

PSYCHOLOGY AND POLITICS: HOBBES, CHRYSIPPUS THE STOIC AND THE PASSIONS

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Abstract: This article highlights the key role played by human psychology and the passions in Hobbes's theoretical construction of politics as civil science. It analyses the connections with some stoic theories, in particular with the philosophy of Chrysippus. In fact, despite several differences, Hobbes was influenced by Stoic philosophy, especially with reference to the essential dynamics of the passions as “impulse” (*hormé*) and “repulsion” (*aformé*).

Keywords: Hobbes, Stoicism, passions, psychology, politics

HOBBES AND THE MODERN LITERATURE ON THE PASSIONS

There are “two principal parts of our nature, Reason and Passion”, writes Hobbes in the Epistle dedicatory of his first work, *The Elements of Law, Natural and Politic* of 1640 (he then adds “physical force” and “experience”). This dichotomy, this humanly inherent dialectic between reason and passion, reappears at the beginning of *De cive* (published in 1642, and with additions in 1647) and will remain at the core of Hobbes's philosophical system, with important consequences at a political level.

In what follows, I will focus on the second part of the dichotomy: Passion. Passion is defined by Hobbes in *The Elements of Law* as “the motive power of the mind” – whereas “the cognitive powers” or “faculties” are sense perception, imagination, memory, understanding and reason. Hobbes never used the term *emotion*; he referred instead to *passion*, *affection* and *perturbation of the mind* (in the Latin works: *passio*, *affectum* and *perturbatio animi*). He did not write a specific work on this topic – as did his intellectual enemy Descartes with *Les passions de l'âme / The Passions of the Soul* (1649) – but the theme of

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the passions emerges in various of his works, some written in English, as *The Elements of Law* (1640) and *Leviathan* (1651), others in Latin, as the tripartite system of *Elementa Philosophiae*, with the three books appearing at different times, *De corpore* (1655), *De homine* (1658) and *De cive* (1642), as well as the Latin version of *Leviathan* published in Amsterdam in 1668.

In the years between 1634 and 1636, during his third travel to the Continent, Hobbes was in contact with Marin Mersenne and his circle of European intellectuals. In a letter from Paris written in August 1635 (the number 16 in *The Correspondence of Thomas Hobbes* edited by Noel Malcolm) addressed to William Cavendish, Earl of Newcastle, Hobbes praises Robert Payne, saying that perhaps he will be able to “give good reasons for the faculties and passions of the soul, such as may be expressed in plain English”, adding that “if he can, he is the first that I ever heard of, could speak sense in that subject. If he cannot, I hope to be the first”¹.

This means that Hobbes did not consider *scientific* enough the treatises on the passions previously published in English, such as the so-called “melancholy” literature, as *A Treatise of Melancholie, Containing the Causes thereof* by Timothie Bright (1586) and the more famous *Anatomy of Melancholy* by Robert Burton (1624); and also the “characters writing” literature, with books like Joseph Hall’s *The characters of Virtues and Vices* (1608); and even the more philosophical book by Thomas Wright, *The Passions of the Minde in generall* (1601; 1604, second enlarged edition). All these works were known to Hobbes, since they appear on the manuscript catalogue of the Hardwick Library – the private library of the Cavendish family – the so-called *Old catalogue* which had been compiled by him during the twenties.

Amongst these texts, it is *The Anatomy of Melancholy* by Robert Burton that sometimes reminds some passages of *Leviathan*:

For where you shall see the people civil, obedient to God and princes, judicious, peaceable and quiet, rich, fortunate, and flourish, to live in peace, in unity and concord, [...] that country is free from melancholy [...]. But whereas you shall see many discontents, common grievances,

¹ The original text is as follows: «I would he could [a *deleted*] giue good reasons for ye facultyes & passions of ye soule, such as may be expressed in playne English. [I do *deleted*] if he can, he is the first (that I euer heard [>of] could] speake sense in that subject. if he can not I hope to be ye first», *Correspondence*, I, Letter 16.

complaints, poverty, barbarism, beggary, plagues, wars, rebellions, seditions, mutinies, contentions, idleness, riot, Epicurism, the land lie untilled, waste, full of bogs, fens, deserts, etc., cities decayed, base and poor towns, villages depopulated, the people squalid, ugly, uncivil; that kingdom, that country, must needs be discontent, melancholy, hath a sick body, and had need to be reformed (p.79).

In the Introduction of *Leviathan*, civil war is depicted as the death of the State: “*equity and laws are an artificial reason and will of the State; concord is health; sedition is sickness; and civil war, the death of the State*”. And again Burton: “I could repeat many such particular grievances, which must disturb a body politic. To shut up all in brief, where good government is, prudent and wise princes, there all things thrive and prosper, peace and happiness is in that land: where it is otherwise, all things are ugly to behold, incult, barbarous, uncivil, a paradise is turned to a wilderness” (p.86). This resonates in the famous image of “the natural condition of mankind”, where “life is solitary, poor, nasty brutish and short”. Despite these similarities, Hobbes did not seem to think much of Burton’s work, when in 1635 he wrote that he hoped to be the first “to give good reasons for the faculties and passions of the soul”. In fact, Burton’s work was based more on quotations from learned books, than on a scientific enquiry into truth. And it is well known that Hobbes uses quotations very rarely, since he thinks that truth is not to be found in books, but in reasoning and meditation, that is to say in a kind of philosophical enquiry based on scientific method. The expression he uses, *giving good reasons*, reminds of the Greek *lógon didónai* (found also in Plato’s dialogues) that means to use the appropriate logical arguments to prove something.

Hobbes hoped to be the first “to give good reasons for the faculties and passions of the soul”. Was he successful? And, more importantly for the subject here at hands, does his analysis of the passions have some repercussions on Hobbes’s political argument? Or is it even indispensable to it?

Five years after writing to the Earl of Newcastle, and just before going to France, where he remained for a decade, Hobbes was circulating manuscript copies of a work dedicated to the Earl: *The Elements of Law, Natural and Politic*. The first part of *The Elements* (containing the dedicatory epistle, and the first thirteen chapters of the work) was published in print ten years later, in early February 1650, without Hobbes’s permission, by some Oxford scientists, with the title:

Humane nature, or, The fundamental elements of policy. Being a discoverie of the faculties, acts, and passions of the soul of man, from their original causes, according to such philosophical principles as are not commonly known or asserted.

The epistle to the reader claimed, falsely, that the text was in fact the English version of *De homine*, the second treatise of Hobbes's tripartite system, *Elementa Philosophiae*, of which only the third part, *De cive*, had already been published. In the book *Taming the Leviathan* Jon Parkin (2007) has highlighted that "Senault's *De l'Usage des passions* (1641) appeared as *The use of the passions* in 1649, and de la Chambre's *Les caractères des passions* (1640) was published as *The characters of the passions* in March 1650, shortly before the translation of Descartes's work in May. *Human Nature* clearly fits into this trend, and may well have done much to fuel the interest in this literature" (p.75, note 190). It is also possible that Hobbes was somewhat influenced by this literature in French language, especially in the sixth chapter of *Leviathan*, where he offers a somewhat revised sketch of the passions. Indeed we know that Marin Mersenne, in his work *De l'usage de la raison / On the use of Reason*, embraced the traditional view of the passions as the negative, animal side of man, but he was involved anyway in the circulation of the literature on this subject; for example we know through his correspondence that he sent to Descartes a copy of the work by de la Chambre, and that Descartes replied "il n'y a que de paroles" / "it's only words".

Arrigo Pacchi (1987) and Gary Herbert (1989) have highlighted the influence of Descartes on Hobbes, while Leo Strauss and others have insisted on that of Aristotle's *Rhetoric*, a text that was translated into Latin by Hobbes (for his pedagogical activity as tutor in the Cavendish family) and also into English – as the anonymously published *A Brief of the Art of Rhetorique* (1637). Susan James (1997) has suggested a possible influence of the Stoics on Hobbes (as well as on Spinoza) a suggestion reinforced by the reference that Hobbes himself does to the Stoics while explaining the passions as causes of crime. This of course does not mean that Aristotle has not exerted a certain influence too, and that the French intellectual context has not contributed to the development of Hobbes's interest in this topic.

Aristotle and the Stoics were the main sources for the subject of the passions in late Renaissance. For example, in the second book of *The Advancement of Learning*, Francis Bacon writes that, in comparison with Aristotle – who did find place for "the affections", only in the

Rhetoric, and not in their proper place, that is to say the works on Ethics: “Better travails I suppose had the Stoics taken in this argument, as far as I can gather by that which we have at second hand: but yet it is like it was after their manner, rather in subtilty of definitions (which in a subject of this nature are but curiosities) than in active and ample descriptions and observations” (p.259).

STOIC AND ANTI-STOIC ELEMENTS IN HOBBS’S THOUGHT

We know that Hobbes had at his disposal, amongst the hundreds of books in the Hardwick Library, all the relevant sources for the reconstruction of Stoic thought, and – for what is more relevant here – of their doctrines of the impulse (*hormé*) and the passions (*páthe*). Many of the ancient works used by Hans von Arnim for his modern collection *Stoicorum Veterum Fragmenta*, were present in the private library of the Cavendish family: Stobaeus, Galen, Diogenes Laertius, Plutarch and Cicero.

In general, we can find several analogies between the philosophy of Hobbes and that of the Stoics, for instance their materialism: the metaphysical assumption that everything existing is of a bodily nature, being made of matter. There are also important differences between them. For the Stoics, the wise man is – if not totally without passions (*apathé*) – he who retains only the positive passions (*eupathéias*: literally, “the good passions”): those that are reasonable insofar as guided by reason: joy, prudence (precaution: the avoiding of perils in a rational way) and good will (wishfulness: a sort of reasonable impulse). Reason is for the Stoics the only true nature of man (as well as of the universe itself) and when a man follows it, he becomes wise, and being wise also means being happy. The kind of reason regulating actions, or practical reason, is defined as “right reason” (*orthòs lógos*, translated into Latin by Cicero as *recta ratio*).

However, Hobbes rejects the idea of a “right reason constituted by nature” to be found “*in rerum natura*”; the only universal right reason is not natural but artificial: it is the reason of the State, expressed and made known through the law. Before the creation of the State – that is a human artefact, being “artificially” created through a covenant – there are no civil laws and there is no justice. Good and evil are relative terms, insofar as each person tends to call “good” what is pleasant, and “evil” what is unpleasant to him or her. Thus, good and evil are defined in terms of pleasure and pain; but these latter are subjective, and so must be good and evil.

With this assumption, the “right reason” of the Stoics dramatically disappears, and the natural condition of mankind resembles a Protagorean universe, where the only rule – if it may be called so – is that of *homo mensura* (*ánthropon métron*). Man is the measure of all things, so there is no absolute measure at all.

Moreover, the tranquility of mind (*apátheia*) that was for the Stoic the unique and authentic end to aim at in life (and the only way to *eudaimonía*, to happiness) is completely meaningless to Hobbes, and this in a double sense: because happiness or, as he says, “felicity” is not something that man can fully obtain during his lifetime; and also because man is, in his essence, a desiring being: “For as to have no desire, is to be dead” (as Hobbes writes in chapter 8 of *Leviathan*). Suffocating passions and desires would mean an eradication of humanity for human beings. Thus, Hobbes’s definition of human happiness is deeply anti-Stoic (and much more of a Cirenaic nature...). In chapter six of *Leviathan* he writes: “*Continual success* in obtaining those things which a man from time to time desires, that is to say, continual prospering, is that men call FELICITY; I mean the felicity of this life. For there is no such thing as perpetual tranquillity of mind, while we live here; because life itself is but motion, and can never be without desire, nor without fear, no more than without sense” (meaning sense perception). And in chapter eleven:

[...] the felicity of this life consists not in the repose of a mind satisfied. For there is no such *finis ultimus*, (utmost aim) nor *summum bonum*, (greatest good) as is spoken of in the books of the old moral 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 continual progress of the desire, from one object to another; the attaining of the former, being still but the way to the latter. The cause whereof is, that the object of man’s desire is not to enjoy once only, and for one instant of time; but to assure for ever the way of his future desire. And therefore the voluntary actions, and inclinations of all men, tend not only to the procuring, but also to the assuring of a contented life; and differ only in the way: which arises partly from the diversity of passions, in diverse men; and partly from the difference of the knowledge, or opinion each one has of the causes, which produce the effect desired.

In the Latin version: “*Felicitas progressus perpetuus est ab una cupiditate ad alteram*” (*Leviathan latinus*, XI, 2); thus, from this Hobbes infers that it is “a general inclination of all mankind, a

perpetual and restless desire of power after power, that ceases only in death” (*Leviathan*, XI, 2).

Despite all the theoretical differences between Hobbes and the philosophers of the *Stoa*, it is possible to find some similarities, above all in the dynamics of the passions. Amongst the Stoics, it is Chrysippus who appears to have exerted the major influence on Hobbes, especially with the extant fragments of his works *On the Soul* (*Perì psychés*) and *On the Passions* (*Perì pathôn*), belonging to the fields of Physics and Ethics, respectively. Also for Hobbes, the passions can be treated either from a physical point of view, when we consider passion as a natural faculty of the human animal, or as a part of Ethics, when we focus on human “conversation”, that is to say on the influence of the passions – the feelings that we have towards things and towards each other – on our conduct and behavior.

Following the table in chapter 9 of the *Leviathan*, Ethics can be defined as the science of the “consequences from the passions of man”. These *motus animorum*, the passions, are deduced from – and so are the consequences of – the physical nature of man, and the constitution of human body, deriving from the mechanism of sense perception, memory (which is “decaying sense”) and imagination. The passions are also known to man through *introspection*, a special capacity that man has to read into himself, and decode the feelings and thoughts that are inside his mind and belong to him. This method of introspection is famously presented in the Introduction of *Leviathan*, where Hobbes says that “he who has to govern an entire nation” must be able to read into himself not this or that man, “but mankind”.

THE ROLE OF PASSIONS IN HOBBS’S POLITICAL THEORY

The main question is now if, and in what measure, the doctrine of the passions has a role to play in Hobbes’s political argument.

In his essay on the vocabulary of the passions (*Le vocabulaire de la passion*) the French scholar François Tricaud concluded that “the word passion does not seem to belong to the authentically Hobbesian ground of Hobbes’s thought” being absent in many crucial points of his political argument. This thesis is asserted again, being somewhat amplified by Julie Saada, in her essay on the analysis of the passions in the dissolution of the body politic. On the contrary, François Lessay in his analysis of chapter six of *Leviathan*, thinks that Hobbes has developed “a treatise of political passions”; before him, Arrigo Pacchi thought that “Hobbes’s meditations on the passions, particularly in the

fuller and more systematic version of the theory expounded in *The Elements of Law*, were prompted by an interest which was above all political” and Daniela Coli entitles her essay on the topic, “Hobbes’s Revolution”, to demonstrate that, in *Leviathan*, “Hobbes intends to make politics into a science, by founding it on an anthropology in which the passions pay the leading part”; in fact, without them, “there would be neither a science nor politics”.

Reason is certainly the central faculty for Hobbes. It calculates the consequences of things, making science possible and, at a practical level, it elaborates the laws of nature, which are at the base of the foundation of the State and, once the State is born, are incorporated into the civil laws as their normative principles.

Sometimes the passions are real “perturbations of the mind”, in the sense that they can cause crimes and, when excessive, they can even bring to madness; they can be *perturbationes animi* also in the sense, explained in chapter twelve of *De homine*, that they can make the work of reason difficult: “they obstruct right reasoning in this, that they militate against the real good and in favor of the apparent and most immediate good”. For instance, sometimes reason sees that the immediate object of desire would bring negative consequences, but the desire is so strong that the individual follows it anyway, so the job of reason is made impossible. However, the positive role of the passions cannot be underestimated, especially at a political level.

It is the passion of curiosity that moves men to reason and to develop science and scientific reasoning, together with the passion of anxiety: “anxiety for the future time, disposeth man to inquire into the causes of things”, says Hobbes in chapter 11 of *Leviathan*, and this in order to control things and use them for the best. Moreover, it is the passion of fear, as well as the desire of living well, that motivate reason to elaborate the natural laws in order to escape from the “miserable” state of nature.

It is true that in *De cive* Hobbes depicts the world dominated by passions as a negative “*Imperium affectum*” (“the Empire of the passions”) while the *Civitas*, the State with its laws and rules, is the “*Imperium rationis*” (“the Empire of reason”) that makes peace and concord possible. But the first chapter of the *De cive* is quite clear that it is a passion, the passion of fear (in this case “mutual fear”) that motivates men to build the empire of reason, and in *Leviathan* (chapter 13th) is found the famous phrase about “the ill condition, which man by mere nature is actually placed in; though with a possibility to come

out of it, consisting partly in the passions, partly in his reason”. Hobbes goes on to explain that: “The passions that incline men to peace, are fear of death; desire of such things as are necessary to commodious living; and a hope by their industry to obtain them. And reason suggests convenient articles of peace, upon which men may be drawn to agreement. These articles, are they, which otherwise are called the Laws of Nature”. Thus, some passions are indispensable to escape from the state of nature.

Of the passions, some are pro-social, and some anti-social (the laws of nature tend to regulate the negative ones: against arrogance, against pride, and so on). This is true even in the simile of the life as a race (found in the ninth chapter of *The Elements of Law*) in which human life and the passions felt by any man during his life, are compared to a race – as one of the few rhetorical expedient in a work that is meant to be scientific, this simile might be a concession to the way of the times in representing the passions through similes and short stories – see for instance Thomas Wright’s example of the wolf and the sheep in *The Passions of the Mind in General*².

² “First, the wolfe loveth the flesh of the sheepe, then he desireth to have it, thirdly, he reioyceth in his prey when he hath gotten it: Contrariwise, the sheepe hateth the wolfe, as an evill thing in himselfe, and thereupon detesteth him, as hurtfull to herself; and finally, if the wolfe seize upon her, shee paineth and grieveth to become his prey: thus we have love, desire, delight, hatred, abomination, grieffe, or heavinesse, the six passions of our coveting appetite. / But now, put case the Woolfe should see the shepheard about his flocke, armed with a guard of dogges, then the Woolfe fearing the difficulty of purchasing his prey, then he erecteth himself with the passion of Hope, perswading him the sheepe shall be his future spoyleafter the conquest: and thereupon contemning the doggers, despising the shepheard, not weighing his hooke, crooke, stones, or rurall instrumentes of warre, with a bolde and audacious courage, not regarding any daunger, hee setteth upon the flocke; where, in the first assault, presently a mastife pincheth him by the legge; the inurie he imagineth ought not to be tollerated: but immediatly inflamed with the passion of Ire, procureth by all meanes possible to revenge it: the shepheard protecteth his dogge, and basteth the wolfe (as his presumption deserved.) The wolfe perceiving himself weaker than he imagined, & his enemies stronger than he conceyved, falleth sodainely into the passion of Feare, (as braggers doe, who vaunt much at the beginning, but quaille commonly in the midle of the fray) yet not abandoned of all hope of the victory; therefore he stirreth up himself, and procedeth forward, but in fine, receiving more blowes of the shepheard, more woundes of the dogges, awearied with fighting, fearing his life, thinking the enterprise impossible, oppressed with the passion of Desperation, resolveth himselfe, that his heeles are a furer defence, than his teeth, and so runneth away. By this example we may collect the other five passion

Hobbes writes:

“The comparison of the life of man to a race, though it holds not in every point, yet it holds 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 other garland, but being foremost; and in it:

To endeavour, is appetite.

To be remiss, is sensuality.

To consider them behind, is glory.

To consider them before, humility.

To lose ground with looking back, vain glory.

To be holden, hatred.

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.

Even here, where “the only goal” is “being foremost”, we find some positive and pro-social passions, such as pity and charity.

HOBBS AND CHRYSIPPUS'S *PERI PATHÔN*

This simile is developed on the basis of an idea of the Stoic Chrysippus – who filled his works on the passions with quotations from the poets,

of the invading appetite, hope, boldness or presumption, anger or ire, feare or desperation” (pp. 23-24).

above all Homer – who compares the reasonable attitude to man’s walking, and the passionate attitude to man’s running:

When someone walks in accordance with his impulse, the movement of his leg is not excessive but commensurate with the impulse, so that he can stop or change whenever he wants to. But when people run in accordance with their impulse, this sort of thing no longer happens. The movement of their legs exceeds the impulse, so that they are carried away and unable to change obediently, as soon as they have started to do so. Something similar, I think, takes place with impulses, owing to their going beyond the rational proportion (*Stoicorum Veterum Fragmenta*: SVF, 462; see also SVF 476).

An important influence on Hobbes may have had the doctrine of *oikéiosis*, since the axiom from which the laws of nature are deduced is the principle of self-preservation. In the seventh book of the *Vitae philosophorum*, dedicated to the Stoics, Diogenes Laertius writes: “They assert that the living being has, as first impulse, that of conserving itself; in fact, since the beginning nature has made him familiar to himself – following what Chrysippus affirms in the first book of *On the ends*, saying that, for every living being, the first constitutive element is his own nature, and the awareness of this nature (*suneídesis*); [...] thus, he pushes away what is harmful to him, and he gets near to what is proper as well as familiar to him” (VII, 85). In a similar vein, in the *Elements of Law* (chapter 14th) Hobbes writes:

[...] necessity of nature makes men to will and desire *bonum sibi*, that which is good for themselves, and to avoid that which is hurtful; but most of all that terrible enemy of nature, death, from whom we expect both the loss of all power, and also the greatest of bodily pains in the losing.

For Hobbes as for the Stoics, there is a sort of self-awareness and self-love that seems to be inherent to the individual, bringing him to wanting to preserve his own life. Moreover, for both Hobbes and Chrysippus, the passions are a kind of impulse: endeavour/*hormé*. For Hobbes, the passions are movements (internal to the subject) *towards* or *from* an object – an object that can be perceived, remembered or fancied by the mind.

In *The Elements of Law* and in *Leviathan*, the kind of motion belonging specifically to passions is called “endeavour” - that stands for the Latin *conatus* - or “the internal beginning of voluntary motion”.

In chapter 6 of *Leviathan*, Hobbes explains that “This endeavour, when it is toward something which causes it, is called APPETITE, or DESIRE; the latter, being the general name; and the other oftentimes restrained to signify the desire of food, namely *hunger* and *thirst*. And when the endeavour is fromward something, it is generally called AVERSION. These words *appetite*, and *aversion* we have from the Latins; and they both of them signify the motions, one of approaching, the other of retiring. So also do the Greek words for the same, which are *hormé* and *aformé*”. The reference is certainly to the Stoics.

In fact, we find the same expression in Stobaeus’s description of the doctrine of the passions as “impulse” (*hormé*) and “repulsion” (*aformé*). The first is “a movement of the soul” (*forà psuké*) towards something, while the second is a movement that impedes a certain practical action (SVF, 169-171).

In particular, through the testimony of Galen’s *On the Doctrines on Hyppocrates and Plato*, we know that in the first book of *On the Passions*, Chrysippus writes that an impulse can also be rational, following right reason, but in the majority of the people it is “irrational” (*álogon*) and “contrary to nature” (*parà fúsin*): it is “an excessive impulse” (*pleonazoúsa hormé*) that originates the passions. The passions are “judgements” (*kríseis*) even though they can be, and often are, wrong judgements. In general, a passion can be defined as “a motion of the soul (*kínesis psukés*) that is contrary to reason” (SVF, 462). The principal passions are “desire” and “fear” (*epizumía* and *fóbos*) and “pleasure” and “pain” (*edoné* and *lúpe*) (SVF, 378, Stobaeus).

The Stoic origin of Hobbes’s doctrine of appetite and aversion (developed also in chapter XI of *De homine*) is evident in the manuscript of 1642/43 known as *De motu, loco et tempore* or *Critique* of the *De mundo* by Thomas White. Here (in paragraph thirty, 23) Hobbes speaks of “*voluntas*” as “*facultas motiva*” and differentiates “*delectatio*” and “*molestia*”, the first being “*appetitus*” or “*motum versus obiectum*” and the second “*aversio*” or “*fuga ab obiecto*”. These motions are placed either in sense or in imagination; when in the latter, they can be feigned (*in fictione*) or remembered, and in this case are “memories of the past” (*recordationes; memoria praeteriti*) or “expectations of the future” (*expectationes; expectatio futuri*). The passions are said to originate, in the mind, from the succession (*alternatio*) and sometimes from the juxtaposition (*conflatio*) of expectations of the future and memories of the past. In *Leviathan*

chapter 6 he writes that “Will is the last appetite in deliberating” and the process of “deliberation” consists in “the whole sum of desires, aversions, hopes and fears (in the Latin version: “*totum illud passionum aggregatum*”) continued till the thing be either done, or thought impossible”; till the decision is made.

THE PASSIONS AS THE FOUNDATIONS OF POLITICS

If sometimes the passions are negative and against reason, they can also make a powerful and positive alliance with reason.

It is true (as we read in chapter 11 of *Leviathan*) that “Competition of riches, honour, command, or other power, inclines to contention, enmity, and war”. But it is also true that there are passions that “dispose men to obey a common power”. Hobbes lists “desire of ease, and sensual delight”, “fear of death”, “desire for knowledge” and “love of the arts”; finally, the “desire of praise”, that “disposes to laudable actions, such as please them whose judgment they value” and the “desire of fame after death”.

Thus, passions are important after the creation of the State, and they are even more important before the creation of the State, functioning – along with reason – as the basis of Hobbes’s political construction.

In Chapter XIII of *Leviathan*, Hobbes writes that, the fact that Nature “dissociates” men, producing conflict and “the war of all against all”, is an “inference made from the passions” (“*perspicue illatum est ex natura passionum*”, in the Latin version) and it is also confirmed by experience.

The passions cannot be considered unimportant at a political level, since Hobbes’s political conceptions are logically derived from the state of nature, and from the dynamic of the passions as well as from the dialectic between reason and passion.

This is made quite clear from the following passages in Chapter XVII of *Leviathan* (paragraphs 1-2 and 5):

“THE final cause, end, or design of men (who naturally love liberty, and dominion over others) in the introduction of that restraint upon themselves, (in which we see them live in commonwealths,) is the foresight of their own preservation, and of a more contented life thereby; that is to say, of getting themselves out from that miserable condition of war, which is necessarily consequent, (as hath been shown, chapter XIII) to the natural passions of men, when there is no visible power to keep them in awe, and tie them by fear of punishment to the

performance of their covenants, and observation of those laws of nature set down in the fourteenth and fifteenth chapters.

For the laws of nature, (as *justice, equity, modesty, mercy*, and, (in sum), *doing to others as we would be done to,*) of themselves, without the terror of some power to cause them to be observed, are contrary to our natural passions, that carry us to partiality, pride, revenge, and the like. And covenants, without the sword, are but words, and of no strength to secure a man at all. Therefore, notwithstanding the laws of nature (which every one hath then kept, when he has the will to keep them, when he can do it safely), if there be no power erected, or not great enough for our security; every man will, and may lawfully rely on his own strength and art, for caution against all other men.

[...] Nor is it enough for the security, which men desire should last all the time of their life, that they be governed, and directed by one judgement, for a limited time; as in one battle, or one war.

The creation of the State is the final result of a conflict of desires:

1. desire a: “men (who naturally love liberty, and dominion over others)”;

2. desire b: “the security, which men desire should last all the time of their life”

So we have on the one hand the love of liberty and dominion over others and on the other hand the desire for security.

The creation of the State is also the result of a dynamics of appetite and aversion:

3. appetite: “the foresight of their own preservation, and of a more contented life thereby”;

4. aversion: “getting themselves out from that miserable condition of war”.

So men are drawn to doing what preserves their life and makes their life better and at the same time are pushed to retire from that which is, and cannot not be, a miserable condition.

Finally, the laws of nature might be (and in fact are for Hobbes) the product of reason; they are the “dictates of reason”, but their motivation is to be searched for in the passionate dimension of human beings. The natural laws also depend on the *will* of the individuals to observe them:

Back to the previous quotation, we read that:

5. “the laws of nature (which every one hath then kept, when he has the will to keep them, when he can do it safely)”.

In *Leviathan*, Hobbes hopes that his theoretic principles will be embraced by an enlightened sovereign, who will decide to “convert this truth of speculation, into the utility of practice” (XXXI, 41). But Hobbes has no moral philosophy of his own, in the sense of proposing an ideal life, and imposing some rules of conduct to obtain happiness, like the ancient philosophers did. In fact, he thinks that all philosophical doctrines pretending to dictate the rules of good and evil are potentially subversive, since the only legitimate moral philosopher should be the sovereign, be it a king or an assembly. But the sovereign cannot fix the rules of good and evil arbitrarily, since he is bound too to obey the laws of nature, and to follow the imperative “*Salus populi suprema lex*”. He must operate wisely, translating equity into justice, and building the legal conditions for peace and “civil conversation” (civil society) amongst men.

Even if Plato was “the best philosopher of the Greeks”, he and all the ancient philosophers were wrong and presumptuous in proposing their personal philosophic view as the true way of living. In *Decameron Physiologicum*, Hobbes writes:

Yet Both Greeks and Romans were more addicted to moral than to natural philosophy; in which kind we have their writings, but loosely and incoherently, written upon no other principles than their own passions and presumptions, without any respect to the laws of the commonwealth, which are the ground and measure of all true morality” (EW, VII, pp. 75-76).

The civil law (*lex civilis*) is defined in *De cive* as “the reason of the State” (*Civitatis ratio*) and in *Leviathan* as “the will and appetite of the State”. It is *in* the civil law and *through* the civil law that reason and passion eventually join their forces and cooperate to the construction of the common good, that *bonum commune* evocated by the word “*Common-wealth*” and protected by the great “Leviathan”, “the King of the Proud”.

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