeth a new desire; in some, of Fame from new Conquest; in others, of ease and sensuall pleasure; in others, of admiration, or being flattered for excellence in some art, or other ability of the mind.<sup>72</sup>

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<sup>72</sup> *Leviathan*, XI, 70.

Seeing all delight is appetite, and appetite presupposeth a farther end, there can be no contentment but in proceeding: and therefore we are not to marvel, when we see, that as men attain to more riches, honours, or other power; so their appetite continually groweth more and more; and when they are come to the utmost degree of one kind of power, they pursue some other, as long as in any kind they think themselves behind any other. Of those therefore that have attained to the highest degree of honour and riches, some have affected mastery in some art; as Nero in music and poetry, Commodus in the art of a gladiator. And such as affect not some such thing, must find diversion and recreation of their thoughts in the contention either of play, or business. And men justly complain as of a great grief, that they know not what to do. Felicity, therefore (by which we mean continual delight), consisteth not in having prospered, but in prospering.<sup>73</sup>

Hobbes may not reduce desire for various ends to desire for power prior to *Leviathan*, nor generalize the desire for power, but he already describes this appetite for “the utmost degree of one kind of power” extending to the same desire for power “in any [other] kind.” And the prime examples of these kinds are “more riches, honours, or other power,” thus considering riches and honours as kinds of power. So again, already in *Elements of Law*, the analysis of appetite-desire exhibits main foundations of the full conception of desire for power. Hobbes chooses more extreme examples in *Elements of Law*, Nero and Commodus. Such unhealthy minds may seem to make questionable demonstrations of a psychological model. However, Hobbes could be choosing extreme images from history to dramatize the human tendency in some measure active in all human desire. Not only such unstable rulers, history suggests, fail to rest satisfied with already astounding degrees of power. It is not rare that a powerful ruler or ruling elite or democratic populace, with secured peace at home and strength abroad, cannot rest, but takes up various tangential pursuits or superfluous and wasteful political ventures or displays of power. Hobbes must include the most powerful as examples, otherwise he leaves open the possibility that desire for power, once largely achieved, gives way to a more restful

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<sup>73</sup> *Elements of Law*, VII. 7, 45.



form of desire. Hobbes depicts the falling of desire into anxiety and vanity, and diversions implying deep boredom in the “great grief, that they know not what to do.”<sup>74</sup> The point is not mainly a historical one, but a psychological generalization built into the structure of Hobbes’s psychology of desire. Human beings, including the most powerful, seem constitutionally awry or unhappy. Desire is radically misaligned with fulfillment, and bound up in an indefinite structure of continual and significantly disappointed desire, extending desire to the future more than fulfilling it.

Even as Hobbes deflates man’s aspirations for an unlimited future or eternity, he may quietly depict the natural tendency of desire to extend itself in time to the extreme:

The object of man’s desire, is not to enjoy once onley, and for one instant of time; but to assure for ever, the way of his future desire.<sup>75</sup>

This “for ever” may just rhetorically or poetically reinforce the sense of indefinite motion of desire. Or desire may be so consuming as to forget death in its imperiousness without strictly wanting eternity. Or the natural structure of man’s desire may desperately seek to eternalize itself with or without conscious belief in this possibility. Hobbes may capture in his concept of desire for power the imperious nature of desire, not only for limited goods and relative superiority, but perhaps also, in the absence of reasonable self-limitation, deluded longing for permanence. This longing may conceive permanence through power over chance or death, by one’s own power or the power of invisible powers. But Hobbes closes this tempting perspective with austere clarity in the final

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<sup>74</sup> One thinks of Pascal’s portrait of *divertissement* and *vanité* (*Pensées*, 16-18, 502-06). Pascal explains *divertissement* as the unifying motivation of the various restless, finite human desires and pursuits driven by flight from the true concern and fear, mortality or death, and the true object of desire, eternal life or God. Hobbes may deny that the true object is the eternal, at least in the form of eternal life in unity with the Biblical God. But his analysis of anxious desire for power of all kinds to secure itself against future time in the awareness of its end in death has affinities with Pascal’s depiction of the restless, also energetic and partially joyful, race of desire through one diversion to another.

<sup>75</sup> *Leviathan*, XI, 70.

words of his sentence on perpetual desire for power after power, “that ceaseth onely in death.” Hobbes may concentrate the mind on death to remind and restrain the wandering of desire beyond the possible and beneficial.

To test the extreme boundaries of Hobbes’s conception, then, one could provisionally entertain this uncertain hypothesis, that for Hobbes power could become a genuinely intrinsic, even metaphysically grounded, object of desire: man is in some sense naturally directed toward infinite power, including but not reducible to its social-political forms. The ultimate form of power corresponding to this thought would be omnipotence. In Hobbes, power as the force of motion can be understood as the universal principle of nature, sovereign and thereby in some sense good.<sup>76</sup> If there is a first principle of cosmic order or, as Pascal seems to suppose of Descartes, a philosophic God of nature in Hobbes, it may be conceived as the omnipotence of motion or causality. In Hobbes’s sometimes obscure attempts to describe God, either in the perspective of nature or the context of Biblical worship, he concentrates on the attribute of omnipotence, not exclusively but most prominently. He presents such power as an object for our contemplation in nature and, when considered in the Biblical God, reverence. But Hobbes does not hold out omnipotence as a individual human goal. On the contrary, he tries to deflate individual hopes for extravagant power. He aims to persuade us, practically speaking, of the improbability of prevailing against others on the basis of power, rather dramatizing the probable anxiety, misery, and death of such an attempt in the state of nature. Still he states more than once that, if there could be an irresistible power among human beings in

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<sup>76</sup> Cf. Plato presents a notion of being as *dynamis* through a speech of the Eleatic Stranger in the *Sophist* (247e). Hobbes and Descartes present conceptions of God as infinite power in a manner plausibly consistent with the efficient causality that governs nature in Hobbes’s scientific understanding. Spinoza goes further than Hobbes in considering, certainly in elaborating, power as a universal principle of nature. Nietzsche can be seen to assert the will to power as a cosmic principle.

the natural state, this would constitute a right to rule and provide a clean political solution. And he appears to reduce God's justice to his omnipotence. But again, he teaches precisely the impossibility of human omnipotence, and the improbability even of lasting domination of others, unless in the fully political and legitimate form of the sovereign dominion. Within the psyche, Hobbes's picture of the unlimited structure of desire for power might account for a persistent tendency to desire infinite power. Yet Hobbes's argument through his illumination of desire for power is precisely to limit or dispel or redirect what he forcefully portrays in this desire, a natural tendency to extremes of destructive pride or greed or impossible aspiration through its unlimited structure. Hobbes affirms in the natural desire for power the limitation of desire to the incomplete goods and imperfectly satisfied state of mind given to our condition.

### § 3.5. POWER AS THE SUMMATION OF GOODS

Hobbes tries to give content to open-ended power as a universalized summation of goods or excellences such as honour and wisdom "reduced" to their common aspect of power and in this form desired generally and continually as power after power. Hobbes's Latin version of the opening definition in Chapter X makes explicit the summing operation: "The power of a man, taken universally, is "the sum of all his means into one aggregate [*mediorum omnium ...aggregatum*]." <sup>77</sup> More precisely, what is desired in power is the aggregate of the various potentialities of honour, knowledge, wealth. But how do we know or measure such potentiality? In Hobbes's natural science, power is

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<sup>77</sup> As translated by Malcolm, *Leviathan*, p. 132, including note 1, p.151. The Latin sentence: "*Potentia cujusque, universaliter sumpta, est mediorum omnium, quae habet ad bonum aliquod futurum apparens adipiscendum, aggregatum. Est autem vel naturalis vel instrumentalis*" (*Leviathan*, X, OL III, 68).

known through its effects on matter and, in principle or at least aspiration, quantifiable. In the human situation, it is unclear what is the relevant total effect of power as honour or wisdom. Understanding effect in the scientific sense of efficient cause and effect, the effect of human power could be seen as its external effect on people or things, the moving of people and things. The desire, the possession, and use of power, such as honour or wealth or knowledge, also affects the one desiring and accumulating and using such goods, both in internal effect on the psyche and the increase in capacity to acquire or influence. All these effects, internal and external, must be comprehended as an aggregate of somehow uniform power. It is not clear how such heterogeneous goods, at least originally known to us in their heterogeneity, may be summed, how their common element of power can be distilled as a commensurable aggregate, let alone quantified. The risk of abstraction, even in strictly theoretical terms, is the blurring or disintegration of the effects or qualities specific to each kind of good or activity. Hobbes “taking” power universally seems to involve such violence, seizing and re-arranging the phenomena as modes of power.

### § 3.6. THE SPIRIT OF HOBBS’S REDUCTION

What does it mean for Hobbes that pride, and other passions, are manifestations of desire for power? What is the spirit of Hobbes’s reduction? The reductionist mode is generally taken to undermine the integrity of the different forms or wholes that become understood in terms of their elements, in this case the single element of power. What we understand as honour is really our psychological interpretation, moralized or otherwise

imagined, of a relation of power. But in the terms distinguished earlier,<sup>78</sup> reduction can also be reductive, the philosophic or scientific reduction or simplification of many apparent phenomena or causes to fewer or, ideally, to one cause or principle. Since Hobbes's psychology does not lean merely on reduction to elements, but explains in psychological and introspective human terms (even if on a materialist foundation), his account gives scope to the higher-level phenomena in some measure as higher-level phenomena, that is, as distinctly human powers of mind and consciousness. Moreover, desire for power is our psychological first cause, not merely in a mechanical sense, since the desire for power participates in the effect, comes into its own in the effect, in the activities of desire for honour or knowledge. Desire for power seems in this sense expansive in Hobbes. It takes on the potential magnitude, if not the movement toward perfection, of Platonic Eros, or of Nietzsche's even more comprehensive will to power.

However, if one takes Hobbes's materialism or motionism to suggest that motions are real, but the combinations formed by motions, such as plants and animals and human beings, are merely accidental formations, then Hobbes may be reductionistic. Perhaps this dissolution of the integrity or final reality of form, including the human form, is well described by a more absolute and destructive term than reduction. Johnson describes Aristotle's implicit critique of Empedocles's materialist reduction of eternal natures or forms to elements in terms of elimination:

The issue here is not one of reductionism, but of eliminativism. For Aristotle takes the implication of what Empedocles is saying as not that an animal's nature is reducible to the elements, but that the animal has no nature and is only an incidental collocation of elements. Thus Empedocles does not reduce the nature of

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<sup>78</sup> See § 2.2, p. 52-53 above.

the animal, he eliminates it. His elements are the only intrinsically real things, according to Aristotle; everything else is an accident of their combination.<sup>79</sup>

Perhaps elimination is a more precise term of distinction from reduction, at least from the Aristotelian or anti-materialist perspective. Aristotle does not recognize the elements or undirected motion as finally real taken in themselves, but as potentiality that can only be understood as real in its actuality as the formed nature of water, plant, animal. Eliminativism versus reduction makes the alternative a stark either/or. In such terms Hobbes would evidently defend his understanding as true reduction, but he remains open to the eliminativist charge.

Hobbes's reductive or reductionist-eliminativist desire for power is not the only mid-seventeenth-century attempt to explain human phenomena through a unitary psychological force. La Rochefoucauld makes amour-propre, self-love or pride, the governing source of the passions. Pascal explains human desires as forms of *divertissement*, from which pride and self-love are inseparable in this psychology of man without God. These rival contemporary attempts have much in common with Hobbes's psychological mode (monism, reduction) and content (predominance of passions, centrality of pride or egoism). The parallel is especially close with La Rochefoucauld. Hobbes goes far in building his psychology on pride, but ventures further, perhaps deeper, perhaps extravagantly, to see pride and self-love in the perspective of power. La Rochefoucauld could respond that self-love remains the deeper phenomenon, that power is merely one of many conceivable mirrors of our inclination to self-love; the other mirrors, say, beauty or honour or generosity, may not universally reflect power, but other aspects of reality. La Rochefoucauld, without turning to a scientific basis, expresses the

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<sup>79</sup> Aristotle on Teleology, 98-99.

relentless, imperious, tormenting motion of desire as the trajectory of self-love, *amour-propre*. Hobbes discovers a natural basis or criterion of self-love through power, which may unify human desire and self-consciousness with the more universal motions of nature. This self-love in the image of power assumes the more affirmative natural dynamism of a desire not only revolving around the self but also projecting power outward. This effective, even physically effective externalization of human desire through power, extravagant or not, may give Hobbes a psychological foundation for beneficial political comprehension and unification of power.

## IV. PASSIONS, VIRTUES, AND REASON IN THE PERSPECTIVE OF DESIRE FOR POWER

### § 4.1. HOBBS'S DOUBLE REDUCTION: VIRTUES AND PASSIONS

Hobbes's psychology effects what may be seen as a double reduction—first, the natural virtues to passions; second, the passions of the mind themselves to manifestations of desire for power. Hobbes's reduction, from at least the conventional moral perspective acutely reductionist in spirit,<sup>1</sup> can be taken to undermine the integrity of the virtues. In the definition catalogue of passions in Chapter VI of *Leviathan*, Hobbes redefines a series of appetites-desires-passions, absorbing what we call virtues into passions. Courage is defined as a particular combination of hope and fear:

Aversion, with opinion of Hurt from the object, Feare.  
The same, with hope of avoyding that Hurt by resistance, Courage.<sup>2</sup>

Compounding the two linked definitions, courage can be seen as aversion, originally and otherwise fearful, now hopeful of avoiding the potentially hurtful object by resistance. Courage is an alternation of fearful and hopefully resistant aversion. The virtue of courage is reduced to a passion or composite of passions, named for the prevailing passion.<sup>3</sup> In the following line “Sudden courage” is given as the definition for “Anger.”<sup>4</sup> Anger is sudden courage. One might expect, in this mode of reduction: courage is sudden

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<sup>1</sup> See the working distinction between reductive and reductionist in § 2.2, p. 52-53 above.

<sup>2</sup> *Leviathan*, VI, 41.

<sup>3</sup> “*Hope* and *fear* so alternate with each other that almost no time is so short that it cannot encompass their interchange. And so *hope* and *fear* must then be called perturbations, when both are encompassed in the briefest time; and these perturbations are named after the prevailing emotion, simply *hope* or *fear*” (*De Homine*, XII. 3, 56).

<sup>4</sup> *Leviathan*, VI, 41.



anger or anger of some kind. But Hobbes characterizes the passion, anger, in terms of the virtue, courage. Since Hobbes has already reduced courage to a particular passionate composite of hope and fear, then it can serve to define another passion, and the equation can be made between anger and courage on the same passionate plane. It is unclear whether the “resistance” involved in courage is precisely passionate, but it seems to be motivated by passion (anger or otherwise); nor, strictly speaking, is courage defined as this resistance itself but as hope to avoid by resistance, but one could say the passion of hope includes resistance or directly motivates it.

In his analysis of courage in the *Ethics*, Aristotle distinguishes carefully between the merely passionate sort of appearance of courage—“Spirit or anger is also classed with courage”—and real courage based in the disposition of the mind toward the beauty or nobility of courage and virtue-excellence simply.<sup>5</sup> The passion resembling courage is one of the five kinds of false semblances of courage enumerated.<sup>6</sup> Practically speaking, for Aristotle, one could say that the passions may be attuned to virtuous dispositions and support the virtues, but the virtues are not passions. “Thus the real motive of courageous men is the nobility [*kalon*] of courage, although spirit [*thumos*,<sup>7</sup> a kind of passion] operates in them as well.”<sup>8</sup> Aristotle comments before the fact on Hobbes’s identification of courage with anger and possibly spirit (closely related passions, nor does Hobbes have a clear English equivalent to use for spirit as distinguished from anger):

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<sup>5</sup> *Nicomachean Ethics*, III, viii, 10, p. 167.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid*, p. 169-171.

<sup>7</sup> *Thumos* is, along with anger, another possible aspect of the passionate basis for courage, at least as described by Aristotle in his ethical works. It could seem that Hobbes removes the thumotic element from anger, and thereby from affinity with sudden courage, by this initially narrow definition of anger. But anger over sensed injustice, which seems to integrate the thumotic aspect, reappears as part of the definition of indignation. It is unclear whether this indignant thumotic anger is implicitly part of anger as sudden courage. In any case it would only expand the already passionate basis of Hobbes’s conception of courage.

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid*, p. 167.

The form of courage that is inspired by spirit seems to be the most natural, and when reinforced by deliberate choice and purpose it appears to be true Courage. And human beings also feel pain when angry, and take pleasure in revenge. But those who fight for these motives, though valiant fighters, are not courageous; for the motive of their confidence is not honour, nor is it guided by principle, but it springs from feeling. However, they show some affinity to true Courage.<sup>9</sup>

For Aristotle, Hobbes's identification of courage with anger captures the motive of some displays of what is often but approximately called courage, but it misses the true realization of courage. Hobbes read closely Aristotle's *Ethics*, which he criticizes severely in *Leviathan*, and translated his *Rhetoric*. Hobbes clears away Aristotle's distilled understanding and presentation of courage as a virtue with the swift equation of anger with courage. Hobbes's prior definition of courage as a mixture of hopeful resistance and fearful aversion seems yet further from Aristotle's pure virtue of courage. Hobbes does not include courage in any of his explicit reductions of passions to desire for power. One could suggest that courage, as hopeful resistance to fearful aversion, is an assistance or defense of appetite-desire generally. Insofar as the distinctly human passions of the mind are forms of desire for power, courage seems to defend manifestations of the desire for power, that is, to counteract the inevitable fear and objects of fear encountered in desiring and pursuing power. It seems plausible that courage as defense or advancement of desire for power is motivated by desire for power, again insofar as desire for power can be generalized across desires. Courage is also, like desire for power, a natural virtue-passion of human beings even aside from political life and its virtues.<sup>10</sup>

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<sup>9</sup> *Ibid*, p. 169.

<sup>10</sup> "The other three virtues (except for justice) that are called cardinal—*courage*, *prudence*, and *temperance*—are not virtues of citizens as citizens, but as men, for these virtues are useful not so much to the state as they are to those individual men who have them. For just as the state is not preserved save by the courage,

Further, the passions reduced to desire for power are passions affecting intellectual virtue; and courage of a kind can be said to be integral to intellectual virtue both practical and theoretical. Moreover, in *De Homine* Hobbes brings out an aspect of which he seems to neglect in *Leviathan* and *Elements of Law*: “Courage [*fortitudo*], like prudence, is more a strength of the mind than a goodness of manners.<sup>11</sup> Hobbes does not elaborate in what sense courage is a strength of the mind, whether it is governed by reason or some other more passionate version of mental fortitude (as the complex human passions are a blend of passion and thought). Perhaps this strength of mind comprises the “resistance” inseparable from hope in the *Leviathan* definition of courage. Hobbes does not seem here to give courage a rational or noble direction in any Aristotelian sense, but to acknowledge the mental aspect of the passion of courage. If courage is an aid to or form of power, then perhaps it may be a strength of mind included in the complex conception of desire for power, though again the possible relation or reduction of courage to power is not made explicit. And as I have argued, Hobbes’s generalizing conception of desire for power may not take all passions as absolutely reducible to desire for power. Courage may be closely related in motivation to desire for power but not strictly reducible to it.

#### § 4.2. NATURAL MORAL VIRTUE: CHARITY

Hobbes admires Aristotle’s “rare” *Rhetoric*, where Aristotle analyzes the passions from the perspective of the rhetorician attempting to affect and move the passions in

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prudence, and temperance of good citizens, so is it not destroyed save by the courage, prudence, and temperance of its enemies” (*De Homine*, XIII. 9, 69).

<sup>11</sup> *De Homine*, XIII. 9, 69.

speech; accordingly Aristotle treats the passions more as they tend to function in the world, not, as in the *Ethics*, in relation to human excellence which involves the governing or attuning of passions by reason. Hobbes radically extends any Aristotelian accentuation of the force of passion or desire—again, finally equivalent terms in Hobbes— and provides a theoretical and practical moral psychology of the passions that affirms their primacy. Hobbes explicitly dismisses Aristotle’s ethical principle of virtue as a reasonable mean, as he introduces his alternative, thoroughly political or practical Hobbesian definition of virtue as that which promotes peaceful society:

But the Writers of Morall Philosophie, though they acknowledge the same Vertues and Vices; Yet not seeing wherein consisted their Goodnesse; nor that they come to be praised, as the meanes of peaceable, sociable, and comfortable living; place them in a mediocrity of passions: as if not the Cause, but the Degree of daring, made Fortitude; or not the Cause, but the Quantity of a gift, made Liberality.<sup>12</sup>

Hobbes proceeds in *Leviathan* Chapters VIII and X, as I discussed above in Chapter 3, to reveal the passions as functions of desire for power and recast a host of passions, qualities, and activities in this perspective. The two waves of reduction unsettle or disintegrate conventional understandings of the virtues and passions. Hobbes intends just this undermining of the illusory and impractical old understanding of virtue and rational harmonizing of passions. I suggest there may also be—even prior to Hobbes’s introduction of his social-political virtues, his laws of nature flowing from natural right—a positive or constructive direction to Hobbes’s reductive analysis, seeking to reconstitute the natural virtues, such as pride or charity, precisely on the genuine basis of their natural origin in desire for power. The negative unmasking of false notions of the virtues gives way to a new teaching on the natural passions, moral or otherwise, re-interpreted as

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<sup>12</sup> *Leviathan*, XV, 110-11.

phenomena of power. In what measure is desire for power a coherent basis for the passions and a winnowed set of virtues? At the extreme, does Hobbes attempt to deduce natural goodness from power?

Hobbes does not deny, taking a prime example, the phenomena of charity. On the contrary, he considers charity as one of only two kinds or aspects of all virtue: “All the virtues are contained in justice and charity.”<sup>13</sup> Moreover charity is the natural form of moral virtue:

Moreover, that moral virtue [*virtus moralis*], that we can truly measure by civil laws, which is different in different states, is justice and equity; that moral virtue which we measure purely by the natural laws is only charity [*charitas*]. Furthermore, all moral virtue [*omnis virtus morum*] is contained in these two.<sup>14</sup>

Hobbes affirms charity but may recast its Christian understanding in content and psychological foundation:

There can be no greater argument to a man of his own power, than to find himself able, not only to accomplish his own desires, but also to assist other men in theirs: and this is that conception wherein consisteth charity.<sup>15</sup>

It is unclear whether charity is said to be motivated precisely by desire for power or desire to appear powerful to oneself, to see an argument of one’s own power, but the latter desire or mode of pride would normally be based on the former core desire (or be its vain shadow which still grants its authority over one’s self-understanding). It seems plausible that charity—and Hobbes means here practical generosity to provide others the means to accomplish their desires, not charity in its original sense of generous spiritual love or concern for the other’s soul, which may or may not be derivatively expressed in

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<sup>13</sup> *De Homine*, XIII. 9, 70.

<sup>14</sup> *De Homine*, XIII. 9, 69.

<sup>15</sup> *Elements of Law*, IX. 17, 56.

charitable giving—if charity be an argument of power, is not an empty one in terms of actual power, since charity involves excess wealth or influence, excess power, sufficient to share with others.<sup>16</sup>

Still one could say, if this interpretation of the motive is accurate, it destroys charity in any meaningful moral sense. Hobbes calls the vanity of display of excess wealth, charity. Hobbes calls precisely the false, hypocritical form of real Biblical charity, charity. Hobbes’s naturalistic egoism of desire, interpreted through power or not, annuls distinctions between moral and immoral, replacing them with amoral descriptions of the tendencies of human desire. Hobbes may have two lines of response to this compelling criticism. First, he may grant that much of what was conventionally considered moral, cannot be fundamentally distinguished in motivation from the conventionally immoral, but both find roots in the amoral passions, and the determination of moral and immoral often depends on the interests and emotions of the interpreter or on the ruling opinions of a given society. For this very reason, morality, that is, political morality, or the “manners” or ways or ethics conducive to living in peace and moderate ease, must be grounded in natural right, which prescribes the basic naturally derived laws of sociality, but which leaves the determination of specific, social-artificial-conventional moral codes to the authority of the sovereign. Such is the main practical path of thought from Hobbes’s natural to his political psychology if we can so distinguish them.

However, second, returning to the possibility we were examining, that of a natural basis for the virtues in desire for power, Hobbes may maintain that there is a kind of natural criterion of human thought and action based on power. It is not conventionally

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<sup>16</sup> Anecdotally, Aubrey recounts that Hobbes was himself joyfully moved by his own modest acts of charity. Aubrey does not venture a motive.

moral, though it may corroborate the health of some conventionally moral actions and attitudes, such as charity. It may be the measure, if not of human goodness, then of the new form of semi-happiness, not the flourishing but the progress of desire. This represents natural goodness of a kind from the perspective of human desire. Such an ethic of power could not be the basis for a moral-political code, since some expressions of desire for power undermine peaceful sociality. Perhaps some extreme expressions of desire for power undermine the progress of desire for power itself, but that would be an individual not a political problem, and would require a standard of guidance beyond power alone.

This kind of ethic of desire for power would have its true and false signs and expressions, its true and false forms. In Chapter VI of *Leviathan*, Hobbes distinguishes between justified and unjustified joyful glory based on power:

Joy, arising from imagination of a mans own power and ability, is that exultation of the mind which is called Glorifying: which if grounded upon the experience of his own former actions, is the same with Confidence: but if grounded on the flattery of others; or onely supposed by himself, for delight in the consequences of it, is called Vaine-Glory: which name is properly given; because a well grounded Confidence begetteth Attempt; whereas the supposing of power does not, and is therefore rightly called Vaine.<sup>17</sup>

Here the vanity is explained partly on the basis of its practical consequence (though vanity can sometimes motivate attempt), but the hard criterion of underlying power-ability makes the difference between pride or glory, and vanity.

Still one could question whether desire for power can be sufficient basis for even this natural, individual ethic. There remains the problem of direction of this desire, given the many kinds of power that can be pursued or exerted. Intention requires decision

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<sup>17</sup> *Leviathan*, VI, 42.

among the possibilities. Even if charity expresses power and also, through others' recognition of this displayed power, gives power, then what motivates one to charity instead of, say, mere accumulation of wealth, which is also power? Indeed if charity is valued simply as an argument or demonstration of one's power, then to destroy or hurt another person is equally an argument for one's power as power; and it may similarly give power through the impressing others with fear or again simply the display of power. Power on its own seems an insufficient explanation for charity. Therefore if charity is an expression of power, still it seems to involve on some level concern for the other person, since there are many expressions of power, and the inclination toward charity can suggest, along with pride, a disposition to aid others and an enjoyment, even if we call it empathetic desire for power, of the slightly improved progress of their desire. Hobbes seems to affirm precisely this other foundation for charity in *Leviathan*:

Desire of good to another, Benevolence, Good Will, Charity. If to man generally, Good Nature.<sup>18</sup>

In *Leviathan* Hobbes leaves out the explicit explanation of charity on the basis of power. It could be suggested that he abandons it, but I suggest rather Hobbes realizes its inadequacy as a self-sufficient explanation of charity and completes the account of charity with this consideration of desire for another's good. Also in *Leviathan* as opposed to *Elements*, Hobbes makes the reduction of mental passions to desire for power and its assertion as a general principle of desire, so its role in particular passions and virtues such as charity may be there implied and not require a particular explanation for each. Though in Chapter X Hobbes explains the relation of many particular passions and virtues in terms of power, and does not include charity, which again suggests he wishes to qualify

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<sup>18</sup> *Leviathan*, VI, 41.



the grounding of charity in power. In the “conception” of charity as “argument to a man of his own power” in *Elements of Law*, a person is said to “find himself able” to assist other men in their desires, but does not specify his being willing or desirous to do so. Perhaps the will and desire are implied in the ability. But it may be that the conception of charity requires this further “desire of good to another” to be actualized, to be willed over other desires which may also be manifestations of desire for power. In this way Hobbes restores a version of the traditional meaning of courage with a combined foundation in care for others and demonstration of power. Perhaps this is meant as a practicable version of charity, the more mixed form in which charity actually happens and can be hopefully relied upon politically. This leaves the ultimate question what is relation between the desire of good to another and desire for power. It seems forced to attempt to reduce desire for another’s good to desire for power, for precisely the reasons just explained for the insufficiency of power as a motivation in charity. Acting on the desire for another’s good may sometimes redound to one’s power, but the motive cannot be purely desire for power, without simply annihilating the phenomena of charity, which Hobbes does not seem to do. One could argue that Hobbes merely rhetorically maintains the language and apparent moral integrity of charity to provide a beneficial moral-political teaching, even if he thinks that charity is ultimately a form of selfishness reducible to desire for power or some other formulation of selfish passion. This extreme view may capture accurately the selfish aspect that Hobbes reveals or allows within the redefinition of charity, as opposed to the especially Christian demand for selfless and spiritual purity of motive. But such an absolute interpretation of Hobbes’s moral doctrine as rhetoric cannot account for the phenomenology of charity presented by Hobbes without dissolving not only charity, but

any qualitative distinction within kinds of selfish desire for power beyond a standard of quantitative power—that is, without denying even a modest, prudentially moral distinction of better and worse, beneficial or harmful for the extension of one’s desire through self-preservation (plausibly including secondary but distinct concern for the self-preservation or good of others). I argue that Hobbes, through natural charity and quasi-natural political justice as we will see, genuinely attempts to ground and defend such a practical morality which does not include categorical or absolute, intrinsic moral commands or prohibitions, with the possible exception of useless, but which accounts for the distinction in human passions and actions between prudentially better or worse, healthy or sick in effect. Hobbes dilutes the conception of the moral; if the moral can only be perfectly selfless, or motivated by love of the noble-beautiful as in Aristotle, or an absolute command of a Biblical or Kantian kind, then one could perhaps say that Hobbes dissolves the moral strictly speaking.

Regarding charity or concern for another’s good, in the opening pages of *De Cive* and elsewhere, Hobbes is at pains to deny that human beings are moved predominantly by this desire to “man generally” as he here defines “good nature,” but a measure of charity to some others plays is given a place in the analogy of natural passions to a race, though hardly a leading place, and in the definitional catalogue of *Leviathan*. I maintain Hobbes indeed puts desire for power “in the first place” as general human inclination, but perhaps not the exclusive place, leaving the possibility for other, less predominant and effective but still significant forms of desire that are not absolutely reducible to desire for power. Desire of good for another, even if considered as desire for the increased power of

another, represents the principle moral or unselfish natural principle of desire counterbalancing the more primary desire for one's own power.

Stated another way, unless there is no differentiation or hierarchy within desire for power, and any form of desire for power is equally natural or healthy, then desire for power requires a further principle of guidance toward charity or whatever other expression of power. This further principle can be another passion, namely desire of another's good as generalized motive of natural charity. The further principle can reason, even if only instrumental deliberative reason. If the criterion is maximal power, then a discerning reason is required, since it seems difficult, if at all possible, to compare the various forms of power: one must measure the power contained in qualitatively different activities or goods all subsumed under power; and one must, given that power is future effect, attempt to forecast the chain of cause and effect that will render this or that form of power most useful or powerful. Desire for power involves a complex operation of reason, since the comprehension of power involves causal thinking, the distinctly human form of thinking or reason.<sup>19</sup> Desire for power, as it projects the desiring mind into the perspective of uncertain future causation, or power as psychologically conceived, must acutely suffer, inseparable from pleasure in its continual progress of desire, "perpetuall solicitude of the time to come... perpetuall feare."<sup>20</sup>

#### § 4.3. NATURALISTIC EXPLANATION OF EVIL AND CRUELTY

Hobbes's attempt at thoroughly naturalistic treatment of the passions as motion makes it difficult to find a standpoint from which to condemn any desire. If Hobbes

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<sup>19</sup> *Leviathan*, III, 21. See further discussion in § 4.8 below.

<sup>20</sup> *Leviathan*, XII, 76.

means to maintain a natural basis for morality, which his moral term natural right implies, he seems to need a naturalistic root for a critique of natural desire, that is, a natural principle within or outside of desire that limits the trajectory of desire for power. Before considering the critique of desire for power through natural right, it may be helpful to consider the natural situation of the passions depicted in Hobbes's idea of desire for power.

In our contemporary usage, the term power has come to include as a leading shade of meaning, domination. Power as domination is a prominent discourse on human and political relations. Domination can mean political rule but tends to have the colouring of domination for its own sake, political or otherwise, and domination as cruelty or infliction of suffering. This colouring of the term power seems to stem immediately from Foucault's narratives of ubiquitous and harmful power dynamics, but more fundamentally from Nietzsche's concept of will to power.

Nietzsche deliberately conceives power in terms of will, not desire. Nietzsche begins from a concept of desire for power, *Machtgeliüst*, but as he increasingly develops the idea as a master concept in his thought, he replaces desire with will. Nietzsche explains in his late drafts that become, edited by others after his incapacity and death, the volume *Will to Power*:

“Willing” is not “desiring,” striving, demanding: it is distinguished from these by the affect of commanding.... It is part of willing that something is commanded.<sup>21</sup>

Will to power involves command in some sense, perhaps command of self and others, but a relation of command, assertion over or against someone. In terms of the contemporary study of power, Nietzsche's concept heavily involves “power over” as distinguished from

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<sup>21</sup> *Will to Power*, Aphorism 668, p. 353.

“power to” (not that the latter aspect is absent). The will to power integrates “power over” into the essential human drive. As with the Nietzschean concept generally, we must be careful not to presumptively read this meaning back into Hobbes’s desire for power, whatever the affinities may be.

Nietzsche uses his concept of will to power to explain, at moments even to praise or encourage, kinds of human cruelty and what is usually called evil. Hobbes, I suggest, aims to explain naturalistically through will to power much of what we consider as evil. Hobbes condemns cruelty as vicious in nature and in his political virtues and vices. After distinguishing charity as the only purely natural virtue, Hobbes defines the corresponding and natural evil, “lack of charity,” in the terms he uses elsewhere to define cruelty:

For all the virtues are contained in justice and charity. Whence it can also be understood that dispositions contrary to these are wicked; and the contrary manners and vices are all contained in injustice and in a mind insensible to another’s evils, that is, in a lack of charity.<sup>22</sup>

Cruelty, as we will presently see, is defined by Hobbes precisely as insensibility to another’s evils in one of his two main accounts of this vice<sup>23</sup>; and cruelty in its further Hobbesian definition still must involve moral insensibility to others’ suffering but extends beyond such indifference to an enjoyment of this suffering. Cruelty, then, as opposite to charity, appears as the arch natural vice. It is unclear whether desire for power, the natural principle of desire which may explain human evil or some range of evil, includes especially a tendency toward cruelty as integral. Desire for power, as we have seen, has in one of its two inseparable aspects an asocial (and, considered in itself, basically healthy) source in the structure of human desire simply as motion. The acutely social (and morally problematic) aspect of desire for power stems from its dual source in

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<sup>22</sup> *De Homine*, XIII, 9, 70.

<sup>23</sup> *Leviathan*, VI, 43-44

human self-awareness as relative awareness of power, or pride. Still it is not clear that comparison of relative power, and contemplation of one's power, involves inclination to domination or cruelty. In the analogy of the race, for example, human beings seem to seek pre-eminence without primarily cruel intention.<sup>24</sup> Still they are seen to overthrow others from envy and laugh when others fall, so there may be cruel pleasure taken in a rival's downfall, though this could be at least partly a glorying pleasure in one's relative advancement in the race. In the account of the passions in *Leviathan*, Chapter VI, Hobbes makes at first glance a stunning claim:

Contempt, or little sense of the calamity of others, is that which men call Cruelty; proceeding from Security of their own fortune. For, that any man should take pleasure in other mens great harmes, without other end of his own, I do not conceive it possible.<sup>25</sup>

Hobbes seems to deny the phenomenon of cruelty as enjoyment of suffering, as opposed to indifference. In this definition of cruelty within the Chapter VI account of the passions, he seems to maintain the chapter's emphasis on the natural trajectory of desire toward an apparent good, which he does not take to include the suffering of another person. Hobbes here clearly allows that, if the suffering of the other person is beneficial in some further way, say, the misfortune of a rival opens up an opportunity, then the harm suffered by the other person will be a source of pleasure, but not from the harm itself, only from its positive effects. Hobbes seems to neglect the scenario with which he would be familiar from Lucretius among other places, that one enjoys in the sight of others' suffering one's own relative security and pleasure. There may also be a human enjoyment of simple

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<sup>24</sup> *Elements of Law*, IX. 21, 59-60.

<sup>25</sup> *Leviathan*, VI, 43-44.

bloodlust, wolf-like as described by Plato for example,<sup>26</sup> which aggression is distinct from the enjoyment of the suffering of the victim. I think Hobbes understands the famously Lucretian enjoyment to be, not of the other's suffering, but of one's own security—less indirect than benefitting from the effects of the suffering, but still not direct enjoyment of another's harm. However, one could wonder, in the perspective of desire for power, since awareness of relative power is pleasurable, then would not another's suffering, even or especially if inflicted by oneself out of aggression, provide the joy of visibly increased relative power? It seems it would, and in this way desire for power could impel one toward cruelty, even if there may be an admixture of other motives such as enjoyment of security or visceral bloodlust. But then the question becomes, definitionally here, what does Hobbes mean by “without another end of his own”? If Hobbes means that one must enjoy the suffering as suffering in the strictest sense, such that even one's sensation of relative power, wrapped up as it is in the spectacle of the suffering (and even in the causing of it), remains “another end of his own,” then desire for power does not involve cruelty as enjoyment of another's suffering.<sup>27</sup>

Nietzsche's will to power integrates more directly a will to command and master others. Hobbes integrates into desire for power only this comparative assessment of power, which remains at one remove from actual enjoyment of making suffer—and, at

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<sup>26</sup> *Republic*, 565d-e.

<sup>27</sup> One could further propose, as an instance of enjoyment of cruelty “without another end of his own,” that people enjoy hearing of others' sufferings from the distant past whether real or fictional, where the relation to our own good, such as relative power or relative security, seems obscure. Hobbes may counter that in hearing about and imagining even past and fictional suffering, we inevitably imagine it sufficiently real and present as to draw ourselves into relative comparison. Still this may be a somewhat forced counter-explanation denying the main intuitive force of the phenomena, leaving the historical-fictional example as possible evidence of enjoyment of the idea of another's suffering in itself or in isolation from any good of our own.

least primordially, at a remove from mastery or domination in the sense of subjecting the other, rather than of enjoying relative superiority. However, this is an extremely strict interpretation of “another end.” Such a strictness or (negative) purity of motive is required to save, on the basis of his own psychology, Hobbes’s claim that cruelty as enjoying of suffering is impossible. Practically speaking, Hobbes here allows and affirms that what we call cruelty happens, even if the motive is not “pure” cruelty; and as such it is well explained by the comparative aspect of desire for power. It is plausible that Nietzschean will to power better explains pure cruelty if such exists, what today we might call sadism (in its general not its specific and original sexual sense). Hobbes’s psychological conception of power appears in this sense more benign than that of Nietzsche, and perhaps gentler than one may expect of the harsh Hobbesian vision.

Yet Hobbes seems to qualify his denial of cruelty in the later Chapter XV, where he defines the vice of cruelty among the violations of his moral-political laws of nature:

Revenge without respect to the Example, and profit to come, is a triumph, or glorying in the hurt of another, tending to no end; (for the End is always somewhat to Come;) and glorying to no end, is vain-glory, and contrary to reason; and to hurt without reason, tendeth to the introduction of Warre; which is against the Law of Nature; and is commonly stiled by the name of *Cruelty*.<sup>28</sup>

Here Hobbes refers to the occurrence of cruelty as vengeful “glorying in the hurt of another, tending to no end.” Hobbes concedes what human experience may unfortunately suggest, that in some significant sense human beings take delight in the suffering of others for no further reason. In this scenario, desire for power would not well explain cruelty, unless, again, we consider the joy in increased relative power to be so bound up in the awareness of the other’s suffering as not to be a further end. This interpretation is

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<sup>28</sup> *Leviathan*, XV, 106-7.



also plausible, and Hobbes's use of the term "glorying" calls to mind the glorying motions of awareness of power. So desire for power, whether still at one remove or not from being directly, aggressively cruel, may yet lead intensely to the *effect of cruelty* insofar as its passionate comparative concern with power leads a person to enjoy any relative precedence in power including the diminishment of another through their harm. Hobbes may give the two presentations of cruelty to bring out the two shades of meaning of motivation of cruelty, which I draw from the passages. He may also, facing the subtly imprecise determination of this phenomenon of cruelty, illuminate the more benign human tendency in the account of natural desire, and the more malignant one in the prescription of laws of nature meant to condemn and limit vicious and anti-social passions among which cruelty is the arch purely natural vice and a leading vice simply.<sup>29</sup>

#### § 4.4. MORAL-POLITICAL CRITIQUE OF DESIRE FOR POWER: NATURAL RIGHT, JUSTICE

Hobbes's naturalistic science of the passions has difficulty characterizing particular forms of desire as strictly evil. Yet in his "zeal for peace"<sup>30</sup> Hobbes must confront, through a teaching on justice, the destructive effects of excessive natural forms of desire for power, namely, pride or unnecessary offense (including, once in the political state, any offense against the law or the sovereign's absolute right to rule). Hobbes's concern for peace seems to reflect genuine concern for human beings, in some sense

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<sup>29</sup> On the moral-political plane, which is indeed the context of his condemnation of cruelty as a vice or offense against the laws of nature, Hobbes thus in particular rules out retributive rather than corrective or deterrent punishment, since the former kind of justice requires the criminal to suffer, and the non-criminals to potentially indulge in cruel enjoyment of the criminal's suffering, strictly apart from any future good that may flow from this infliction of suffering.

<sup>30</sup> *De Cive*, Preface, 154 (*OL II*); 37 (Warrender), 15 (Tuck). For my comment on Hobbes's phrase and its translation, see § 1.6, footnote 27, p. 26.

moral concern for the harm man inflicts on man—and not merely or primarily, as is argued at one extreme, a modern strategy for the defense of philosophy and science.<sup>31</sup> Compared with the concentration in Bacon and Descartes on increase of scientific-technological power over nature, Hobbes’s concept of desire for power brings or restores to the fore the problem of the relative power of person versus person as the cause of misery: continual fear and anxious vanity, and occasional physical violence. I do not believe Hobbes views this condition as merely the most immediate problem to be solved in order to facilitate the scientific progress that will provide the decisive “relief of man’s estate.”<sup>32</sup> Certainly he deplores the lack of technological advancement as a defect of the state of nature.<sup>33</sup> And, as I will consider in Section 4.8 on reason and power, he advocates and designs the political use of technology to improve human welfare. Yet his list of technological-commercial inadequacies caused by permanent war in the state of nature gives way to the famous statement of more ultimate evils, perhaps aggravated by lack of technology but more originally caused by the psychological dynamics underlying human antagonism: “worst of all, continuall feare, and danger of violent death; And the life of man, solitary, poore, nasty, brutish, and short.” Hobbes concentrates on the irreducibly political (or anti-political) problem of human striving against others for power as a

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<sup>31</sup> Weinberger illuminates key Baconian elements in Hobbes, but perhaps underappreciates Hobbes’s moral-political modifications and developments, including on the concept of power (“Hobbes’s Doctrine of Method”). On Weinberger see also footnote 70, p. 204 below.

<sup>32</sup> Bacon, *Advancement of Learning*, I. V. 11, 34.

<sup>33</sup> Hobbes dramatizes the undermining of technological and other human progress as a consequence of disorderly conditions in the state of nature, as he gives this list as a way of leading up to his most famous line on the human misery of the state of nature: “Whatsoever therefore is consequent to a time of Warre, where every man is Enemy to every man; the same is consequent to the time, wherein men live without other security, than what their own strength, and their own invention shall furnish them withall. In such condition, there is no place for Industry; because the fruit thereof is uncertain: and consequently no Culture of the Earth; no Navigation, nor use of the commodities that may be imported by Sea; no commodious Building; no Instruments of moving, and removing such things as require much force; no Knowledge of the face of the Earth; no account of Time; no Arts; no Letters; no Society; and which is worst of all, continuall feare, and danger of violent death; And the life of man, solitary, poore, nasty, brutish, and short” (XIII, 89).

profound cause of suffering and a permanent dilemma arising from the natural inclination to power.

It is hard to discern whether Hobbes's moral condemnation of certain passions, for which he maintains the names of traditional vices such as pride and cruelty, is intended as: 1) a natural grounding of moral judgment or law, which retains the absolute and intrinsic character of Biblical command or other traditional moral strictures, or anticipates the rational categorical morality of Kant; 2) a prudential morality based on a naturalistic moral science of human nature that replaces intrinsic or categorical moral standards with laws of conduct conducive to peaceful conditions of life, in which case Hobbes maintains Biblical or conventional moral language partly to accommodate prevailing sentiments, partly to convey the practical but still significantly moral character of his counsel; or 3) an alternate interpretation of this prudential morality as a merely political strategy for general human well-being or other ends, without a morality worthy of the name, that is, without a theoretical moral grounding or natural basis for moral distinctions, but only a moral rhetoric to support a political design to promote certain human tendencies for a beneficial result.

In any of these interpretations, Hobbes's criticism of pride entails suppression of some forms of desire for power. Again, Hobbes's understanding of pride as desire for relative power<sup>34</sup> in one sense redeems pride against empty or false vanity by giving it a

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<sup>34</sup> As argued in this thesis, Hobbes reinterprets pride as ultimately desire for superior relative power. As such pride is no longer grounded in an objective moral excellence or dependent on mere vanity. At the same time, pride is emphatically pride in relation to other human beings, not the Biblical sin of human pride in relation to God. If and to the extent Hobbes is seen to assign God's authority, in the transformed sense now of *potestas*, political authority, to the Sovereign Leviathan as "Mortall God," then pride as refusal to acknowledge any common power or offense against sovereign authority retains a resonance of pride against the superior right and power of God. If and to the extent Hobbes is seen to interpret a God of nature as efficient causality as first cause, then human failure to accept their natural place without metaphysical privilege (including freedom) in the universal determined motion of causation could be a kind

hard core, a natural foundation and standard in power. Moreover, the pursuit of power is justified, if not as an intrinsic object of pride, then as necessary means—partly because of the need for means to necessary goods, partly precisely because of the threat precisely from the excessively proud lovers of power:

Because there be some, that taking pleasure in contemplating their own power in the acts of conquest, which they pursue farther than their security requires; if others, that otherwise would be glad to be at ease within modest bounds, should not by invasion increase their power, they would not be able, long time, by standing only on their defence, to subsist. And by consequence, such augmentation of dominion over men, being necessary to a mans conservation, it ought to be allowed him.<sup>35</sup>

Pursuit of unnecessary degrees of power for the pleasure of contemplating one's superiority in power leads away from any possible political union and peace. (Here Hobbes seems to implicitly assume that human foresight can effectively attempt to judge the degree of power sufficient for one's security, or more precisely to take any given person's actual judgment as the morally relevant measure of the person's intentions.) Even if no degree of attainable power absolutely ensures security, Hobbes concentrates on the problematic motive of proud contemplation of one's power as opposed to its necessary use. Yet in this moral concentration on pride, Hobbes depicts the strong natural attraction of human desire to power itself and the pleasure of contemplating its attainment or desired attainment. There appears a kind of amoral force of natural goodness to such

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of pride in relation to the natural god. If and to the extent Hobbes, in a line of thought shared by other early moderns (see Marion, *On the Ego and on God: Further Cartesian Questions*, pp. 161-192), is seen to interpret the Biblical or Christian God also in terms simply or primarily of causal power, then Hobbes relegates God in a sense to the same ultimate plane as human beings, that of causal power which can only be efficient causality for Hobbes. In this last scenario, Hobbes denies or collapses the absolute difference between the transcendent Biblical God and the creatures, conceiving instead a relation that may be characterized in commensurate terms of power, or bare power relations between God and human beings. In this relation pride seemingly cannot retain its character as metaphysical or categorical rebellion, but is reduced to, again, failure to recognize or acknowledge accurately one's inferior degree of power.

<sup>35</sup> *Leviathan*, XIII, 87-88.

contemplation of power, or at least a temptation including apparent pleasure. It is a question, from the strictly individual perspective of the human type drawn to such power, what intrinsic prohibition Hobbes can provide in his condemnation of pride against this natural, intensely pleasurable desire for power.

Further complicating the political treatment of pride, for Hobbes pride can take a form that is good in a more traditional and even noble sense:

The force of Words... too weak to hold men to the performance of their Covenants; there are in mans nature, but two imaginable helps to strengthen it. And those are either a Feare of the consequence of breaking their word; or a Glory, or Pride in appearing not to need to breake it. This later is a Generosity too rarely found to be presumed on, especially in the pursuers of Wealth, Command, or sensuall Pleasure; which are the greatest part of Mankind. The Passion to be reckoned upon, is Fear.<sup>36</sup>

Here pride does not seem to be a contemplation of one's power. But in a sense Hobbes redefines even this kind of pride, as magnanimity or "gallant" sense of justice, in terms of power.<sup>37</sup> "Actions proceeding from Equity, joynd with losse, are Honourable; as signes of Magnanimity: for Magnanimity is a signe of Power."<sup>38</sup> Magnanimity is a kind of ease and confidence of action based on sufficient power.<sup>39</sup> Pride in appearing not to need to break one's word may be taken as pride based on indifference to the consequences of breaking one's word or as pride in sufficient power that one need not break one's word (and even the former, as suggested by Hobbes's use of the word "need," seems to be a

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<sup>36</sup> *Leviathan*, XIV, 99.

<sup>37</sup> "That which gives to humane Actions the relish of Justice, is a certain Noblenesse or Gallantesse of courage, (rarely found,) by which a man scorns to be beholding for the contentment of his life, to fraud, or breach of promise" (*Leviathan*, XV, 104). "Magnanimity is contempt of unjust, or dishonest helps" (*Leviathan*, VIII, 53).

<sup>38</sup> *Leviathan*, X, 66.

<sup>39</sup> "Magnanimity is no more than glory, of which I have spoken in the first section; but glory well founded upon certain experience of power sufficient to attain his end in open manner" (*Elements of Law*, IX. 19, 58). "To break through with ease, magnanimity" (*Elements*, IX. 21, 60).

generosity inspired by the idea of not needing to break one's word, thus ultimately rooted in the idea of power sufficient not to require fraud, rather than simple self-sacrifice. Though it may integrate an element of indifference to one's well-being, which is in tension with the general Hobbesian catalogue of virtues and is one reason he considers this nobler virtue not generally effective enough to be "reckoned upon"). However exactly interpreted, Hobbes attributes potentially good effects also to such forms of pride. Even more ordinary forms of moderate pride, insofar as it is a necessary element of the human desire for power, seems useful and justified insofar as it motivates necessary and therefore "allowable" competition.

Pride then is treated with some ambivalence. Pride has a natural and real basis in power, which is an ambivalent good. But pride as an intrinsic desire for relative power is conceived in opposition to other human beings in a zero-sum contest. Hobbes uses the concept of desire for power to stress our "asocial," more accurately our antagonistically social, character. This agonistic tendency in its various political manifestations threatens the prospect of civil peace, the goal of Hobbes's science of justice based on natural right. In its essential, archetypical form of desire for superiority Hobbes presents pride predominantly as morally harmful. Hobbes lists pride as one of the catalogue of violations of the laws of nature, and also uses it in a more general sense as the root of other violations of natural right. As a particular violation pride flaunts the natural law principle of equality:

Whether therefore men be equall by nature, the equality is to be acknowledged, or whether unequall, because they are like to contest for dominion, its necessary *for the obtaining of Peace, that they be esteemed as equall*; and therefore it is in the eight place a precept of the Law of nature, *That every man be accounted by nature equall to another*, the contrary to which Law is Pride [*superbia*].<sup>40</sup>

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<sup>40</sup> *De Cive*, III. 13, 68.

Pride undermines the sense of equality which is the condition for peace and a main condition for law in Hobbes's understanding. More generally, pride as desire for superiority can be said to underlie other problematic passions such as ambition and greed, especially in their extreme forms that go beyond reasonable needs. In *Leviathan*, after describing pride as the breach of the precept of acknowledgement of equality, Hobbes introduces the next law "against Arrogance" as a corollary that "dependeth" on the law against pride:

The observers of this law, are those we call Modest, and the breakers Arrogant men. The Greeks call the violation of this law *πλεονεξία*; that is, a desire of more than their share.<sup>41</sup>

The desire for more and more, *pleonexia*, seems to be reflected within the restless motion of desire for power after power. Proud desire for power seems to have no internal principle of limitation, requiring Hobbes's dual political remedy: 1) instilling fear, "the Passion to be reckoned upon," artificially imposed fear to amplify our perhaps insufficient natural fearfulness through the Sovereign's superior quantitative power, *potentia*, and superior qualitative authority of just or rightful power, *potestas*—to intimidate individual desire for power into more limited forms; combined with 2) enlightening people's reason or opinion to counteract desire for power with other desires and objects, positively desire for self-preservation, negatively fear of violent death and aversion to continual anxiety, morally expressed as devotion to justice; reason somehow guides or is guided by these more sociable desires as a limitation on desire for power.

Pride as unlimited desire for relative power can be said to underlie the fundamental political offense or injustice, that is, disposition to disrespect or disobey the

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<sup>41</sup> *Leviathan*, XV, 107-108.

sovereign. Pride from the beginning in the state of nature resists the founding transfer of individual powers to the aggregation of absolute power in the sovereign. In the civil state, pride may encourage new claims to share in greater power or rule. Hobbes calls his Leviathan the “King of all the children of pride,” the sovereign power being the only force capable of subduing the unruly desire for power of the proud.<sup>42</sup> Hobbes introduces his famous analogy in this way: “Hitherto I have set forth the nature of Man, (whose Pride and other Passions have compelled him to submit himselfe to Government).”<sup>43</sup> Hobbes here seems to mean that the harmful consequences of pride have led to the clear necessity for submission to government; again pride is stated as the lead passion, “pride and other passions” leaving open but suggesting the close relation of the other passions to pride.

Does Hobbes, then, finally understand desire for power as man’s naturally healthy governing principle, or as his inevitably deluded, malignant first motion (or some combination perfectly integrated or not)? If the former, then Hobbesian natural right seems grounded more in prudent compromise than in an account of maximal human happiness in the new Hobbesian sense of maximal progress of desire, since society restrains individual pursuit of the natural good of power that drives this progress of desire. It seem true that many or most visions of the individual good involve necessary compromise with political circumstances. Only, desire for power, itself a naturally unlimited inclination for the crucially political object of power, runs into especially direct tension with the fundamental and founding Hobbesian political fact, the transfer of

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<sup>42</sup> “God having set forth the great power of *Leviathan*, calleth him King of the Proud. *There is nothing, saith he, on earth, to be compared with him. He is made so as not to be afraid. Hee seeth every high thing below him; and is King of all the children of pride*” (*Leviathan*, XXVIII, 221).

<sup>43</sup> *Leviathan*, XXVIII, 220.



individual power to the sovereign. If the latter, that is, desire for unlimited power is a malignant first motion of passion, then any argument for power as naturally good is severely qualified. But again, from the perspective of the one desiring power, what is the principle of moral criticism or limitation on power? Hobbes's notion of justice sanctions or amounts to a sane, healthy prudential compromise, that is, the relinquishing of unlimited but anxious and precarious desire for power for a moderated, politically protected range of desire with more probable security of life or continuity of desiring. Pride then appears as self-destructive; as Hobbes suggests, "pride" brings its own "natural punishment" of "ruin."<sup>44</sup> Regarding the political or common good, in this case an instrumental good of peace, pride offends not only in its motivating unjust actions. Pride in its very spirit or intention, as well as in the actions it motivates, is in conflict, not to say contradiction, with the requirements of political life or peace (and thereby with the conditions for whatever human happiness in the Hobbesian meaning is possible). In this sense pride as excessive desire for power can be considered almost intrinsically unjust, morally wrong in a meaningful sense, in its moral intention and consequences.

Still one could argue, from the individual perspective, is it certain that unlimited pursuit of power must lead to one's own harm and ruin? What if desire for power, and the glorious contemplation of power as Hobbes puts it, brings more extension of desire (and pleasure) to a certain kind of person, say, the extremely ambitious ruler or conqueror, than any other desire and way of life? Does the fact that the very intention of this desire violates the conditions of peace, and thereby the beneficial conditions for most people, constitute a perfect moral criticism, given the egoistic starting point of Hobbesian psychology and the possible natural good of unlimited power for some individuals? Here

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<sup>44</sup> *Leviathan*, XXXI, 253-54.

Hobbes's moral critique of power may encounter limit points. He does not have recourse to a categorical moral rule in the Kantian mode or to an absolute command. Indeed Hobbes confesses that his laws, unless commanded by God, if simply laws according to nature, are not strictly speaking laws.<sup>45</sup> If natural right or natural laws are "conclusions, or Theoremes concerning what conduceth to the conservation and defence" of a person, then Hobbes must give compelling reasons, both for these laws as the way to such an end and for this end of conservation as primary. I suggest that Hobbes gives potentially compelling reasons for his moral-political laws,<sup>46</sup> but that his reasoning cannot have absolute force, but ultimately probabilistic force. Hobbes argues, in brief, for the probable eventual defeat or death of any one striving to prevail on the basis of bare power in the state of nature. Moreover, and perhaps even more convincing, Hobbes seems to rely on the psychological argument of inevitable, or overwhelmingly probable, continual anxiety and misery even if one may seem for a time to be prevailing (given the vulnerability of

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<sup>45</sup> "These dictates of Reason, men use to call by the name of Lawes; but improperly: for they are but Conclusions, or Theoremes concerning what conduceth to the conservation and defence of themselves; whereas Law, properly is the word of him, that by right hath command over others. But yet if we consider the same Theoremes, as delivered in the word of God, that by right commandeth all things; then are they properly called Lawes" (*Leviathan*, XV, 111). "Now what we call the laws of nature are nothing other than certain conclusions, understood by reason, on what is to be done and not to be done; and a law, properly and precisely speaking, is an utterance by one who by right commands others to do or not to do. Hence, properly speaking, the natural laws are not laws, in so far as they proceed from nature. But in so far as the same laws have been legislated by God in the holy scriptures, as we shall see in the next chapter, they are very properly called by the name of laws" (*De Cive*, Tuck ed., III. 33, 56).

<sup>46</sup> Hobbes's laws may not be laws in the strictest sense, but he elaborates a systematic defense of the law as law. Hobbes defends the legal as effectively the politically moral. One could say that Hobbes, like Montaigne, begins from a kind of skepticism of absolute moral law or good, and from this starting point reasons towards the political wisdom of defending the authority of particular or conventional law as the most solid principle of moral-political order. But Montaigne appears to avoid or suppress explicit debate on the reasons behind the goodness of law as law, perhaps because the debate destabilizes law practically speaking (and perhaps because Montaigne does not believe the rational argument can be made sufficiently compelling or airtight; he may consider that the specific Hobbesian argument for legal justice rests on an oversimplification of human desires and thus sacrifices too much of the full human self-conception and also of the more generous-spirited real basis of sociality). Hobbes precisely elaborates a reasoned argument for the law as law. One could wonder if Hobbes becomes guilty of his own charge against some religious and some republican politics, that of making the principle of politics or rule or obedience a matter of public and now universal debate and contestation. It seems Hobbes would be aware of the practical risk of basing the defense of law on his arguments and therefore must be confident of the true or compelling character of his argument and the risk of leaving the defense of law insufficiently argued.

even the most powerful person to the power of other people and nature). This may lead most human beings to the Hobbesian conclusion of preference for peaceful political existence. But if the Napoleons or worse of this world scorn an easier peace and hold out in their desire for unlimited power, however unstable, dangerous, and improbable, then the Hobbesian argument may lack an absolute response, that is, an absolute moral prohibition against this natural desire for power. Justice, unlike pride or pleonexic greed or desire for power, is not included in the list of natural passions-virtues reducible to desire for power, but enters with political contract. The ultimate tension in Hobbes's moral science, his radical division between nature and political life in the proper sense, may be only imperfectly harmonized or harmonizable.<sup>47</sup>

Hobbes, then, works to affirm and re-organize limited human desires and powers to generate, not a superior or harmonious internal order of mind and passions, but beneficial effects. Hobbes's political solution cultivates effects on and through the passions. The citizen is guided and intimidated by political institutions as well as re-directed by education. There does occur then an alteration and even re-ordering of the passions. This may involve an enlightened moral self-understanding, i.e., a more reasonable estimate of one's relative power and the consequences of not combining powers in the Sovereign. But the human benefit is not essentially an inherently felicitous

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<sup>47</sup> A further ambivalence in the moral status of desire for power is that the priority of rights and liberties as the moral basis of liberalism seems ultimately rooted in a conception of man's inclination to power in the sense of mastery and potentiality. Cf. Locke's management of desire for power through cultivation of desire for liberty. In Nathan Tarcov's analysis: "According to Locke, this fundamental human desire for liberty is also primordially a desire for mastery, not only over oneself but also over others. Both are recognized as pride. The first aspect must be carefully separated, strengthened, and satisfied, while the second must be subjugated. Indeed, it is by accommodating the proud desire for liberty that the proud desire for mastery can best be controlled" (*Locke's Education for Liberty*, 8).

If potentiality can be usefully distinguished from human mastery (or understood as its extreme conclusion), then I mean to underline the priority of the conception of man's open-ended, indefinite possibilities versus the realization of a definite, constant human nature usually reflected in specific moral obligations. In this mode, Hobbes's conception of desire for power, in opposition to a teleological power-act structure, contributes to the modern moral and metaphysical basis of rights.

ordering of desires (such as equilibrium, fortitude, moderation) or a more intrinsically satisfactory object of desire (such as God, nature, Romantic beloved) but an improved set of effects on and from the desires, an alleviation of conditions, namely peace, to allow some limited but more secure trajectory of the motion of desire.

Hobbes professes his own zeal or passion for peace,<sup>48</sup> meaning conditions of political peace, as a basis for his political doctrine. He does not suggest a direct passion or desire for peace itself among the main human desires. In the absence of an absolute moral prohibition against unlimited desire for power, it is interesting that Hobbes does not suggest a desire for peace itself as an alternative principle. Hobbes conceives desire for self-preservation as an alternative principle of desire, or an accentuation of an originally subsidiary aspect of desire for power (which now combines with a chastened, limited desire for power to form a just, reasonable model of human desire in society). One could say that desire for self-preservation amounts to a desire for peace, since peace is the political condition or means for self-preservation. Still desire for self-preservation is not desire for peace intrinsically but rather instrumentally as the beneficial condition for continued progress of one's desire. Hobbes, then, appeals in most humane and compelling terms for peace as instrumentally desirable, but he does not, and perhaps cannot on his principles, conceive a desire for peace itself. Augustine attempts such an argument for peace, which can be considered an attempted refutation on the ultimate level of desire for power as psychological first principle:

Whoever who joins me in an examination, however cursory, of human affairs and our common human nature will acknowledge that, just as there is no one who does not wish to be joyful, so there is no one who does not wish to have peace. Indeed, even when men choose to wage war, they desire nothing but victory. By means of war, therefore, they desire to achieve peace with glory; for what else is

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<sup>48</sup> *De Cive*, Preface, 154 (*OL II*); 37 (Warrender), 15 (Tuck). See § 1.6, footnote 27, p. 26.

victory by the subjugation of those who oppose us? And when this is achieved, there will be peace. Wars themselves, then, are conducted with the intention of peace, even when they are conducted by those who are concerned to exercise their martial prowess in command and battle. Hence it is clear that peace is the desired end of war. For every man seeks peace, even in making war; but no one seeks war by making peace. Indeed, even those who wish to disrupt an existing state of peace do so not because they hate peace, but because they desire the present peace to be exchanged for one of their own choosing. Their desire, therefore, is not that there should be no peace, but that it should be the kind of peace that they wish for.<sup>49</sup>

Augustine maintains that desire for peace underlies even the apparently aggressive desires. He makes a psychological argument for peace as the good. It is uncertain to what extent this argument depends on the true final good, in Augustine's understanding, of eternal peace. He distinguishes between the worldly and eternal meanings of the word immediately before the above passage.<sup>50</sup> Worldly peace could be an image of the true object of human desire, eternal peace or rest, in Augustine's case in God. But Augustine does not express their relation in precisely this way in the course of this argument above. The argument itself at least becomes presented as mainly psychological or experiential. As such it is a striking suggestion that love of war is ultimately love of peace or aims at peace. It may be true that the worldly peace Augustine describes here is not internal peace of soul, but, as in Hobbes, political peace. Yet Augustine seems to portray a human love of peace as peace, as intrinsically desirable as "to be joyful." Perhaps worldly

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<sup>49</sup> *City of God*, XIX. 12, pp. 933-35.

<sup>50</sup> "We may say of peace, then, what we have already said of eternal life: that it is our Final Good [*finis bonorum*]... The word 'peace,' however, is frequently used in connection with merely mortal affairs, where there is certainly no eternal life; and so I have preferred to use the expression 'eternal life' rather than 'peace' in depicting the end [*finem*] of this City, where its Supreme Good [*summum bonum*] will be found... On the other hand, those who have no familiarity with Holy Scripture may suppose that the life of the wicked also is eternal life... Thus, in order that everyone may more easily understand what we mean, let us say that the end of this City, in which it will possess its Supreme Good, is to be called either 'peace in life eternal' or 'life eternal in peace'. For peace is so great a good that, even in the sphere of early and mortal affairs, we hear no word more thankfully, and nothing is desired with greater longing: in short, it is not possible to find anything better" (*City of God*, XIX. 11; pp. 932-33).

political peace is finally an image of internal peace of soul, itself only imperfectly achievable in this world and an image of eternal peace. Hobbes may respond that Augustine's argument is unsustainable and somewhat forced: Is love of victorious peace fundamentally love of peace, or love of victory confirmed or settled or extended by peace? But even if we grant that Augustine means we love not fighting victoriously but victory, the fulfillment or resting in peaceful victory, still this object would be significantly closer to peace itself than the kind of perpetually moving means-end of power Hobbes conceives.

Hobbes, as I have argued, conceives desire as motion to the exclusion of final fulfillment or any fulfillment worth meaningfully calling rest. Hobbes does not argue for peace, or rest, as the object of desire since his understanding of desire excludes this kind of good, but rather is expressed in the continual desire for the means-end of power. Augustine's psychological argument for peace can coherently be (and most plausibly is) grounded in the Augustinian structure of desire for a final good, or rest.<sup>51</sup> For Hobbes nature gives human beings strictly restless desire, that is, desire without rest or perfection even as a truly conceivable though unattainable principle (as may be, for instance, Plato's Ideas or Good). Hobbes comprehends this natural course of desire as primarily desire for power and seeks to morally limit and redirect its trajectory in the shadow of the preponderance of sovereign power. This moral-political restructuring of the effects of power aims to achieve peace, or political rest, to impose an artificial rest amidst the ceaseless motion of the human psyche and nature.

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<sup>51</sup> In Augustine's case, the final good is God or eternal life and peace in God, but for the purpose of this argument for peace it could possibly be an object such as the Platonic Ideas or Good, Aristotelian form or first cause or complete happiness in contemplating causes or form.

#### § 4.5. NATURAL SOCIALITY

The desire for power is introduced within the portrait of the natural passions. The strict naturalness of this desire (and Hobbesian desires generally), in its fully developed social form as known to us from observation or introspection, can seem ambiguous, since the line and transition between nature or state of nature and society in Hobbes's account is not always simple. I have argued that, though society may modify or limit the trajectory and particular objects of desire—through range of educations and opinions, and political institution of limitations instilled by fear—still the essential structure of desire for power remains the same in the natural and social perspective. As such the inherent, naturally unlimited character of desire for power will remain in some tension with the strictures of Hobbes's teaching on natural right, that is, tension remains between the natural and social orders of desire, which must be reconciled in a moralized social mode of desire that has sufficient natural psychological foundations to be effective and relatively satisfying or happy in the limited Hobbesian sense.

The naturalness of desire for power may also provide a basis to challenge prominent, extreme readings of the state of nature that undermine the natural sociality of Hobbesian humanity. Briefly, if we take Hobbes to mean the solitary or asocial character of man in the state of nature literally or essentially, then its well-documented inconsistency with the naturalness of pride and desire for relative power comes to the fore. I suggest that Hobbes's presentation of asociality is highly qualified. It may not correspond to the usual stark interpretation, which is exploited as it were by Montesquieu and Rousseau. Both argue that Hobbes's state of nature cannot stand as conceived:

Montesquieu objects that such a complex and relative passion as desire for domination cannot be original in nature:

Le désir que Hobbes donne d'abord aux homes de se subjurer les uns les autres n'est pas vraisemblable. L'idée de l'empire et de la domination est si composée et depend de tant d'autres idées que ce ne seroit pas celle qu'ils auroient d'abord.

Hobbes demande pourquoi si les hommes ne sont pas naturellement en état de guerre, ils vont toujours armés et pourquoi ils ont des clefs pour fermer leurs maisons. Mais on ne sent pas que l'on attribue aux hommes avant l'établissement des sociétés ce qui ne peut leur arriver qu'après cet établissement qui leur fait trouver des motifs pour s'attaquer et pour se defendre.<sup>52</sup>

Rousseau contends that Hobbes's state of nature contains or conceals asocial premises, which, thought through to their conclusion, require that human beings be understood as properly or originally solitary. Hobbes may, against the related critiques, maintain that original human nature in any relevant sense must include the principal passion of pride and the complex, relative idea of dominion. Hobbes does not demonstrate this notion historically or scientifically, but may understand it as an axiom or principle of his psychology, derived from observation and consistent with his concept of the sovereignty of continual desire for power. The relation of his scientific basis for desire as motion to the specific phenomenon of pride is more difficult.<sup>53</sup> He may not have anticipated the

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<sup>52</sup> *De L'Esprit des Lois*, Livre I, Chapitre 2.

<sup>53</sup> One could perhaps argue against Hobbes, on the basis of his conception of nature, that his scientific basis of motion cannot explain—and, in denying a distinct principle of non-material mind, therefore undermines—the kind of “complex” self-consciousness involved in pride. But this critique of his motionist-materialist basis would apply to all human consciousness, at least that involving reason or thinking in any significant sense. I believe this to be the most difficult and problematic point in Hobbes's psychology in its foundation, that is, the ultimate impossibility, as Aristotle seems to suggest, of explaining human consciousness, which is rational consciousness, on a materialist basis. On the problem of self-consciousness, Hobbes may be more aware of the difficulty or inexplicability of consciousness, than his decisively motionist-materialist explanation suggests. The following passage, for which interpretation is vexed, could be taken as an expression of endless, irresolvable wonder and thereby concession of the inexplicability of perceptive consciousness, given that the appeal to sense, or perhaps inference from sense, cannot reach first causes and yet seems perhaps to Hobbes the most clear and compelling, but not finally illuminating and certain, way to grasp reality: “Of all the phenomena or appearances which are near us, the most admirable is apparition itself, *to phainesthai*; namely, that some natural bodies have in themselves the



radical questioning of the naturalness of human passions that takes place in his wake, and therefore did not give explicit argumentation against it. He may argue that nature does not necessarily give human beings simple or well-ordered passions (which original coherence Rousseau tries to establish through a teaching of original and harmonious solitude), nor social coherence. That is, Hobbes does not depict purely asocial historical passions, nor, to take a less strict interpretation of natural asociality, does he consider our disposition well characterized as fundamentally asocial. Our natural psyche is pervaded by a range of dissociating passions, but among them pride is also intensely binding through the mechanism of continual comparison. If it is incoherent or tragic for a natural being to be drawn to others of the species out of both psychological and practical need, yet to be mainly motivated into fearful, competitive, and vain dynamics of association, then it must be accepted that nature indifferently abandons us to an incoherent or tragic fate or at least starting point. Since power is the most universal criterion of this dynamic of comparison and strife, desire for power motivates not only aggressive and fearful opposition and therefore solitude, but acutely antagonistic sociality. Hobbes's political remedy accepts and attempts to treat this natural problem of desire.

#### § 4.6. HOBBS'S PROTO-ECONOMIC PERSPECTIVE

Hobbes's psychology of desire for power, in its abstraction to a uniform motive of power, and its implicit tendency toward an ideally quantifiable factor of psychological

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patterns almost of all things, and others of none at all. So that if the appearances be the principles by which we know all other things, we must needs acknowledge sense to be the principle by which we know those principles, and that all the knowledge we have is derived from it. And as for the causes of sense, we cannot begin our search of them from any other phenomenon than that of sense itself. But you will say, by what sense shall we take notice of sense? I answer, by sense itself, namely, by the memory which for some time remains in us of things sensible, though they themselves pass away. For that perceives that he hath perceived, remembers" (*De Corpore*, XXV. 1, *EWI*, 389).

analysis, may contribute to the theoretical basis of the eventual economic idea of human nature and politics.

Hobbes is often interpreted as an early theorist of liberal individualism, including as an exponent of theory of self-interest.<sup>54</sup> I suggested in Chapters 2 and 3 that Hobbes is misunderstood as fundamentally a psychologist of self-interest, since he instead expounds the more expansive concept of desire for power. Hobbes's doctrine of self-interest, if he authors one, would be his political morality of peaceful self-preservation and pursuit of moderate well-being. This prescription for the citizen may not encompass the whole, or the deepest principle, of Hobbes's psychology, but it remains an important dimension of his political philosophy. At the very least, Hobbes's psychology may give rare ammunition and groundwork for a notion of self-interest, including, negatively, in his repudiation of teleological psychology, without his being ultimately a self-interest theorist.

Hobbes's concentration on desire for power can be seen as part of his professed aim and method of bringing more scientific precision and effectiveness to political philosophy. The paradigm of such precision is geometry, or mathematics:

For if the patterns of human action were known with the same certainty as the relation of magnitude in figures, ambition and greed, whose power rests on the false opinions of the common people about right and wrong, would be disarmed, and the human race would enjoy such secure peace that (apart from conflicts over space as the population grew) it seems unlikely that it would ever have to fight again.<sup>55</sup>

This remarkable political aspiration for such enduring secure peace is premised on approaching, if not literally achieving, a mathematically precise and certain grasp of the

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<sup>54</sup> Macpherson, *Political Theory of Possessive Individualism*.

<sup>55</sup> *De Cive*, Tuck ed., Epistle Dedicatory, 5.

patterns of human action. Hobbes attempts to bring these patterns, or motions, into comprehensible and quasi-mathematical order by conceiving the motions as uniform motions of power toward power. Hobbes simplifies human motivation into a unified factor, not number or line, but in their image. If society can be understood as a combination of the many patterns of one kind of power, then this power can be arranged and manipulated, or presented as amendable to manipulation and arrangement. Similarly individual persons can understand their own desires and deliberations and choices in one currency, that of power, again simplifying their self-understanding and giving them a term of relation to the central political necessity of absolutely unified though abstract sovereign power. This reduction of society to a set of desires expressed in one generalized term prefigures the economic analysis of desire, which becomes far more reduced to a notion of self-interest, then to preference or demand, which can literally be quantitatively summed, as power in its psychological form cannot.<sup>56</sup>

Hobbes simplifies motives through desire for power, but, as explained, also expands and explains a certain trajectory of open-ended desire for power. Hobbes's psychology is not limited to economic motives. On the contrary, he analyzes, dramatizes, and accounts for the prevalence of extreme and irrational passions. In this sense the concept of desire for power maintains the more complete perspective on human nature as against the eventual economistic tendency. Still Hobbes reduces the psychological perspective, our vision of good or eminence, to relative comparison, opening the way to more or less limited criteria:

The *Value*, or Worth of a man, is as of all other things, his Price; that is to say, so much as would be given for the use of his Power: and therefore is not absolute;

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<sup>56</sup> Hobbes knew and showed serious interest in the early economic work of William Petty.

but a thing dependant on the need and judgement of another. An able conductor of Souldiers, is of great Price in time of War present, or imminent; but in Peace not so. A learned and uncorrupt Judge, is much Worth in time of Peace; but not so much in War. And as in other things, so in men, not the seller, but the buyer determines the Price. For let a man (as most men do,) rate themselves at the highest Value they can; yet their true Value is no more than it is esteemed by others.<sup>57</sup>

Hobbes's economic terms remain metaphorical insofar as he does not render the effective social price of every person in wealth or money, since honour remains at least as fundamental as a monetary reward or a price on the head. He assesses the person's worth not by her wealth, but by her power, which he defines to include a range of important human capacities. But Hobbes renders the value of a person in proto-economic terms as the function of the demand of other human opinions or desires or wills.

#### § 4.7. CHRISTIAN AND NON-CHRISTIAN PSYCHOLOGY

Commentators often remark on the affinities between the dark picture of selfish passion in Hobbes and that in Christian thinkers such as Augustine, the Jansenists, Calvin, and various strains of English Protestantism. This could be seen—and has been seen, in modern scholarship rather than in writers of Hobbes's era—to reflect Hobbes's Christian principles or faith of whatever sort.<sup>58</sup> Yet Hobbes's engagement with Christianity may have a more ambivalent, if not antagonistic, character. This dissertation on Hobbes's psychology cannot properly treat the entire question of Hobbes's possible Christian faith or atheism. Still I may touch on the plausible harmony or conflict between

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<sup>57</sup> *Leviathan*, X, 63.

<sup>58</sup> For interpretations of Hobbes's sincere Christian faith, see Francis Hood, *The Divine Politics of Thomas Hobbes*; Weber, *Hobbes et le Corps de Dieu*; A.P. Martinich, *The Two Gods of Leviathan*; Peter Geach, "The Religion of Thomas Hobbes."

Hobbes's psychology as I understand it and a Christian psychology, that is, the content and spirit of thought and desire consistent with a Christian understanding and possible faith.<sup>59</sup> I suggest that Hobbes learns from the Augustinian phenomenology of selfish passions and maintains significant elements of this understanding of human nature, while rejecting the Christian interpretation of such phenomena. That is, Hobbes may not follow the grounding of Christian understandings of selfish passions in, for example, humanity's original innocence, fallen condition, sin, and provident redemption. Christian desire can, while Hobbesian desire cannot, transcend, if imperfectly in this life, selfish, vain objects in a trajectory toward the final or infinite end which is its true desire. Saint-Beuve

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<sup>59</sup> There is of course a great range of Christian doctrine—some of it even seeming predominantly metaphysical and abstract, or based in mysterious faith without clear content, or eccentrically expounded and perhaps diluted—such that scholars may claim either that it is impossible to assess the status of Hobbes's attitude to Christianity from the content of his thought given the range of possible content in Christianity; or that without knowledge of Hobbes's inner faith or non-faith, it is again futile to speculate, since Christianity cannot be reduced to a set of thoughts or desires or dispositions of spirit; or that there is some semblance of agreement between Hobbes and some aspects of some versions of Christian dogma, despite other signs of difference or antagonism. There may be some validity to these approaches to assessing Hobbes's relation to Christianity, but they can be exaggerated or exploited to avoid or distort the difficult task of considering Hobbes's philosophic approach to Christianity, the dominant form of faith and of learned understanding of his time, and which he directly addresses through dialogue, polemical and otherwise, with the Scholastics and other principal Christian sources.

It is true one cannot presume to assess the faith of any human being. Indeed perhaps from the Biblical perspective, it is impossible for Hobbes himself to know more than some signs or non-signs of his own faith, while only the omniscient God may really know the truth of any human heart. Nor will I depend directly on a determination of the status of Hobbes's esoteric writing mode or not. I believe Hobbes gives us generous content for reflection through his explicit psychology or account of human nature; and since his psychology is the subject of this thesis, I will depend on it for any consideration of the Christian or non-Christian spirit of Hobbes's thought. It seems plausible and fruitful that one can discern some fundamental outline of Christian principles and understanding of human nature in relation to God, and attempt to compare its main features with Hobbes's understanding of human nature and the universe. Such analysis of the consistency or harmony of thoughts and doctrines may reduce any inference or conclusion to the plane of what Hobbes calls demonstrations of "atheism by consequence," that is, demonstration that certain thoughts or arguments held by a person, if taken to their logical conclusion, would conflict or accord with Christian doctrine. This is a just delimitation of the inquiry, but adherence or non-adherence to doctrine (Christian in this case or otherwise), seems a profoundly significant criterion, especially in the case of Hobbes who concentrates to the extreme in his methodology and in his philosophic works on coherence of argument and thought. There may remain in Hobbes's philosophy, in the possible absence of direct human intuition of first causes, a current of ultimate skepticism underlying even what he takes as first principles; and this skepticism may leave open the possibility of faith, though on its own skepticism clearly bears no indication or suggestion of faith. But Hobbes's skeptical aspect does not prevent our studying the complete attempt he makes in thought and writing at understanding and expressing human nature, and our analyzing his thoughts in comparison or dialogue with Christian accounts.

comments on the semblance of agreement between the severity of Christian and that of hard-minded philosophic understandings of human nature, in the course of discussing Hobbes and Jansenism. He offers this cautionary note on taking limited, qualified affinities and resemblances of doctrine in a thinker for real Christian principle of thought (let alone faith):

La doctrine de Jansénius ne peut être dite *fataliste* dans le sens de Hobbes, pas plus que celle de Pascal ne peut être dite *égoïste* dans le sens des *Maximes* de La Rochefoucauld, parce que cette doctrine chrétienne, bien qu'elle reconnaisse en plein et que peut-être elle surpasse (je ne l'examine point ici) le mal et l'asservissement de la nature, ne l'accepte pas comme définitif, et n'a de hâte que pour restaurer la substance malade et l'affranchir... Mais une des manières les plus directes de le devenir, c'est, à coup sur, d'envisager la nature humaine déchue exactement comme le feraient Hobbes, La Rochefoucauld, Machiavel, ces grands observateurs positifs. Plus ce coup d'oeil est triste à qui n'a pas l'âme très ferme, ou même à qui, l'ayant ferme, l'a très capable d'amour et très avide de bonheur, plus il dispose et provoque au grand remède, au remède désespéré. On se demande si c'est là l'état vrai, définitif, si c'est tout, pendant, avant et par-delà; on cherche l'issue (comme Pascal) hors de cette foule misérable et de cette terre, jusque dans le désert du ciel, dans cette morne immensité d'espace et dans ce silence infini qui effraye. Or, cette issue étroite, difficile, presque introuvable, cette échelle inespérée de salut, c'est le christianisme; je parle du véritable.<sup>60</sup>

Hobbes strives precisely to purge much Christian condemnation of natural desire. The concept of desire for power preserves but transforms elements of the Augustinian analysis of the passions. Hobbes comprehends the several forms of concupiscence within the inclination to power, reinforcing the sovereignty of the desiring element despite denying the true object of this desire, God, in opposition to which the tyrannical futility of self-loving passions had been understood. Hobbes maintains the Augustinian sense of an imperious, empty circle of worldly desire, and the Augustinian reduction of many forms of desire to one, that of pride. Hobbes even follows this specific concentration on

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<sup>60</sup> *Port-Royal*, III, 3, p. 674.

pride in great measure as a dominant human motive inseparable from desire for relative power. But again Hobbes thus redefines pride as relative human concern with power.<sup>61</sup> More fundamentally, for Augustine the predominance of worldly pride is ultimately understood as a manifestation or consequence of human pride in relation to God, the ultimate problem of pride. For Hobbes the problem of pride, and the problem of desire altogether, remains within the human plane—from the Augustinian perspective, enclosed within a limited human plane, since Hobbes denies any complete object of desire natural or divine. Hobbes accepts the finally closed or imperfect trajectory of desire. Human desire cannot move towards completion or purification—desire is not impure, only limited—by discovering a true object, but can in principle sustain a kind of infinite expansion of degree of desire through increase of power. Hobbes does critique and re-order this natural trajectory of desire in the moral-political sphere, by educating and intimidating desire away from extremes of proud or cruel relative power, even if this redirection of desire is mainly a re-ordering of external effect rather than transformation of the ultimate object of desire. Hobbes may not so critique or limit the trajectory of another perpetual current of human desire he describes, the desire for knowledge, in some sense reduced to desire for power.

#### § 4.8. REASON AND POWER

Hobbes's most famous depreciation of at least practical reason as scout and spy of the desires, often quoted in isolation, comes in Chapter VIII of *Leviathan*, in the paragraph right after Hobbes's reduction of principal passions of the mind to desire for

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<sup>61</sup> On the possible relation and non-relation to God of Hobbes's reinterpreted form of pride as awareness of relative power, see my footnote 34, p. 178-79 above.

power. Since both this characterization of practical reason and the tracing of differences in wit, or intelligence, to the passions are relevant to our inquiry into reason in the perspective of desire for power, it is worth quoting the whole sequence:

The causes of this difference of Witts, are in the Passions: and the difference of Passions, proceedeth partly from the different Constitution of the body, and partly from different Education. For if the difference proceeded from the temper of the brain, and the organs of Sense, either exterior or interior, there would be no lesse difference of men in their Sight, Hearing, or other Senses, than in their Fancies, and Discretions. It proceeds therefore from the Passions; which are different, not onely from the difference of mens complexions; but also from their difference of customes, and education.

The Passions that most of all cause the differences of Wit, are principally, the more or lesse Desire of Power, of Riches, of Knowledge, and of Honour. All which may be reduced to the first, that is Desire of Power. For Riches, Knowledge and Honour are but severall sorts of Power.

And therefore, a man who has no great Passion for any of these things; but is as men terme it indifferent; though he may be so farre a good man, as to be free from giving offence; yet he cannot possibly have either a great Fancy, or much Judgement. For the Thoughts, are to the Desires, as Scouts, and Spies, to range abroad, and find the way to the things Desired: All Stedinesse of the minds motion, and all quicknesse of the same, proceeding from thence. For as to have no Desire, is to be Dead: so to have weak Passions, is Dulnesse; and to have Passions indifferently for every thing, Giddinesse, and *Distraction*; and to have stronger, and more vehement Passions for any thing, than is ordinarily seen in others, is that which men call Madnesse.<sup>62</sup>

In the generally accepted and well-founded interpretation, Hobbes diminishes practical reason as instrumental, as merely calculating means to satisfy desires; in Malcolm's sound characterization of the view, "reason neither participated in the nature of desire nor supplied any substantive knowledge of values."<sup>63</sup> This interpretation in its stark form tends to underplay the scope Hobbes allows to thoughts, through their participation in opinion, in determining objects of desire: not necessarily through ultimate knowledge of

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<sup>62</sup> *Leviathan*, VIII, 53-54.

<sup>63</sup> *Aspects of Hobbes*, 30.



“values” or a final good, but in influencing the priority of competing objects of desire by assessing or mis-assessing benefits and harms. Hobbes seems to describe the role of opinion in shaping the will in this passage on deliberation from *Elements of Law*:

Forasmuch as will to do is appetite, and will to omit, fear; the causes of appetite and of fear are the causes also of our will. But the propounding of benefits and of harms, that is to say, of reward and punishment, is the cause of our appetite and of our fears, and therefore also of our wills, so far forth as we believe that such rewards and benefits, as are propounded, shall arrive unto us. And consequently, our wills follow our opinions, as our actions follow our wills. In which sense they say truly and properly that say the world is governed by opinion.<sup>64</sup>

Hobbes does not give an example here, but we may consider, for instance, the effect on deliberations of a difference of opinion regarding worldly versus eternal reward and punishment. If one holds the opinion that what are called sins will be punished eternally, this opinion will alter the calculation of benefit and harm to be gained from a possible sinful thought or act. Opinion is not a function simply of reason, but reason or thought or mind participates in the formation of opinion. Reason may help form an opinion in deliberation on a single situation or a chain of anticipated causes and effects. Most fundamentally, thought affects overall opinions of the kind underlying the question of eternal punishment, or of the moral status of certain actions: a person’s “world view,” which is predominantly an opinion. Indeed Hobbes’s political solution will involve re-educating politically relevant opinion toward his notion of practical reason in the broadest sense, which includes a view of human nature and the political world (perhaps itself a re-alignment of opinion with proper human desire) to achieve the end of peace (instrumental to the various motions of desire).

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<sup>64</sup> *Elements of Law*, XII. 6, 72.

Hobbes attributes the differences in passions to natural “complexion” but also to “difference of customes, and education,” which seem to be the domain of thoughtful opinion. So the force and direction of the passions or desires, is formed at a basic stage partly by opinion. Desire has a natural structure and trajectory toward universalized power, yet its specific path through the many possible particular objects is pervaded by opinion. Perhaps even “values,” then, since most people hold them as opinions, are at root influenced by thoughts, which are then far more than merely instrumental scouts and spies to attain already formed desires. If one means thoughts are scouts and spies to range about and find the way to the fundamental “thing desired,” power, then this gloss may work. But then thoughts would still be finding their way to values and basic choices among goods, since power is so general a thing desired that it leaves deliberation on means that are ends in the sense of formative aims of a person, which is not how the “scouts and spies” metaphor is usually taken.

While it may not be obvious that Hobbes means the “scouts and spies” metaphor in this way I have glossed it, I think in the perspective of his entire psychology it requires this gloss. In this context Hobbes is stressing the dominance of desire over mind, to the point of passion determining intellectual strength. In this radical argument, Hobbes even denies that the mind itself has significant natural differences of ability, which seems incorrect, intuitively and today scientifically. Yet Hobbes is pursuing his fundamental idea of the primacy of desire-motion to its conclusions. Hobbes attempts to explain the difference in intelligence through force of passion. There is plausibility in seeing force of desire, especially curiosity however defined, as directly driving the mind’s activity. Desire for honour or other attainment may plausibly also spur the mind. In Plato, Eros

seems to play something of this role, not only in the contemplative type of Socrates, but in the hybrid such as Alcibiades, driven by passionate intensity, perhaps excessively so. Hobbes's argument seems to hit a limit point on this question of excess. If the mind receives quickness and steadiness from strength of passion, it should be true that greater force of passion results in stronger mind. But Hobbes proceeds to warn against the risk of excess passion as madness and loss of steady operation of the mind. He gives many possible causes of excess, natural and experiential, but does not attribute madness to error or weakness of reason, though its wild passions will eventually cause these defects in the mind.

The question, indeed in various forms a question from Hobbes's non-teleological starting point, is the source of direction. "Passions unguided, are for the most part meere Madnesse."<sup>65</sup> One expects, even if passionate force drives thinking, that reason will affect the direction of thought. Hobbes tries to explain so much here through the passions that his account, to an extent compelling, becomes nearly circular, with passion causing passion. Elsewhere in *Leviathan* Hobbes gives a prominent role to right reason, for example in grasping and deliberating on the laws of nature. But the account in Chapter VIII seems to extend the general predominance of motion-desire in the natural psychology of *Leviathan*, producing revealing consistency and perhaps some difficult extremes.

More generally, regarding contemplative as well as practical reason, Hobbes's conception of desire for power integrates into desire a principle of power which is ultimately inseparable from human thinking, specifically thinking about causes. Hobbes includes thinking, or desire for knowledge, among the passions reduced to desire for

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<sup>65</sup> *Leviathan*, VIII, 55.

power. This presses the question: What is knowledge conceived as power? It has been suggested that, for Hobbes, the inquiry into power as unlimited ability to cause effects, the “considering of phenomena as causes of possible effects,”<sup>66</sup> characterizes the natural structure of human rationality, on the basis above all of the following passage in Chapter III of *Leviathan*:

The Trayne of regulated Thoughts is of two kinds; One, when of an effect imagined, we seek the causes, or means that produce it; and this is common to Man and Beast. The other is, when imagining any thing whatsoever, wee seek all the possible effects, that can by it be produced; that is to say, we imagine what we can do with it, when we have it. Of which I have not at any time seen any signe, but in man onely; for this is a curiosity hardly incident to the nature of any living creature that has no other Passion but sensuall, such as are hunger, thirst, lust, and anger.<sup>67</sup>

If, following this distinctive account of causal thinking, reason is thus ultimately technological, then philosophy may serve the application of human power.<sup>68</sup> Moreover, if reason knows the world only instrumentally, the nature of what constitutes understanding of a thing has been radically limited to efficient causes.

There is the further and related methodological or epistemological dimension of Hobbes’s attempt to salvage and refine knowing as human making, in which perspective we can know that which we can effect or generate through our power (e.g., true relations between geometrical figures). Along the same lines, if we follow Hobbes’s nominalism to its conclusion, any thought or certainly concept is a human construction: Hobbes’s

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<sup>66</sup> See Strauss’s final work on Hobbes (*What is Political Philosophy*, 176).

<sup>67</sup> *Leviathan*, III, 21.

<sup>68</sup> Oakeshott rather understands human reason for Hobbes not only to be inclined to power through knowing possible causes and effects, but the character of human knowing, or epistemology, as the reasoning of efficient cause and effect to be the origin of Hobbes’s understanding of the universe and human nature in terms of mechanism and power. See my comments on Oakeshott’s “scholastic mechanist” interpretation in § 1. 3, pp. 13-16.

conception of desire for power demonstrates its own thesis. It is not clear that either such extreme of knowledge as construction can be sustained with consistency, or that either provides the basis of Hobbes's actual philosophical activity. But these represent important motions of his thought in the direction of human beings as a creature of power. This "constructive" possibility, along with other currents in Hobbes's understanding of thinking which I suggest, deserves further exploration than is possible within the inquiry of this dissertation.<sup>69</sup> But I give here main lines of argument to illuminate the epistemological-metaphysical dimensions of Hobbes's conception of desire for knowledge as desire for power.

The Hobbesian conception of knowledge as limited to efficient causality seems difficult to perfectly maintain. Alongside other epistemological-metaphysical problems, is this immediate one involving moral psychology, that within Hobbes's thought, the guidance even of the practical project appears to depend on some known human purpose or good.<sup>70</sup> Perhaps Hobbes expands the knowledge of a thing to include, as subordinate to what it is for itself, also how it is useful from the perspective of the knower and his concern with power over things. This includes knowledge of other human beings, who in this perspective appear as means to possible effects and components of another person's power: knowledge as desire for power seems tyrannical. Yet this knowledge of the use of human beings, in Hobbes or his political philosophizing, may represent the art of arranging human beings so as to cause beneficial effects. Yet such knowledge of the

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<sup>69</sup> I will undertake such exploration in a further study of Hobbes's psychology.

<sup>70</sup> Weinberger argues that Hobbesian method gives a final cause to the cosmos by understanding all things through utility to human beings. Again, however, this depends on a known or presumed human good, or utility, which cannot be clarified by knowledge of efficient causes, but requires a psychology (of which Weinberger seems not unaware). In Weinberger's view, which may risk Baconizing excessively, the political teaching and its psychological basis seems finally rhetoric to support the scientific project ("Hobbes's Doctrine of Method").

beneficial “use” of human beings relies on the discovery or presumption of what is good for them—if not a final, then a mediate and common good, in this case civil peace—which discovery seems beyond the investigation of strictly efficient causes.

Hobbes, following Bacon, though I believe with some reservations, directs the capacities of reason toward practice: political re-arrangement of human nature and technological manipulation of nature. In this evident sense philosophy becomes a pursuit of power. Hobbes writes: “Knowledge for the sake of power.”<sup>71</sup> Yet at times in *De Corpore* and *Leviathan* Hobbes describes his own activity in more purely contemplative terms. Though not conclusive, Hobbes’s portrait of contemplation in the account of desire in Chapter VI of *Leviathan* is far from gearing causal thinking to the practical purposes even in this political work:

Desire, to know why, and how, Curiosity; such as is in no living creature but Man: so that Man is distinguished, not onely by his Reason; but also by this singular Passion from other Animals; in whom the appetite of food, and other pleasures of Sense, by prædominance, take away the care of knowing causes; which is a Lust of the mind, that by a perseverance of delight in the continuall and indefatigable generation of Knowledge, exceedeth the short vehemence of any carnall Pleasure.<sup>72</sup>

If anything the pleasure described seems intrinsic to the discovery of causes, or generation of knowledge for its own sake.<sup>73</sup> One could suggest that, even if we can know

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<sup>71</sup> “*Scientia propter potentiam*” (*De Corpore*, I. 6, *OL I*, 6).

<sup>72</sup> *Leviathan*, VI, 42.

<sup>73</sup> Cf. “I would very fain commend philosophy to you, that is to say, the study of wisdom, for want of which we have all suffered much damage lately. For even they, that study wealth, do it out of love to wisdom; for their treasures serve them but for a looking-glass, wherein to behold and contemplate their own wisdom. Neither do voluptuous men neglect philosophy, but only because they know not how great a pleasure it is to the mind of man to be ravished in the vigorous and perpetual embraces of the most beauteous world” (*De Corpore*, Epistle to the Reader, *EW I*, xiv). Hobbes seems here to playfully and seriously reduce love of wealth to love of wisdom, and immersion in sensual pleasures to merely an ignorant form of pursuit of superior contemplative pleasure, now described in classical terms evocative of platonic Eros. This commendation of philosophy may be taken as a merely formal statement of an opening Epistle, or, as I suggest, an expression of at least the hierarchy of Hobbes’s own desires of these kinds and

only efficient causes or natural laws, they may be pursued aside from and beyond their utility. Hobbes can be seen to equivocate significantly on his notions of knowing as inquiring into consequences and knowing as making, and on the essentially practical motives of philosophy. I suggest Hobbes is aware of the possible exaggeration in an absolute reduction of philosophy to power. Hobbes could be deciding to turn reason's energies in practical directions without believing that the ultimate structure of reason is practical. And the technological unleashing of human potentialities may be meant partly to support and expand our theoretical understanding: certainly of efficient causes; and to a limited even if negative extent of final ones, i.e., cosmology may not discover the ultimate cause of the cosmos or unqualifiedly eternal laws, but may exclude significant possibilities. More fundamentally, the understanding of efficient causes or principles of motion, of which power is one form, may be understood as the most penetrating mode of contemplation of reality.<sup>74</sup> This contemplation may in some sense comprehend a first

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perhaps a reflection of his understanding of these kinds of desires simply. Hobbes's opening epistles and prefaces generally across his books contain some merely formal or polite statements but also many substantial thoughts, formulations, and arguments.

<sup>74</sup> Since power is the future action of motion, and thereby inseparable from the efficient causality that appears as the most plausible first cause, or even god of the philosophers, of Hobbes's universe, then one could wonder in what sense we can know the grounds of motion, power, and causality in light of Hobbes's skeptical undercurrent. Hobbes writes in *De Corpore*: "The causes of universal things (of those, at least, that have any cause) are manifest of themselves, or (as they say commonly) known to nature; so that they need no method at all; for they have all but one universal cause, which is motion... For though many cannot understand till it be in some sort demonstrated to them, that all mutation consists in motion; yet this happens not from any obscurity in the thing itself, (for it is not intelligible that anything can depart either from rest, or from the motion it has, except by motion), but either having their natural discourse corrupted with former opinions received from their masters, or for this, that they do not at all bend their mind to the enquiring out of truth" (VI. 5, *EW I*, 69-70). Hobbes, in what could be an answer before the fact to Hume, defends the universal cause of motion and thereby, in his system, causality, as self-evident without method, undemonstrated. Hobbes refers to demonstration to say that "many cannot understand till it be in some sort demonstrated to them" for accidental reasons, obstacles of former opinions or lack of ability or application. Hobbes does not say that demonstration is required or possible. Hobbes goes on to give a kind of demonstration of the principle of motion (IX. 6-10, *EW I*, 123-27). Brandt suggests that it is "probably out of consideration for these people" that Hobbes gives this demonstration, which has been found circular and inadequate by Hume and others (*Mechanical Conception*, 277). Brandt raises the possibility that Hobbes himself may not consider the demonstration serious and adequate, but hesitates to concede that Hobbes may give this demonstration only for the sake of persuading readers not otherwise grasping his principle,

principle of nature or reality in the invisible and universal causal motion underlying the continual observed motion of phenomena in our world. Desire for power, taken to its furthest point as desire for knowledge, may be desire for knowing in whatever way humanly possible motion or power itself.

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while himself realizing its inadequacy. I suggest that Hobbes, given his clear indication of the self-evidence of the principle and making explicit the accidental, secondary reason for demonstration, may well have given the demonstration as a kind of instructional exercise while thinking that it is unnecessary and inadequate, and that the first principle may not need and not admit of demonstration in this sense. This leaves the ultimate problem of how Hobbes in his thinking—without allowing for supra-sensible intuition of first causes, or knowledge in the strict or Platonic sense—can break through his own professed method as he sometimes appears to do to find self-evident first principles, unless rational inference from the sensation of continual change is considered sufficient for his concept of self-evident knowledge.



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