Human Nature in Hobbes and Thucydides

by

Jonathan Wensveen

A thesis submitted to the Faculty of Graduate Studies in partial fulfillment of the
requirements for the degree of

Master of Arts

in

Political Science

Carleton University
Ottawa, Ontario
Canada

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Jonathan Wensveen

Abstract

As a close reader, translator, and self-professed admirer of Thucydides, Thomas Hobbes was heavily influenced by the former's account of human nature, provided in his *History of the Peloponnesian War*. In fact, many scholars (in both political theory and international relations) have been keen to point out just this. Passages, they argue, such as the Plague at Athens and the Civil War at Corcyra, both of which reveal human nature at its darkest, undoubtedly shaped Hobbes's own understanding and conception of man, the most comprehensive account of which appears in the first part of his most famous and mature work, *Leviathan*. What many of these scholars fail to acknowledge, however, is that for all of their similarities Thucydides' account of human nature is also somewhat different from that of Hobbes. Indeed, although Thucydides often describes man at his worst, his *History* also provides moving examples of man at his best. In contrast to passages such as the Plague at Athens and the Civil War at Corcyra, passages such as the Mytilenean Debate and Pericles' Funeral Oration highlight the human concern and capacity for virtue and justice, and indicate a recognition on the part of Thucydides (as opposed to Hobbes) that, despite what the primordial imposes on human beings they nevertheless and at the same time yearn for something higher.

The purpose of this thesis, then, is to account for this fundamental, yet often overlooked difference. In it, I essentially argue that the difference between Thucydides and Hobbes on the question of human nature can be explained best by looking to Aristotle and Hobbes's attack on him. More specifically, I argue that Hobbes's rejection of Aristotle's political science, moral and political psychology, and account of human nature underlying it, is also and at the same time what necessarily handcuffs him from acknowledging as natural certain aspects of the human condition that Thucydides, like Aristotle, does. Finally, I argue that for this reason, Hobbes's attack on Aristotle also qualifies, in some ways, as an attack on that thinker he admired most: Thucydides.

Acknowledgements

I would like to thank Professor Newell for his willingness to supervise and take me on as a graduate student. I will forever be grateful for his time and generosity as both my teacher and friend. Second, I would like to thank Professor Darby for agreeing to be my second reader and beyond that, for his constant support throughout my M.A. Third, I would like to thank Professor von Heyking—first, for cultivating my interest in political philosophy; and second, for introducing me to Thucydides, whose *History* I have since fallen in love with.

Most important, I would like to thank my parents, James and Mary Anne, for their unconditional love and support. I am proud to be their son.

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Introduction

Hobbes, Thucydides, and The Question of Human Nature

At first, comparing and contrasting a modern political philosopher known primarily for his views on domestic politics to an ancient historian known primarily for his on foreign affairs, may seem odd. Whereas Thomas Hobbes, it might be said, devoted the majority of his life to discussing and theorizing about order within political communities, Thucydides devoted the majority of his to documenting disorder between them. Upon deeper reflection, however, the two share more in common than it might, at first, appear; for although they differ in terms of content (not to mention style) both remain, at the most basic and fundamental level, concerned with the nature of war and peace and with the question of human nature more generally.

In fact, for this very reason, Hobbes became a close reader, translator, and self-professed admirer of Thucydides. In his verse autobiography, he tells us that, of the Greeks and Latins he read, “none please’d [him] like Thucydides.”¹ And in his own translation of the *History*, he makes a marginal note shedding light on why. As Richard Schlatter observes, in the margin of Book One, Hobbes wrote “the use of this history” where “Thucydides claimed that ‘he that desired to look into the truth of things done and which (according to the condition of humanity) may be done again.’”² In marking this passage, however, Hobbes was highlighting more than just the “use” of Thucydides’ *History*. He was, at the same time and according to Schlatter, “emphasizing a concept which was fundamental in his own thinking as well as in that of Thucydides. *The idea of an unchanging human nature, the constant element in history, the common denominator which enables the historian to compare one*

¹Hobbes, *Verse Autobiography*, line 84.

²Richard Schlatter, “Thomas Hobbes and Thucydides,” *Journal of the History of Ideas*, Vol. 6, No. 3 (June, 1945), 357

event with another and construct a formula or pattern which is intelligible and useful.”³
(Italics mine)

Not surprisingly, therefore, Hobbes’s own understanding of human nature, the most comprehensive account of which appears in the first part of *Leviathan* (a work that, for all intents and purposes, constructs a “formula or pattern” useful for establishing political order) seems to have been heavily influenced by Thucydides’ description of human nature in his *History*—so much so, as Schlatter rightly points out, that the descriptions in the *Leviathan* of how men act read like generalizations from the *History*.⁴ Passages, for instance, such as the Plague and Athens and the Civil War at Corcyra, both of which reveal human nature at its darkest, seem to have shaped Hobbes’s own understanding and conception of man. Accordingly and as Peter Pouncey puts it, although “Hobbes does not acknowledge any debt to Thucydides for the formations of his conception of human nature, either in the Dedication or Letter to the Readers, with which he prefaced his translation, or later in his verse Autobiography, we need not be disconcerted by this lack of explicit acknowledgment of substantial influence...Hobbes’s close reading of Thucydides did not merely leave him with a warm impression of a kindred spirit, but could have planted, perhaps even unrecognized at the time, the seeds of specific ideas about the nature of man and war, which would reach full fruition in his political theories.”⁵

Unlike Schlatter or Pouncey, however, who are keen simply to point out the significant influence of Thucydides on Hobbes, there are more than a few scholars in both political theory and the contemporary field of international relations that tend to either implicitly or explicitly assimilate their respective views on human nature. Among international relations scholars, for instance, is Hans J. Morgenthau who, in his well-known

³Schlatter, “Thomas Hobbes and Thucydides,” 357.

⁴Ibid.

⁵Peter Pouncey, *The Necessities of War* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1980), 156.

and foundational *Politics Among Nations* mistakes the view of Thucydides for the view of the Athenian representatives on Melos, and in so doing falsely and perhaps unknowingly attributes to Thucydides Hobbes's view that human beings exhibit "a desire for power after power that ceaseth only in death."⁶ Or as the Athenian representatives put it: "According to our understanding, divinity, it would seem, and mankind, as has always been obvious, are under an innate compulsion to rule wherever empowered." (5.105) Also included among international relations scholars, however, are Kenneth Waltz and his disciple John J. Mearsheimer—founder father of, and leading scholar in, what has come to be known as the "neo-realist" camp. Whereas Waltz, in his famous *Theory of International Politics*, attributes to Thucydides the Hobbesian view that politics can, in essence, be understood according to mechanical laws of force and counter-force by arguing that Thucydides agrees with the "proposition that states balance power,"⁷ Mearsheimer, in *The Tragedy of Great Power Politics*, again and like Morgenthau, mistakes Thucydides' view for that of the Athenian representatives at Melos by attributing to him the infamous but essentially Hobbesian flavored dictum that "the strong do what they can" while "the weak suffer what they must."⁸

Alternatively and among political theorists, for instance, is Clifford W. Brown who, in "Thucydides, Hobbes and the Derivation of Anarchy," argues, in essence, that Thucydides, like Hobbes, "is a radical individualist" making "one of Thucydides' sharpest divergences from both Plato and Aristotle [his] concept of the *polis* [as] the product neither of economic integration nor shared political ideals."⁹ For Thucydides, rather, the *polis* "seems to be an aggregation of self-interested individuals, assembled and held together by the existence of

⁶Hans J. Morgenthau, *Politics Among Nations: The Struggle for Power and Peace* (New York: The McGraw-Hill Companies, Inc., 1948), 38.

⁷Kenneth Waltz, *Theory of International Politics* (Don Mills: Addison Wesley Publishing Company, 1979), 159.

⁸John J. Mearsheimer, *The Tragedy of Great Power Politics* (New York: Norton and Company, Inc., 2001), 163.

⁹Clifford W. Brown, "Thucydides, Hobbes, and the Derivation of Anarchy," *History of Political Thought* Vol. 8, No. 1 (Spring, 1987), 50.

power and artifice.”¹⁰ Similarly, in “Thucydides and Hobbes’s State of Nature,” George Klosko and Daryl Rice, upon analyzing the behavior of human beings in Thucydides’ *Archeology*, argue that it “seems reasonable to conclude that Hobbes based his classic description of man in the state of nature upon this passage.”¹¹ Likewise, in his article “Machiavellian *Virtu* and Thucydidean *Arete*: Traditional Virtue and Political Wisdom,” Michael Palmer argues that “Thucydides’ description” of the Greek world in the *Archeology* “sounds like the ‘state of nature’ of Thomas Hobbes or John Locke: there was no commodious living, because there was no peace, no rest.”¹²

Finally, in his book *The Human Thing*, Marc Cogan provides a detailed analysis of how Thucydides uses the term “human nature” in his *History*, again assimilating Thucydides’ understanding of human nature with that of Hobbes. According to Cogan, “Thucydides uses the words *anthropeia physis* [human nature] (or *physis anthropon*) [only] twice (and possibly three times) in *propria persona*,”—that is to say, in his own voice. “The first use,” which appears “at 2.50.1 in his discussion of the plague in Athens,” writes Cogan, “is ambiguous, but only within a range close to the literally natural or biological. Thucydides says that the plague was worse than appeared by the accounts of it, and that it struck people harder than human nature.”¹³ This, however, is important, because as Cogan goes on to explain, “whether this phrase means ‘beyond the capacity of human nature to endure’ (as it does in Rex Warner’s translation of the *History*) or, ‘being crueler even than human nature’ (as it does in Hobbes’ unorthodox but appealing translation), the meaning of *anthropeia*

¹⁰Brown, “Thucydides, Hobbes, and the Derivation of Anarchy,” 50.

¹¹George Klosko and Daryl Rice, “Thucydides and Hobbes’s State of Nature,” *History of Political Thought* Vol. 7, No. 3 (Winter 1985), 408.

¹²Michael Palmer, “Machiavellian *Virtu* and Thucydidean *Arete*: Traditional Virtue and Political Wisdom in Thucydides,” *Review of Politics* Vol. 51. No. 3 (Summer, 1989), 374.

¹³Marc Cogan, *The Human Thing: The Speeches and Principles of Thucydides’ History* (Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, 1981), 187.

physis can be referred to the specific biological content of our natures.”¹⁴ In other words, both Rex Warner’s and Hobbes’s translation make sense insofar as both place an emphasis on the specifically biological and hence primordial aspect of the human condition. “If the former meaning is preferred,” writes Cogan, “*physis* is directly and explicitly biological; if the latter, *physis* refers to the cruel and rapacious behavior that appetite and desire occasion, and that has its origin—with our appetites in our biological nature.”¹⁵

Yet, according to Cogan, it is the latter interpretation—that is, Hobbes’s interpretation—which appears to be more in line with how Thucydides uses the term—especially, he argues, when we consider his second use of it. As Cogan explains:

Thucydides’ second use of the term *anthropeia physis* occurs during his discussion of the stasis at Corcyra...In this instance (and in both instances connected with the stasis, should we accept 3.84) the meaning of “human nature” remains straightforward, as do the kinds of events of which it is the cause. Human nature is again conceived of as a particularly amoral (if not immoral), selfish, often cruel manner of acting attributable to appetite, and, therefore, ultimately to our animal and biological nature. In this discussion of the stasis of Corcyra and else where, *anthropeia physis* is identical in content to the second of the alternative interpretations of *physis* in the passage from the description of the plague.¹⁶

In other words, upon discussing the Corcyrean civil war, Thucydides provides a pessimistic, exclusively primordial account of human nature—an account that anticipates if not completely informs how Hobbes interprets it and, coincidentally, one that validates Hobbes’s own translation of the aforementioned passage in the “Plague”—that is, as the plague being, not “beyond the capacity of human nature to endure” (as it is for Warner), but rather, “crueler even than human nature.” Needless to say, in both cases (one perhaps more legitimate than the other) Hobbes interprets Thucydides’ use of the words “human nature” in way that supplements his own account of human nature in *Leviathan*, thereby suggesting that Thucydides’ understanding of human nature is either synonymous with that of his own,

¹⁴Cogan, *The Human Thing*, 187.

¹⁵Ibid.

¹⁶Ibid.

or that his derives specifically from that of Thucydides. As Cogan remarks, “that Thomas Hobbes found Thucydides congenial enough to warrant translation is hardly surprising. The two share an almost identical view of the nature of mankind, of its motives, of the origin of those motives, and of the result when this nature is allowed a free rein to operate.”¹⁷

That they have “almost identical” views “of the nature of mankind,” however, does not mean that their views are simply interchangeable. In fact, when taken by itself and as a closer reading of the *History* reveals, Thucydides’ limited and decidedly ambiguous use of the term “human nature” makes only for a limited and ambiguous account of how he actually understands the human condition. Equally important to consider is how he depicts and more importantly, judges the behavior of certain men, not only in passages such as the Plague at Athens and the Civil War at Corcyra, but in passages such as the Mytilenean Debate and Pericles’ Funeral Oration as well; for, in these passages, he provides a more nuanced and profound account of what motivates human beings—one that, in some ways actually challenges what is too frequently taken for granted as conventional wisdom concerning the philosophical relationship between Thucydides and Hobbes—namely, that human nature for Hobbes is human nature for Thucydides and vice versa. As Clifford Orwin rightly points out, although Thucydides may “appear to share with his student Hobbes a negative political orientation”—that is to say, an orientation whereby “we ought to take our political bearings not from what attracts us as best, but repels us as worst”—“Thucydides’ orientation is not simply negative.”¹⁸ The same applies when it comes to understanding their respective interpretations of human nature: those who make the mistake of equating them tend to focus only what is negative in Thucydides, and hence to the exclusion of what is not.

¹⁷Cogan, *The Human Thing*, 187.

¹⁸Clifford Orwin, *The Humanity of Thucydides* (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1994), 184.

The purpose of this thesis, then, is to examine more closely the theoretical relationship between Thucydides, Hobbes and their, similar yet different interpretations of human nature. More specifically, it looks at what Thucydides included as part of his interpretation that Hobbes does not in an effort to answer why Hobbes put forth a different conception of human nature from that of Thucydides, despite having such an affiliation for the latter's work.

To sufficiently address this topic, it consists of four chapters. Chapter One offers a detailed exegetical summary of Hobbes's account of human nature in the first part of *Leviathan*, in order to show how that account not only informs but makes possible his larger modern philosophical project.¹⁹ More specifically, it argues that, due to his primordialism and reductionism, Hobbes puts forward and relies on a pessimistic and deterministic account of human nature crafted specifically to advance the modern goal of saving mankind from that "miserable condition of war." Following Chapter one, Chapter Two looks at human nature in Thucydides. Specifically, it acknowledges a number of obvious similarities between Hobbes's account of human nature in *Leviathan* and that of Thucydides in the *History*, but also points out a number of less obvious, fundamental differences in order to demonstrate that, for all of their similarities, there also exists an important divergence between his interpretation and that of Hobbes. Following Chapter Two, Chapter Three begins to account for this fundamental difference by turning to Aristotle and looking at Hobbes's attack on him. In essence, it argues that Hobbes's political science and the

¹⁹The *Leviathan*, to be sure, is not only work in which Hobbes discusses human nature. He also discusses it in the *Elements of Law*, *De Cive*, and *De Corpore* as well. Important to note, however, is that *Leviathan* contains his most detailed treatment of human nature and many if not all of what he argues about human nature in his earlier works, in one way or another, has made its way into it. As J.C.A Gaskin has noted, in broad terms, while Chapters Two to Thirteen in *Human Nature* (part one of the *Elements*) are reworked as Chapters One to Twelve in *Leviathan*, Chapters Fourteen to Nineteen and most of *De Corpore Politico* are reworked both in *De Cive*, Chapters One to Fourteen and in *Leviathan*, Chapters Thirteen to Nineteen. (*Elements of Law*, ix.) As a result, for reasons of length and consistency I focus on his account of human nature as it appears *Leviathan*, referring only to other works for further analytical support.

Leviathan in particular is intended to replace Aristotle's political science, account of human nature, and the moral and political psychology underlying it, with a more realistic and reliable alternative, conducive to advancing his modern philosophical project, noted above. Finally, Chapter Four shows how Hobbes's attack on Aristotle's political science and moral and political psychology discussed in Chapter Three, helps to clarify and account for the fundamental difference between Hobbes and Thucydides on the question of human nature pointed out in Chapter Two—that is, a recognition of the part of the latter that the human condition is one defined in terms of both the primordial and the transcendental, necessity and justice.

In so doing, this thesis argues that, by taking in account Hobbes's attack on Aristotle and his moral and political psychology, which entails an implicit restructuring of the Platonic/Aristotelian soul and the reduction of the ancient notion of spiritedness (*thumos*) to vainglory, we can best account for the difference between human nature as understood by Thucydides, on the one hand, and as presented by Hobbes in *Leviathan*, on the other. For Plato and Aristotle, *thumos* is that which is between *eros* and *logos*, the desiring and reasoning parts of the soul. As such, *thumos* serves as somewhat of an arbiter between the two and, as I show, therefore parallels a tension between necessity and justice, primordialism and transcendence that, for Thucydides and as I discuss in Chapter Two, characterizes the human condition. Because Hobbes, however, desires to advance a modern philosophical project aimed at creating peace and order, he bifurcates the tri-partite Platonic/Aristotelian soul into reason (as reckoning), on the one hand, and passion on the other, and reduces *thumos* to vainglory, in effect, severing it from reason in the classic sense in order to eradicate as much as possible spiritedness and war from the human psyche and political life.

The end result, in my view, is that in the process, Hobbes also handcuffs himself from recognizing as genuine certain aspects of the human condition that Thucydides presents as natural. Whereas Thucydides, for instance, retains a certain appreciation for the important role that classical virtue, ambition, practical wisdom, and therefore, statecraft and leadership, play in politics, Hobbes attempts to systematically eliminate from politics the need for statecraft altogether by substituting the ancient prescription for peace (ordering *thumos* towards *logos* so as to rein in an otherwise unruly *eros*) for a more realizable, reliable, and modern alternative (pitting the fear of violent death against pride and vainglory so as to bring men to rationality). As a result, I ultimately argue that while human nature for Thucydides, like Aristotle, remains fundamentally *political* by nature, for Hobbes it becomes, in essence, apolitical, egoistic, and driven exclusively by the desire to dominate thereby making his attack Aristotle's political science and moral and political psychology also somewhat of an attack on the very thinker he admired most: Thucydides.

To be sure, some scholars have already noted a difference between Thucydides and Hobbes on the question of human nature. In *Thucydides, Hobbes, and the Interpretation of Realism*, for instance, Laurie M. Johnson asks: "Do Hobbes and Thucydides hold the same view of human nature or do they differ?"²⁰ For Johnson, the answer is most certainly no. In fact, according to her, Thucydides and Hobbes "differ so widely in their concepts of human nature and the perspective from which they view human activity and conflict are so divergent that they represent two different schools of thought."²¹ Whereas the one, writes Johnson, "reduces all human thought and action to one motivation or cause, leveling in its wake all apparent human diversity of character and culture...the other (Thucydides) expands the view, not to the point of a meaningless and endless clutter of influences on

²⁰Laurie M. Johnson, *Thucydides, Hobbes, and the Interpretation of Realism* (Dekalb: Northern Illinois University Press, 1993), Introduction p. X.

²¹Ibid.

human behavior but to a much more rich and rounded picture.”²² In essence, she argues that, “because of their disagreement about the uniformity of human nature, Hobbes views as normal those human qualities that Thucydides sees as products of decline. While Thucydides depicts the bloodthirsty violence of civil war as well as genocidal international warfare as products of the extreme pressures of war, Hobbes sees them as events that take place whenever there is no power strong enough to prevent them.”²³

Likewise, in “The Fear of Death and the Longing for Immortality: Hobbes and Thucydides on Human Nature and the Problem of Anarchy,” Peter J. Ahrensdorf also points out that Thucydides and Hobbes differ in terms of how they understand or interpret human nature. According to him, “the principal difference between Hobbes and Thucydides is their theoretical disagreement over whether the fear of violent death or the desire for immortality is the stronger element within human nature.”²⁴ In other words, the principal difference between Hobbes and Thucydides is their disagreement over the extent to which men behave rationally when faced with the prospect of dying in a violent manner. Whereas Hobbes “hopes that the fear of violent death can lead humans to master their destabilizing hopes,” (ie. make them rational) Thucydides, writes Ahrensdorf, “argues instead that human hopes, especially for immortality, tend to overwhelm human fears, even of violent death.”²⁵ Simply put, whereas Thucydides has little faith in the human capacity to act rationally, even in the face of violent death, Hobbes is a devout believer. And whereas Thucydides therefore regards war as a natural part of the human condition—that is to say, insoluble as a problem—Hobbes believes it can be largely eradicated.

²²Johnson, *Thucydides, Hobbes, and the Interpretation of Realism*, X.

²³ Ibid., 4.

²⁴Peter J. Ahrensdorf, “The Fear of Death and the Longing for Immortality: Hobbes and Thucydides on Human Nature and the Problem of Anarchy,” in the *American Political Science Review* Vol. 94., No. 3., (September, 2000), 580.

²⁵Ibid., 579.

While I tend to agree with both Johnson and Ahrens Dorf that, although sharing an otherwise pessimistic view of human nature Thucydides and Hobbes ultimately put forward different and, to a certain extent, competing interpretations, in my view, this difference is ultimately rooted in something that neither Johnson nor Ahrens Dorf fully acknowledge or consider in their work on the subject—that is, Hobbes’s attack on ancient political philosophy in general and Aristotelian moral political psychology in particular. In other words, although both Johnson and Ahrens Dorf point to a fundamental difference between Thucydides and Hobbes on the question of human nature, both fall short of articulating how Hobbes’s attack on Aristotle’s political science and the moral and political psychology underlying it ultimately accounts for this difference. My research, therefore, attempts to fill this gap in an effort to show that, whereas Thucydides as an ancient accepts war and *thumos* as a natural part of the human condition, Hobbes as a modern believes in the human capacity to eradicate the latter, and in so doing, the former as much as possible from political life.

A Note on Hobbes’s Translation of Thucydides

Although Hobbes’s translation of the *History* is widely regarded as one of the best, in this thesis I rely primarily on Steven Lattimore’s, and for the following reason: Despite Hobbes’s stated goal of trying, as much as possible, to stay true to exactly what Thucydides wrote, it has nevertheless been suggested that Hobbes translated the *History* in a way that might, in fact, lend exaggerated support to his own ideas about politics.²⁶ While this may or

²⁶ Schlatter, for instance, points out that Hobbes, in his translation, chose to use the word “sovereignty” as opposed to the word “government” while describing what Thucydides, in Book Eight of the *History*, calls the government of 5000, and as a result, argues that Hobbes’s “reading into the *History* a preference for monarchy is clear evidence that Hobbes himself, whatever Thucydides may have in fact preferred, had already thought out his solution of the political problem- government by one man.” Similarly, David Grene, in his edition of Hobbes’s translation, points out that “when Pericles, speaking of the Athenians as posterity will see them, says, ‘they have established memorials of good and bad everywhere,’” Hobbes translates it instead as “and set up eternal monuments on all sides both of the even we have done to our enemies and the good we have done to our friends.” The

may not be true, testing it as a hypothesis is beyond the scope of thesis and as a topic may very well warrant one of its own. As a result, in what follows I consult Hobbes's translation only for comparison purposes, treating it not so much as an accurate or reliable translation of the *History*, but instead, as another one of Hobbes's political works. In other words, I consult it not so much for the purpose of interpreting Thucydides, but for the purpose of shedding light on philosophical relationship between Thucydides and Hobbes.

reason, according to Grene, is that "Hobbes is clearly drawing on the discussion of justice in the first book of the *Republic*. The mistranslation comes from Hobbes's decision that Thucydides means something which didn't say and which Hobbes says for him."

Chapter 1

Hobbes on Human Nature

The passion to be reckoned upon, is fear...

-Hobbes, *Leviathan*, Chapter XIV.31.

In this chapter my aim is twofold: first, to summarize in detail Hobbes's understanding of human nature as presented in his most mature and famous work, *Leviathan*; and second, to show how that understanding not only informs but makes possible his larger modern philosophical project.²⁷ Discussing first, Hobbes's reduction of the human condition to primordial existence, I then turn to what I argue is his reductionist account of the passions, intellectual virtues, and the political implications that follow suit—what Hobbes terms the “natural condition of mankind,” on the one hand, and his unnatural solution for it, on the other: the commonwealth or *Leviathan*. In so doing, I essentially argue that, due to his primordialism and reductionism, Hobbes puts forward and relies on a pessimistic and deterministic (mechanistic) account of human nature that, on the one hand, assumes men are governed and motivated entirely by their passions—that is to say, are by nature selfish, egoistic, and driven by a desire for power after power that, according to Hobbes, “ceaseth only in death”—but that, on the other hand and as a result, also assumes men can be made rational insofar as certain passions (most notably fear and the fear of violent death) “inclineth them towards peace.” In other words, I argue that Hobbes's pessimistic and deterministic account of human nature is crafted specifically to support a larger, and paradoxically, optimistic modern philosophical project: to save his fellow Englishmen from what he calls the “disorders of the present time,” and beyond that,

²⁷As I mentioned in the introduction, although Hobbes addresses the question of human nature in his earlier works, much (if not all) of what he writes in those works can also be found in Part One of the *Leviathan*. As his most comprehensive account, then, and for reasons length, it serves as the basis for my treatment of Hobbes's view of human nature.

mankind from its natural condition—that “miserable condition of war” so vividly captured by Thucydides in the *History*.

Hobbes’s Primordialism

In the Dedicatory Letter of *De Cive*, addressed to Sir William Earl of Devonshire, Hobbes comments on two “sayings”—one from the Roman statesman Cato and the other from the Roman statesman Pontius Telenius. While Cato, writes Hobbes, said “*that all kings are to be reckoned amongst ravenous beasts,*” Pontius Telesinus said “*that Rome herself, as well as Sylla, was to be razed; for that there would always be wolves and predators of their liberty, unless the forest that lodged them were grubbed up by the roots.*” (DC, Dedication) According to Hobbes, while the “odious opinion” of Cato (spoken on behalf of the Roman people) is intended to reveal the bestial nature of “all kings”—in effect, reducing all kings to tyrants—Pontius Telesinus’ statement, by contrast, is intended to reveal the bestial nature of Rome herself, reducing all peoples to mobs and all cities to tyrannies; or as Hobbes himself puts it: “what a beast of prey was the Roman people; whilst with its conquering eagles it erected its proud trophies so far and wide over the world, bringing the Africans, the Asiatics; the Macedonians, and the Achaeans, with many other despoiled nations, into a specious bondage, with the pretense of preferring them to be denizens of Rome...” (DC, Dedication) Important to note, however, and as Hobbes goes on to explain, when considered from an impartial point of view, “both sayings are very true” and, when taken together, reveal the truth not only about politics but also the human predicament in general: “*that man to man is a kind of God,*” on the one hand, and that “*man to man is an arrant wolf,*” on the other. (DC, Dedication) “The first is true, writes Hobbes, “if we compare citizens amongst themselves; and the second, if we compare cities. In the one, there is some analogy of similitude with the Deity; to wit, justice and charity, the twin sisters of peace. But in the other, good men must defend themselves by taking to them for a sanctuary the two

daughters of war, deceit and violence: that is, in plain terms, a mere brutal rapacity.”²⁸ (*DC*, Dedication) Simply put, man is to man either beastlike or godlike—godlike within a state and beastlike without it.

Although brief, Hobbes’s commentary on the sayings of Cato and Marcus Telenius in the introduction to *De Cive* in a way already foreshadows his entire understanding of human nature and the natural condition of mankind as presented in his later work, *Leviathan*. In fact, written just two years after his translation of Thucydides,²⁹ *De Cive* serves as a first draft or prototype of what eventually became Hobbes’s most mature and famous work—the first part of which, titled “Of Man,” it might be said, serves only to provide a more systematic and ontological account of the very predicament that Hobbes briefly alludes to in the Dedicatory Letter of *De Cive*. Indeed, beginning with a discussion on sense and following that, discussions on imagination, speech, reason, science, and the passions, Hobbes then proceeds to discuss the purpose of discourse, virtue and its defects, the nature of knowledge, power, worth, dignity, honour, manners, the nature of religion, and finally, the natural condition of mankind—all of which are intended provide the reader with an in depth understanding of mankind’s otherwise rapacious or beast-like nature and why for Hobbes, government—that mortal God, Leviathan—is so necessary as a result. To begin, then, let us first review what ultimately enables Hobbes to advance such an account of human nature, the metaphysical basis of which is laid out in the first five chapters of *Leviathan* and, as we shall see, informs the entirety of what follows: his primodialism.

In Chapter One, titled “Of Sense,” Hobbes discusses that which he argues determines the entirety of how human beings think, comprehend reality, communicate, reason, and, as we shall see, behave—that is, their sense. According to Hobbes, the “thoughts of man” are

²⁸Hobbes’s reference to the twin daughters of war, deceit and violence, parallels Machiavelli’s understanding of the fox and lion in the *Prince*, and force and fraud in the *Discourses*.

²⁹Johnson, *Thucydides, Hobbes, and the Interpretation of Realism*, 156.

rooted entirely in sense, making our thoughts nothing more than appearances. They arise, writes Hobbes, from external objects that “worketh on the eyes, eares, and other parts of a man’s body, and by diversity of working produceth diversity of appearances.” (I.1) Hence, whatever our thoughts, they reflect the material and hence visible, audible, odible, that is, purely physical world around us. Hobbes therefore roots all of that which we discern as human beings in empirical observation, rendering, in effect, all knowledge and the activity of philosophizing itself subject to and determined by the motions of matter around us.³⁰ Or as Hobbes himself explains, although motions appear to be “fancies,” they are in fact nothing more than what we sense as a result of causal relationships; for the cause of sense, writes Hobbes, is an external object which “presseth” on the organs. (1.4)

Next, Hobbes turns to the question of how human beings think. In Chapters Two and Three, titled “Of Imagination” and “Of The Trains or Consequences of Imagination,” he explains how human beings come to understand what they sense—that is to say, what they experience—by discussing imagination and our “trains” thereof. According to him, imagination is “nothing but decaying sense, and is found in men and many other living creatures, as well as sleeping and waking.” (II.2) By decaying, Hobbes means, “not the decay of the motion made in sense, but an obscuring of it.” (II.3) It is, for all intents and purposes, that which human beings retain in their memory after having sensed—that is, felt, smelt, or seen—an object. Hence, man’s “imagination and memory are but one thing,” and insofar as his imagination relates always to his sense, it accounts for his entire understanding of the

³⁰Recent scholarship by Leon Craig questions whether Hobbes himself actually believed this—and for good reason: when taken to its natural conclusion, Hobbes’ understanding of human thought, (that is, as a product of sense or sensation) implicitly refutes his own, but presumably “universal” articulation of it. Hobbes’s understanding of human nature, and by extension, his entire philosophical doctrine, would amount to nothing more than a product of his own subjective experience. The thought of Hobbes, like the “thoughts of man” would consist entirely of appearances derived solely from the perception of external objects. In short, Hobbes’s determinism proves self-defeating. Or as Craig himself argues in the *Platonic Leviathan*: “Upon assuming determinism, there is no conceivable justification for believing it—or anything else...hence Determinism as a positive doctrine is self-refuting, since it renders access to the truth, on this or any other question, impossible.” (pg. 115; pg.121)

material, purely physical world around him. Not surprisingly, then, like man's imagination, his trains of imagination consist merely of successive thoughts, derived also from his sense—what Hobbes refers to “mental discourse.” (III.1) As Hobbes explains: “when a man thinketh on anything whatsoever, his next thought after, is not altogether so casual as it seems to be. Not every thought to every thought succeeds indifferently. But as we have no imagination whereof we have not formerly had sense, in whole or in parts, so we have no transition from one imagination to another whereof we never had the like before in our senses.” (III.2) Simply put, man's trains of imagination which account for his comprehension of what he senses—sometimes “unguided” and sometimes “regulated by desire”—are bound entirely by what he experiences—making, for instance, “prudence a presumption of the future, contracted from the experience of time past.” (III.11)

Following Chapters Two and Three, Hobbes then proceeds to discuss the phenomenon of speech—that is, man's ability to *communicate* and *articulate* what he senses, experiences, imagines, and “discourses mentally.” In essence, Hobbes argues that speech consists of “names or appellations and their connexion, whereby men register their thoughts, recall them when they are past, and also declare them one to another for mutual utility and conversation, without which there [would be] neither commonwealth, nor society, nor contract, nor peace, no more than amongst lions, bears, and wolves.” (IV.1) In other words, speech signifies man's ability to communicate his thoughts—that is, articulate what he imagines or remembers—in a way that animals cannot, making the “the general use of speech” to “transfer [his] mental discourse (his trains of imagination) into verbal, or the train of [his] thoughts into a train of words” (IV.3) Speech, therefore, serves primarily to first, articulate and communicate cause and effect relationships—or as Hobbes puts it: “register what by cogitation we find to be the cause of anything, present or past, and what we find thing present or past may produce or effect...” and “to communicate to others our

knowledge of those relationships—that is, “to show to others that knowledge we have attained, which is to counsel and teach one another.” (IV.3) It also, however, serves to convey intent and produce pleasure, providing it is innocent—that is, “to make known to others our will and purposes, that we may have the mutual help of one another”...and “to please and delight ourselves, by playing with out words, for pleasure or ornament, innocently.” (IV.3)³¹

Finally, and in what serves as a kind of informal ending to his ontology of primordialism, Hobbes, in Chapter Five, titled of “Of Reason and Science,” discusses the nature of reason and what constitutes science. In essence, reason for Hobbes is purely instrumental insofar as a man that reasons, “does nothing else but conceive a sum total from addition of parcels, or conceive a remainder from subtraction of one sum from another.” (V.1) In other words, reason for Hobbes is rationality: it amounts to a “reckoning (that is adding and subtracting) of the consequences of general names agreed upon for the marking and signifying of our thoughts.” (V.2) Reason, therefore is not, “as sense and memory, born with us, nor gotten by experience only, as prudence is.” It is, rather, “attained by industry, first in apt imposing of names, and secondly, by getting a good and orderly method in proceeding from the elements, which are names, to assertions made by connexion of one of them to another, and so to syllogisms, which are the connexions of one assertion to another.” In short, it involves the relating of names and definitions (man’s imaginations or thoughts and his articulation of them) to consequences, making science

³¹That Hobbes attaches to this last use the word “innocently,” is of profound importance; for, just as there are four uses of speech, so there are four corresponding abuses—all of which, it seems, derive not from pleasing and delighting but misleading and deceiving ourselves and others. Indeed, whereas the first consists of the wrongful registering of our thoughts, leading to self-deception, the second consists of using words metaphorically and unintentionally deceiving others; and whereas the third, consists of lying or intentionally deceiving others; the fourth consists of grieving an enemy. The inevitable question that arises, therefore, is whether and to what extent Hobbes follows his own rules regarding speech. For example, does his use of the word *Leviathan*—an obvious metaphor for commonwealth—qualify as an abuse of speech, or merely playing with words in an innocent way? More on this in Chapter Three.

nothing other than “a knowledge of all the consequences of names appertaining to the subject in hand.” (V.17) Whereas reason, then, amounts to reckoning, science amounts to the conclusions reached, and agreed upon by doing so.

On the surface, what Hobbes is arguing regarding sense and thought, imagination, speech, reason and science, seems relatively straightforward, if not innocent: if, as he contends, man’s thoughts reflect merely what he as an individual experiences, his imagination and trains of imagination thereof, represent merely his comprehension of that experience. Finally, speech, insofar as it too is informed fundamentally by what man senses, is, in effect, merely the articulation of what he experiences as understood by his imaginations, guided or otherwise, thereby making his reason, and reason in general, the application of reckoning to speech (names and definitions) and science the natural outcome. At a deeper level, however, what Hobbes is arguing has radical metaphysical implications that ultimately lead to an exclusively primordial understanding of the human condition. Indeed, by attributing all thought to sense, Hobbes not only makes all knowledge or thought subjective, but in so doing discounts the possibility for any kind of knowledge that might transcend man’s primordial existence as a human being. As Hobbes himself states in Chapter Eleven: “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.” (XI.1) As a result, because all human knowledge derives solely from our material and purely physical existence—from the motions of matter around us—philosophy in its Aristotelian or Platonic (not to mention Christian) form, becomes, like any other claim to knowledge, mere opinion predicated on the erroneous assumption that human knowledge derives from or is connected to a higher and transcendental (literally insensible) source: the Good or God. Or as Hobbes explains Chapter Three:

Because whatsoever (as a I said before) we conceive has been perceived first by sense, either all at once or by parts, a man can have no thought representing anything not

subject to sense. No man therefore can conceive anything, but he must conceive it in some place, and endued with some determinate magnitude, and which may be divided into parts; nor that anything is all in this place, and all in another place at the same time; nor that two or more things can be in one and the same place at once; for none of these things ever have, or can be, incident to sense, but are absurd speeches, taken upon credit from deceived philosophers, and deceived or deceiving schoolmen. (III.12)

In other words, insofar as what we conceive is perceived first by sense, there is, in effect, nothing we can know as human beings transcendent of our primordial condition. In the first five Chapters of *Leviathan*, therefore, Hobbes dispenses with the transcendental nature of philosophy altogether by reducing the philosophy of the past to nothing more than “absurd speeches, emanating from deceived philosophers and deceiving schoolmen.” (More on this in Chapter Three)

Hobbes's Reductionism

When taken into account, then, Hobbes's metaphysics and the primordialism to which it leads also and necessarily has profound implications when it comes to interpreting and understanding what motivates and determines human behavior. For, having grounded all of human thought in sense—having again, dispensed with the transcendentalism of those “deceived philosophers”—is, at the same time, what ultimately enables him to evaluate and explain what motivates human beings in a new and radical way—that is, by looking not at the “objects of the passions” (such as the Good or God) but rather, by focusing on merely the “similitude” of them. As he himself explains in the Introduction:

...There is a saying much usurped of late, that wisdom is acquired, not by reading of books, but of men. Consequently whereunto, those persons that for the most part can give other proof of being wise take great delight to show what they think they have read in men, by uncharitable censures of one another behind their backs. But there is another saying not of late understood, by which they might learn truly to read one another, if they would take the pains; and that is, *nosece teipsum, read thy self*, which was not meant, as it is now used, to countenance either the barbarous state of men in power towards their inferiors, or to encourage men of low degree to a saucy behavior towards their betters, but to teach us that for the similitude of the thoughts and passions of one man to the thoughts and passions of another, whosoever looketh into himself and considereth what he doth, when he does think, opine, reason, hope, fear etc. and upon what grounds, he shall thereby read and know, what are the thoughts and passions of all other men upon like occasions. I say that similitude of passions, which are the same in all men, desire, fear, hope etc, not the similitude of the objects of the passions, which are the things desired feared, hoped etc; for these the constitution

individual and particular education do so vary, and they are so easy to be kept from our knowledge, that the characters of man's heart, blotted and confounded as they are with dissembling, lying, counterfeiting, and erroneous doctrines, are legible only to him that searcheth hearts. (Introduction, 3)

According to Hobbes, then, his method for interpreting human nature will consist of reading neither books nor other men, but rather, thyself i.e. looking into thyself and considering what one "doth"—that is to say, what one thinks, opines, reasons, hopes, and fears—so as to read and know "what are the thoughts and passions of all other men upon like occasions."³² Indeed, unlike those who look to themselves for the purpose of "countenancing either the barbarous state of men in power towards their inferiors" (as did Cato, for instance, who, according to Hobbes, put forth the "odious opinion" that all kings are tyrants), and those who, alternatively, "encourage men of low degree to a sauce behavior towards their betters" (like Marcus Telesinus, who incited the people of Rome during its second civil war), Hobbes suggests reading thyself—not, to be sure, in order to justify one's own prejudices but rather to uncover the similitude of passions "which are the same in all men" including "desire, fear, hope, etc." and to leave aside any discussion of the objects of those passions, "which are the things desired, feared, and hoped;" for, as Hobbes explains, although "by men's actions we do discover their designs sometimes...to do it without comparing them with our own, and distinguishing all circumstances by which the case man come to be altered, is to decipher without a key, and be for the most part deceived, by too much trust, or by too much diffidence, as he that reads himself a good or evil man." (Introduction, 3)

Accordingly, in the same way that his good friend and mentor, Francis Bacon, who, quoting Tacitus in the *Advancement of Learning*, calls the passions "tortures that urge men to confess their secrets," Hobbes, in the Introduction to *Leviathan* argues that

³²Hobbes's invocation of the term *nosece teipsum* or read thyself is no accident; for it also signifies a break from ancient philosophy insofar as it qualifies as a tacit criticism of the Socratic dictum "know thyself," which not only means knowing one's motivations and passions, but more broadly, knowing how those passions relate to one's overall place in the *cosmos*.

understanding their similitude will urge the nature of man to reveal those of its own; for the passions (unlike their objects), in one way or another, will always reflect man's most primordial concerns (self-preservation and procuring a contented life)—and not, to be sure, his transcendental longings.³³ Or as Hobbes puts it in Chapter Eleven: “the voluntary actions and inclinations of all men tend, not only to the procuring, but also to the assuring of a contented life, and differing only in the way; which ariseth partly from the diversity of passions in divers men, and partly from the difference of knowledge or opinion each one has of the causes which produce the effect desired.” (XI.1)

Not surprisingly, therefore, Hobbes's discussion of the passions in Chapter Six, his discussion of the intellectual virtues and their defects in Chapter Eight, his discussion of power, worth, dignity and honour in Chapter Ten, and his discussion of manners in Chapter Eleven, flow directly from his metaphysics—considering first the passions only as they relate to and stem from the different motions of matter that men as primordial beings sense; second, the intellectual virtues only as they reflect and are rooted in the “divers” passions that humans as primordial beings exhibit; third, the concepts of honor, worth and dignity only as they are inextricably linked to the concept of power and man's primordial desire for it; and fourth, the difference of manners (those qualities of mankind that concern their together in peace and unity) only as they reflect either man's primordial condition or represent an aberration from it—what Hobbes terms “vain-glory.” (See Chapter Three)

Consider first the passions. In Chapter Six, titled “Of the Interior Beginnings of Voluntary Motions, Commonly Called the Passions, and the Speeches by Which They Are Expressed,” Hobbes asserts that the “small beginnings of motion within the body of man, before they appear in walking, speaking, striking and other visible actions, are commonly called endeavours,” which, when directed “towards something” that cause them, is an

³³Francis Bacon, *The Advancement of Learning*, edited by Arthur Johnston (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1974), XXIII.18.

“appetite or desire,” and when directed fromward or away from something, is an “aversion.” (VI.2-3) Love and hate as passions, therefore, reflect merely our appetites and aversions, “so that desire and love are the same thing.” (VI.3) In effect, the distinction between Platonic *eros* and *epithumia* is eclipsed, while good and evil become personal preferences reflective of subjective experience and appetites and as expressed by subjective pretense; for, as Hobbes explains: “these words [good and evil] are ever used with relation to the person that useth them, there being nothing simply and absolutely so.” (VI.7) As for the other passions, Hobbes argues that they too are simply derivatives of appetite or love, aversion or hate. For instance, hope is an “appetite with an opinion of attaining” while despair is an appetite without it. (VI.13) Alternatively, fear is an aversion “with opinion of hurt from an object,” while courage is reduced simply to an aversion with “hope of avoiding that hurt by resistance.” Finally, anger is “sudden courage” and indignation “anger for great hurt done to another.” (VI.21) In the same way that Hobbes conflates Platonic *eros* (desire) with *epithumia* (appetite), in effect reducing the former to the latter, he conflates the concept of *thumos* (anger) with *phobos* (fear or aversion) in effect rooting it in the physical and primordial as opposed to acknowledging its connection to the immanent or transcendental. Indeed, insofar as courage is merely hope of avoiding hurt (pain) and anger merely “sudden courage,” righteous indignation (sudden courage for great hurt done to another) arises only from pain sensed (seen or felt) as opposed to, for instance, an *injustice* perceived. (More on this in Chapter 3).

Finally, and perhaps most important, at the end of Chapter Six Hobbes reduces the concept of will to merely a by-product of our appetites and aversions. Indeed, whereas weighing the different appetites we experience, that is, “the whole sum of desires, aversions, hopes, and fears, continued till the thing be either done or thought impossible,” amounts to the activity of “deliberation,” “the last appetite or aversion immediately adhering to the

action, or to the omission thereof, is that we call the Will, or the act of willing. (VI. 49-53) Simply put, Hobbes reduces the concept of voluntary action and the human capacity for choice—that which, according to Aquinas (and Aristotle before him) makes human beings able to resist or oppose their inclinations and passions—to merely a by-product of the passions. For Hobbes, it seems, human behavior is as determined or predictable as the behavior as animals or beasts that, according to him, also deliberate and therefore have wills.³⁴

Next, consider the intellectual virtues. In Chapter Eight, titled “Of the Virtues Commonly Called Intellectual, and their Contrary Defects,” Hobbes turns to the subject of intellectual virtue, again, discussing it only as it relates to and reflects our exclusively primordial condition—that is, as they stem from the diversity of passions men as primordial creatures exhibit.³⁵ According to Hobbes, virtue is simply good wit, which can be both natural and acquired (VII.1-2). It is natural, on the one hand, insofar as it is “gotten by use only, and experience without method, culture or instruction,” and acquired, on the other, insofar as it is instructed by method, and hence dependent above all on the “right use of

³⁴Consider, for instance, how Hobbes explains “What it is to be Free” in Chapter Twenty One, titled “Of the Liberty of Subjects.” According to Hobbes, liberty or freedom “signifieth (properly) the absence of opposition,” by which he means “external impediments.” As a result, man’s freedom consists in his ability to do that which he wills (on account of his inclinations and appetites) without impediment. In other words, man’s freedom, for Hobbes, has nothing to do with his being able to resist or regulate his appetites and passions—that is to say, man’s freedom has nothing to do with choice, as it does for Aristotle and Aquinas, following him. Rather, it has entirely to do with his being able to act on his appetites and passions. This is why liberty and necessity are, according to Hobbes, entirely consistent with one another: absent any external impediments, human beings are left free to act in accordance with what their appetites and passions necessitate; they are left free to act as creatures determined by their passions. Or as Hobbes himself explains: “liberty and necessity are consistent: as in the water, that hath not only liberty, but a necessity of descending by the channel, so likewise in the actions which men voluntarily do, which, because they proceed from their will, proceed from liberty, and yet, because every act of man’s will and every desire and inclinations proceedeth from some cause, and that from another cause in a continual chain, they proceed from necessity.” (XX.I)

³⁵That Hobbes discusses only the intellectual virtues, as opposed to Aristotle, who discusses moral and intellectual virtues is significant, and again, is indicative of his break with antiquity and the political science of the past.

speech.”³⁶ But again, according to Hobbes, the cause of this difference in wit is “the passions,” and as he explains, “the difference of passions proceedeth, partly from the different constitutions 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 less difference of men in their sight, hearing, or other sense, than in their fancies and discretions.”(VIII.14) Hence, while the passions stem, ultimately, from sense perceptions, the intellectual virtues stem from the passions—the most influential of which are, according to Hobbes: “the more or less desire for 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 several sorts of power.” (VIII.15) Taken to its logical conclusion, therefore, Hobbes’s discussion of both the passions and the intellectual virtues which, for him, accounts for the entirety of what motivates human beings, makes power and its derivative forms, *the key* to understanding the entirety of their actions.

That Hobbes, therefore, devotes an entire chapter to defining power as a concept—in effect, offering a laundry list of what in fact constitutes power—should come as no surprise. Titled “Of Power, Worth, Dignity, and Honour, and Worthiness” Hobbes begins by defining power in terms of means, to be used in order to achieve certain ends—in order to satisfy our appetites and desires. “The power of a man (to take it universally), writes Hobbes, “is his present means to obtain some future apparent good, and is either original or instrumental.” (X.1) By original, Hobbes actually means natural—that is to say, “the eminence of the faculties of body or mind” including “extraordinary strength, form, prudence, arts, eloquence, liberality, nobility.” (X.2) Alternatively, by instrumental he means

³⁶Hobbes’s distinction between natural and acquired wit, therefore, follows on the heels of what Machiavelli before him attributes to a prince proper, on the one hand—that is, a prince who learns by experience—and a prince who learns by instruction, on the other (Machiavelli himself versus Medici—the man Machiavelli is advising in the *Prince*). Furthermore, insofar as Hobbes desires to end war (in part by having *Leviathan* taught at the university level) he presumably prefers acquired to natural wit insofar as it is more conducive to peace.

“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.” (X.2) So it follows that the worth of a man derives specifically from his power. It is, writes Hobbes, his price, or that which might be “given for the use of his *power*.” (X.16) Hence, whereas dignity, or a man’s “public worth” amounts to the power of offices—offices of command, judicature, public employment, or by names and titles,” honour amounts merely to recognizing that *power*. (X.18-19) Finally, worthiness, which, for Hobbes is “different from the worth or value of a man,” consists of “a particular *power* or ability for that whereof he said to be worthy, usually named “Fitness or Aptitude.” (X.53) (Italics mine) In short, each of worth, dignity, honour, and worthiness are all inextricably linked and reduced to different forms of power (whether natural or instrumental) making any desire for them an extension of a larger and general desire for power on the part of human beings—what Hobbes, in the next chapter, terms “the general inclination of all mankind.”

By general inclination, Hobbes means a “perpetual and restless desire of power after power that ceaseth only in death,” and in Chapter Eleven, titled “Of Manners,” he explains why. The cause of this general inclination, according to Hobbes, is neither “hope for a more intensive delight” nor the fact that man “cannot be content” with a moderate amount of power. It is, rather, because “*he cannot assure the power and means to live well, which hath present without the acquisition of more.*” (XI.2) (Italics Mine) In other words, it is because man is predisposed (on account of his exclusively primordial condition) to pursue and acquire power pre-emptively—that is to say, to usurp power from others in order to protect and secure that of their own. Accordingly, the political result of such an inclination is a love of competition among men—competition, writes Hobbes, “for riches, honour, command, and other power,” all of which, inclineth them “to contention, enmity and war.” (XI.3) “The way of one competitor to the attaining of his desire is to kill, subdue, supplant, or repel the

other,” writes Hobbes. (XI.3) Simply put, insofar as men are in always in competition with one another—are by nature predisposed to becoming enemies—they are by nature predisposed to living in a state of war. Like Hobbes’s account of the passions and intellectual virtues, then, his account of manners, by which Hobbes does not mean “decency of behavior” (for decency is a value normative term that implies the existence of a *Summum Bonum*), but rather, “those qualities of mankind that concern their living together in peace and unity,” (XI.1) again, considers at what motivates human beings only from the perspective of the primordial: power.

From Chapters Six to Eleven and flowing directly from his primordialism, therefore, Hobbes offers a reductionist account of not only what motivates human beings but also how they behave as a result. In other words, in keeping with his discussion of thought in Chapter One, Hobbes discusses the passions only as they relate to and stem from the motions of matter around human beings—from what human beings sense—and at the same time, reduces the concept of the will to acting not against but in accordance with the last passion or inclination felt—ie. the strongest passion.³⁷ Similarly, in Chapter Eight, he discusses the intellectual virtues only as they are rooted primarily in the “divers” passions human beings exhibit. And finally, in Chapters Ten and Eleven, he first, inextricably links the concepts of honor, worth, and dignity, to the concept of power, so as to second, show that the human desire for them (mankind’s manners) is but a natural extension of the human desire for power more generally. As a result and as Leo Strauss observes, Hobbes’s “whole philosophy” it might be said, is “a philosophy of power,” rendering the entirety of politics or man’s political situation defined in terms of a struggle for it: a love for competition that engenders enmity and war.

³⁷As we shall see, Hobbes’s reduction of the will to acting on the last passion felt (ie. the strongest passion in the psyche) is of fundamental importance when it comes understanding his larger modern philosophical project, which relies on the assumption that the strongest passion in the minds of men is also the most peaceable: the fear of violent death.

The Natural Condition of Mankind

As we come to learn, however, competition is not the only reason why human beings are predisposed to living in a state of war. The other reasons, provided in Chapter Thirteen titled “Natural Condition of Mankind,” are diffidence and man’s pride or vanity—both of which, we learn, also stem from man’s general inclination for power. The most famous chapter in *Leviathan*, Chapter Thirteen reveals more clearly the political implications of Hobbes’s primordial and reductionist account of human behavior that precedes it. Specifically, it begins by making explicit a fundamental assumption his primordialism and the metaphysics from which it flows already implies: that men are by nature equal. As Hobbes explains: “Nature,” writes Hobbes, “hath made men so equal in the faculties of body and mind as that, though there be found one man sometimes manifestly stronger in body or of quicker mind than another, yet when all is reckoned together the difference between man and man is not so considerable as that one man thereupon claim to himself any benefit to which another may not pretend as well as he.” (XIII.1) For Hobbes, then, men are by nature equal—so much so that the inequalities of body and mind that might otherwise point to man’s natural inequality are but value-free distinctions that, in actuality, bear little weight in determining how human beings behave: “for as to the strength of body, the weakest has strength enough to kill the strongest, either by secret machination or by confederacy with others that are in the same dangers with himself.” (XIII.1) That Hobbes can argue as much, however, is dependent on his primordial understanding of human existence: given that all thought derives from sense—from the motions of matter around human beings—what would otherwise qualify as natural inequalities among men, are in fact only the result of having experienced different “motions of matter” as otherwise atomized individuals. In short, the natural equality of men that Hobbes explicitly acknowledges at the beginning of Chapter Thirteen is already implied in Chapter One.

And the same is true is for what comes next—that is, the equality of hope “in the attaining of our ends.” (XIII.3) In the same way that Hobbes’s primordialism enables him to unlock the secrets of human nature by looking, not to the objects of our passions but at the similitude of them, Hobbes’s assertion that human beings are by nature equal (an assertion that, as I have just pointed out, is dependent on his primordialism), enables him also to argue that from this equality “ariseth equality of hope in the attaining of our ends.” (XIII.3) In other words, it enables him to argue that from the equality of human beings arises the similitude of their passions—the equality of hope, desire, and fear. As a result, writes Hobbes, “if any two men desire the same thing, which nevertheless they cannot both enjoy, they become enemies; and in the way to their end, which is principally their own conservation, and sometimes their delectation only, endeavor to destroy or subdue one another.” (XIII.3) Put another way, if any two men desire the same *object* that they cannot both enjoy, they will become enemies on account of their passions.

Herein lays, then, the theoretical basis for what Hobbes labels a second cause of quarrel, namely diffidence. “In the nature of man,” writes Hobbes, “we find three principal causes of quarrel: first, competition; secondly, diffidence; thirdly, glory.” (XIII.6)³⁸ Whereas from the general inclination of mankind arises a love for competition, from the equality of man (already implied by his primordial condition) proceeds diffidence: “hence it comes to pass” writes Hobbes, “that, where an invader hath *no more to fear* than another man’s single power, if one plant, sow, build, or possess a convenient seat, others may probably be expected to prepared with forces united, to dispossess and deprive him, not only of the fruit of his labour, but also his life or liberty.” (XIII.3) (*Italics mine*) In other words, the general equality of human beings leads to a fear on the part of some towards others—namely, those

³⁸Important to note is that Hobbes’s “three principal causes of quarrel” almost directly parallel the three causes of war listed by the Athenian envoys at Sparta in Thucydides’ *History*: fear, self-interest, and honor. Moreover, in Hobbes’s translation of the *History*, he uses the word quarrel as opposed to war in that passage.

who are stronger—thereby compelling them to act. Or as Hobbes puts it: “from this diffidence of one another, there is no way for any man to secure himself so reasonable as anticipation, that is, by force or wiles to master the persons of all men he can, so long till he see no other power great enough to endanger him.” (XIII.4)

Herein also lays, then, the basis for what Hobbes labels the third cause of war: man’s pride or vanity. Indeed, in addition to what diffidence compels, Hobbes notes that some human beings also and at the same time take “pleasure in contemplating their own power in the acts of conquest, which they pursue farther than their security requires.” (XIII.4) For, according to Hobbes, “every man looketh that his companion should value him at the same rate he sets upon himself, and upon all signs of contempt, or undervaluing, natural endeavours, as far as he dares (which amongst them that have no common power to keep them in quiet, is far enough to make them destroy each other), to extort a greater value from his contemners, by damage, and from others, by the example.” (XIII. 5) As a result, insofar human beings are by nature insecure physically, they are also predisposed to constantly comparing themselves to others—that is to say, they are predisposed to constantly evaluating themselves in relation to those around them. The drive for external security, therefore, leads to a kind of internal insecurity: vanity. Accordingly, the general desire for power first discussed in Chapter Eleven leads not only to competition and diffidence (which makes human beings “invade for gain and for safety”), but also vanity or pride (glory), which makes human beings invade for “reputation.” (XIII.6-7)³⁹ As it turns out, man is not simply an animal but arrant wolf. On account of his desire for power, he is also vain.

³⁹As previously mentioned, in Chapter Ten Hobbes reduces the concept of honor and reputation to simply the recognition of power, making vanity and the desire for honor, merely another manifestation of the general desire for power—the desire to have one’s power recognized.

Taken together, then, the competition, diffidence, and pride or vanity that comes from man's natural state, and general desire for power after power, accounts for what in Chapter Thirteen, Hobbes describes as "The Natural Condition of Mankind"—a condition that, for all intents and purposes, represents the inevitable political outcome of Hobbes's primordial and reductionist account of the passions, intellectual virtues, manners and hence human behavior laid out in the chapters that precede it. As Hobbes explains:

Hereby it is manifest that during the time men live without a common power to keep them all in awe, they are in that condition which is called war, and such a war as is of every man against every man. For war consisteth not in battle only, or the act of fighting, but in a tract of time wherein the will to contend by battle is sufficiently known. And therefore, the notion of time is to be considered in the nature of war, as it is in the nature of weather. For as the nature of foul weather lieth not in a shower or two of rain, but in an inclination thereto of many days together, so the nature of war consisteth not in actual fighting, but in the known disposition thereto during all the time there is no assurance to the contrary. All other time is Peace. (XIII.8)

In other words, without a common power to keep men in awe, human beings find themselves, by nature, in a condition of war—that is, a condition in which every man is against every man and hence without trust—a precondition necessary for peace; for war, Hobbes tells us, is not simply defined by fighting. It is, rather, defined by specific mindset brought on by the physical and mental insecurity characteristic of human beings as exclusively primordial creatures. Whereas the primordialism that stems from Hobbes's metaphysics necessarily leads to the conclusion that man is by nature equal, Hobbes's reductionist account of what motivates human beings (his account of the passions), leads to the conclusion that the natural condition of mankind is one of war. Insofar as the passions can be understood only as they relate to what human beings sense, and hence what man's primordial necessity dictates, they lead to competition, diffidence, and a desire for glory, and for more power than his fellow men—a condition, Hobbes tells us, in which there is not only no trust, but nothing that would otherwise rely on it. As Hobbes puts it:

In such a 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, continual fear and danger of violent death, and the life of man, solitary, poor, nasty, brutish, and short. (XIII.9)

Simply put, absent a commonwealth or common power, man finds himself in a world of characterized by radical individualism and anxiety. The fruits of peace that stand in opposition to both—that is, of civilization (including industry, culture, navigation, commodious building, technology, knowledge, time, art, letters, and society itself)—do not, by nature (*physis*) exist, insofar as they are entirely dependent on security or convention (*nomos*). As he puts it in the introduction to *De Cive*, without order, “man is to man an arrant wolf.” His predicament is therefore one determined by anxiety and fear, making his condition one devoid of trust, wealth or luxury, mercy or pity, and time. Without a commonwealth, he is, for all intents and purposes, beastlike. Hobbes’s primordialism and reductionism, therefore, leads to a pessimistic and deterministic account of human nature—pessimistic given man’s egoism and selfish nature (his being governed entirely by his passions) and deterministic given his general inclination: his desire for power that so determines what motivates the entirety of his behavior, whether it be invading for gain, safety, or honor. In other words and as stated at the beginning of this Chapter, Hobbes’s understanding of human nature is pessimistic and deterministic insofar as human beings, for him, are governed entirely by their passions—the similitude of which makes them, in general, power seeking tyrants.

Hobbes’s Unnatural Solution

As was also mentioned, however, Hobbes advances such an understanding for a very specific reason. In the conclusion of *Leviathan*, he laments the loss of his “honored friend, Mr. Sidney Godolphin, who, hating no man, nor hated of any, was unfortunately slain in the beginning of the late civil war, in the public quarrel, by an undiscerned and an undiscerning hand.” (Conclusion and Review, 5.) In so doing, however, he also reveals the

purpose or end of *Leviathan* as a work: “occasioned by the disorders of the present time” that is, “the late civil war” already alluded to, his “Discourse of Civil and Ecclesiastical Government,” his *Leviathan*, is intended to “set before men’s eyes the mutual relation between protection and obedience, of which the condition of human nature and the laws divine require an inviolable observation.” (Conclusion and Review, 6). Simply put, his *Leviathan* and hence modern philosophical project is intended to serve as a remedy for the disorders not only of the present time but of war in general—that natural condition of mankind—by reminding men of the essential relationship between security and obedience that peace requires. As pessimistic and deterministic as his view of human nature might seem, therefore, it ultimately serves as a carefully crafted support for an otherwise ambitious and hopeful, modern philosophical project. Put another way, Hobbes’s ambition in *Leviathan* is to provide his readers with an unnatural solution to what he presents as the natural problem of mankind: war. Alas, although his view of human nature is, on the surface, apolitical and even amoral, he himself remains political and moral in his intention.⁴⁰ The natural condition of mankind, for Hobbes, is not simply amoral; it is rather immoral insofar as it is problematic and in need of a remedy or solution.⁴¹

Similar to Bacon, then, who, in *Novum Organum* writes that there is “much ground for hoping that there are still laid up in the womb of nature many secrets of excellent use,” and that, “by the method of which we are now treating they can be speedily and suddenly and

⁴⁰As Strauss explains in *Natural Right and History*, “Hobbes joins the epicurean tradition” insofar as “he accepts its view that man is by nature or originally an apolitical and even a-social animal, as well as its premise that the good is fundamentally identical with the pleasant. But he uses that a-political view for a political purpose. He gives that a-political view a political meaning. He tries to instill the spirit of political idealism into the hedonistic tradition.” (p.169) Or as he puts it in *The Political Philosophy of Hobbes*: “Hobbes’s political philosophy rests not on the illusion of an amoral morality, but on a new morality, or to speak according to Hobbes’s intention, on a new grounding of the one eternal morality.” (p. 15)

⁴¹This is why, as Strauss notes, Hobbes tries as much as possible to downplay vanity as the natural appetite of human beings until the very end of Part One: “Hobbes puts vanity more and more into the background in favor of innocent competition, innocent striving after power, innocent animal appetite, because the definition of man’s natural appetite in terms of vanity is intended as a moral judgment.” (*The Political Philosophy of Hobbes*, p. 14)

simultaneously presented and anticipated,” Hobbes suggests in the introduction to *Leviathan* that the nature of man, like nature herself, is also knowable making it possible to design and build a commonwealth for the purpose of relieving men from the “sickness” of “sedition” and “civil war,” in the same way that Bacon thinks it possible to relieve man of his “estate.”⁴² As Hobbes explains in the Introduction:

Nature (the art whereby God hath made and governs the world) is by the art of man, as in many other things, so in this also imitated, that it can make an artificial animal. For seeing life is but a motion of limbs, the beginning whereof is in some principal part within, why may we not say that all automata (engines that move themselves by springs and wheels as doth a watch) have an artificial life? For what is the heart, but a spring; and the nerves, but so many strings; and the joints, but so many wheels, giving motion to the whole body, such as was intended by the artificer? Art goes yet further, imitating that rational and most excellent work of nature, man. For by art is created that great Leviathan called a Commonwealth or State which is but an artificial man, though of greater stature and strength than the natural, for whose protection and defence it was intended. (Introduction, 1)

Hobbes’s pessimistic and deterministic account of human nature, then, is not, to be sure, for naught; it also makes man a machine and hence life and politics predictable. Just as life in general is but a movement of limbs i.e. matter in motion, so too is the life of man in particular. Like all automata—that is, engines or clocks which are composed of component parts that, together, give motion to them—so human beings are composed of hearts, nerves, and joints that give motion to their bodies (in other words, determine their behavior). Moreover, by imitating the automaton that is man (that most rational and excellent work of nature), man himself can create that great Leviathan called a commonwealth or state, “for whose protection and defense it was intended.” Having rooted, in the most literal sense of the term, all human thought in sense, Hobbes’s primordialism lays the metaphysical groundwork necessary for unlocking the secrets of a human nature that, like nature herself, can be conquered and in being conquered, relieve man of his natural condition. That man is by nature beastlike, it turns out, is precisely what enables him to be by convention godlike.

⁴²Francis Bacon, *Novum Organum*, edited by Fulton H. Anderson (New York: The Liberal Arts Press), XCVIII.

Important to recognize, then, is that Hobbes already plants the seeds for his unnatural solution to the natural condition of mankind (the focus of Part Two of *Leviathan*) in Part One. As previously discussed, in Chapter Eleven Hobbes argues that men are naturally inclined to seek power, which, as we later find out in Chapter Thirteen, engenders not only a love of competition, but diffidence and a desire for glory among men making their natural condition one of war. Also mentioned in Chapter Eleven, however, and in contradistinction to man's desire for power after power that, according to Hobbes "ceaseth only in death," are a number of other passions that inclineth men to seek peace. These include: the "desire of ease" and "sensual delight," (XI.4); the "desire of knowledge" (XI.5) and the "fear of oppression," (XI.9) all of which either "disposeth men to obey a common power" (XI.5) or at least "disposeth a man to anticipate or to seek aid by society; for there is no other way by which a man can secure his life and liberty." (XI.6) In short, although Hobbes provides his readers with an account of human nature that inevitably leads to a war of all against all, it also contains within it the seeds for escape. The passions that, as we have seen, make human nature and the natural condition of mankind at once pessimistic and determined, at the same time and paradoxically make it possible for Hobbes to pursue an optimistic modern philosophical project. Again, and as Hobbes puts it at the end of Chapter Thirteen: "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." (XIII.14)

Ultimately, however, and as we later find out, it is the fear of death (and more specifically the fear of violent death), and not the desire for knowledge or sensual delight that, at the end of the day, inclines human beings towards peace. Indeed, that reason "suggesteth convenient articles of peace, upon which men may be drawn to agreement" is actually and almost irrelevant. According to Hobbes, in addition "to the passions that incline men to peace" are a number of "convenient articles of peace, upon which men may be

drawn to agreement.” (XIII.14) By convenient articles, Hobbes actually means “Laws of Nature” which are precepts or general rules “found out by reason by which a man is forbidden to do that which is destructive of his life or taketh away the means of preserving the same.” (XIV.3) Among these laws include first, the notion that “everyman ought to endeavor peace, as far as he has hope of attaining it, and when he cannot obtain it, that he may seek and use all helps and advantages of war;” and second; the notion “that a man be willing, when others are so too as far-forth as for peace and defense of himself he shall think it necessary, to lay down this right to all things, and be contented with so much liberty against other men, as he would allow other men against himself.” (XIV.4-XIV.5) Finally and also included among these laws are a host other ones, all of which and in essence call for human beings to renounce their pride or vanity—their general inclination for power—and instead “perform their covenants made,” “strive to accommodate” others, “pardon the offences past of them,” and refrain from declaring “hatred or contempt of another,” etc. (XV.1, XV.17, XV.18, XV.20) But as Hobbes later notes, such laws are in and of themselves meaningless without a power to enforce them. As he explains in Chapter Seventeen: “For the laws of Nature (as justice, equity, modesty, mercy, and (in sum) doing to other as we would be done to) of themselves, without the terror of some power to cause them to be observed, are contrary to natural passions, that carry use to partiality, pride, revenge, and the like.” (XVII.2) As a result, peace will have to rely on something more persuasive than natural laws and the reason from which they derive; it will have to rely on something that does carry with it the power to compel and make men obey.

According to Hobbes, and as briefly mentioned above, that something is none other than fear and more specifically, the fear of violent death. “The passion to be reckoned upon,” he writes, “is fear; whereof there be two very general objects: one, the power of spirits invisible; the other, the power of those men they shall therein offend. Of these two, though

the former be the greater power, yet the fear of the later is commonly the greater fear.” (XIV.31) That Hobbes first acknowledges the fear of “spirits invisible” is significant. In Chapter Twelve, titled “On Religion,” Hobbes discusses the seeds of religion, which include the human desire to know and the desire for human beings more specifically to look for causes. Taken together, writes Hobbes, these two seeds make for a state of mental “anxiety” (XII.5)—“a perpetual fear of things to come” that, “always accompanying mankind in the ignorance of causes (as it were in the dark) must needs have for object something.” (XII.6) That something, he goes on to explain, is none other than God himself; for he who “plunges himself profoundly into the pursuit of causes, shall at last come tom this: that there must be one mover...that which men mean by the name of God.” (XII.6) For Hobbes, however (and insofar as he roots all thought in sense) the concept of an unmoved mover or higher power such as God is inconceivable. “Whatsoever we imagine is finite. Therefore there is no idea or conception of anything we call infinite,” he writes in Chapter Three. (III.12) As a result, although Hobbes claims that the power of spirits invisible is “the greater power,” it is, at the same time and at the end of the day incomprehensible, making man’s fear of it wholly irrational and contrary to the dictates of reason and articles of peace listed above—that is, unless it can be used in a way to supplement the second object of “greater fear,” namely, the power of “those men” human beings “therein shall offend.”

Accordingly, in Parts Three and Four of *Leviathan*, Hobbes attempts to reconcile the former with the latter by grounding the literally insensible object of “irrational” fear that is God and invisible spirits discussed in Chapter Twelve, in the sensible object of rational fear that, as we come to learn, is the power of men in Chapter Thirteen: the fear of violent death. As Hobbes explains: “There dependeth much upon supernatural revelations of the will of God...Nevertheless, we are not to renounce our senses and experience, nor (that which is the undoubted word of God) our natural reason...For though there be many things in God’s

word above reason (that is to say, which cannot by natural reason be either demonstrated or confuted), yet there is nothing contrary to it. (XXXIII.2) So it follows that, although the “irrational” fear of God and invisible spirits discussed in Chapter Twelve derives from that which is seemingly “above reason,” it does not, at the end of the day, stand in opposition or contrary to the rational and greater fear of those we offend, implied in Chapter Thirteen. Rightly understood, the otherwise irrational fear of God—of that *Summum Bonum*—is the *rational fear of violent death*—of that *Summum Malum*. As a result and as Leo Strauss observes, “the antithesis from which Hobbes’s political philosophy starts is thus the antithesis between vanity as the root on natural appetite one the one hand, and on the other, fear of violent death as the passion which brings man reason.”⁴³ Through the rational fear of violent death, human beings can be brought to obey the articles of peace or laws of nature that reason, according to Hobbes, “suggesteth.”

So it also follows, then, that the insensible object of “irrational” hope that is eternal life in heaven is, rightly understood and in actuality, the sensible object of “rational” hope that is temporal life on earth—a hope that, as Hobbes tells us, can only be satisfied by the institution of a visible power to keep men “in awe, and tie them by fear of punishment to the performance of their covenants and observation of those laws of nature,” listed above. (XVII.1) Hence, in order to save his fellow Englishmen from the “disorders of the present time” and mankind from that miserable condition of war, Hobbes, in Chapter Seventeen recommends instituting just this: “that great Leviathan, or rather (to speak more reverently) of that Mortal God to which we owe, under the Immortal God, our peace and defense.” (XVII.13) To do so, it will require that human beings consent to give up their natural right to kill and subdue each other, and submit their “wills to his will and their judgments, to his judgment.” (XVII.13) To guarantee as much, however, it will ultimately

⁴³Strauss, *The Political Philosophy of Hobbes*, 18.

require that they fear for their lives. As Hobbes explains in Chapter Twenty, titled “Of Dominion Paternal and Despotical,” there are two kinds of commonwealths: commonwealths by acquisition and commonwealths by institution. Whereas the former comes into being when “men singly (or many together by plurality of voices) for fear of death or bonds authorize all the actions of that man or assemble that hath their lives and liberty in his power,” (XX.1) the latter comes into being when “men who choose their sovereign do it for fear of one another.” (XX.2) Important to note, then, is that “in both cases they do it for fear.” (XX.2). Satisfying the rational hope for peace and life on earth—that is, saving men from the miserable condition of war—it turns out, is wholly dependent on the rational fear of violent death.

Accordingly, that human beings are by nature beastlike and mechanistic is not, for Hobbes, necessarily a bad thing; for the passions that so determine their warlike or wolfish behavior at the same time offer them hope: just as the similitude and consistency of the passions make the natural condition of mankind one of war, so they make the goal of a lasting peace possible. As pessimistic and deterministic as Hobbes’s account of human nature may be, then, it is crafted specifically to support what is otherwise a very hopeful, modern philosophical project. By unlocking the secrets of a human nature determined by passion, Hobbes can transform what he argues is beastlike by nature into something godlike by convention: insofar as human beings can be made to fear death and obey the *Leviathan* as opposed to fearing and obeying God, they can become, for all intents and purposes, godlike on earth without having to wait for eternal life after death in heaven. Again, as Hobbes explains the introduction to *De Cive*, when taken together, the sayings of both Cato and Marcus Tullius reveal the truth about the human predicament: “*That man to man is a kind of God,*” on the one hand, and that “*man to man is an arrant wolf,*” on the other. (DC, Dedication) “The first is true, writes Hobbes, “if we compare citizens amongst themselves;

and the second, if we compare cities. In the one, there is some analogy of similitude with the Deity; to wit, justice and charity, the twin sisters of peace. But in the other, good men must defend themselves by taking to them for a sanctuary the two daughters of war, deceit and violence: that is, in plain terms, a mere brutal rapacity.” (*DC*, Dedication) Simply put, man is to man either beastlike or godlike—godlike within a state and beastlike without it.

Summary

As I stated at the beginning, my aim in this chapter has been twofold: first, to explain and summarize Hobbes’ understanding of human nature as outlined in his most mature and famous work, *Leviathan*; and second, to show how that understanding not only informs, but makes possible his larger political project. As I have tried to show, due to his primordialism and reductionism, Hobbes puts forward and relies on a pessimistic and deterministic (mechanistic) account of human nature that, on the one hand, assumes men are governed entirely by their passions—that is to say, are by nature selfish, egoistic, and driven by a desire for power and honour that, according to Hobbes, “ceaseth only in death”—but that, on the other hand and at the same time, also assumes men can be made rational insofar as certain passions, most notably fear of violent death, “inclineth them towards peace.” As I have also tried to show, however, he does so for a good reason: such an account of human nature not only informs but makes possible Hobbes’s entire modern philosophical project—that is to say, it serves as a carefully crafted support for Hobbes’s main goal—to save mankind from “that miserable condition of war.” Indeed, by focusing on the similitude of passions, Hobbes is able to single out certain passions, including, fear and the fear of violent death as the most persuasive in the human psyche, basing his entire prescription for peace on it. In short, by assuming the worst about the nature of man and his natural condition (war), Hobbes hopes for the best in terms of convention (peace). Or as Hobbes puts it in Chapter 28 of *Leviathan*: “Hitherto set forth the nature of man, whose pride and other

passions have compelled him to submit himself to government, together the great power of his governor, whom I compared to Leviathan, taking that comparison out of the two last verses of the one and fortieth of Job, where God, having forth the great power of Leviathan, calleth him King of the Proud." (XXVIII.27) Upon setting forth, in other words, the nature of man, whose pride and passions make him by nature an arrant wolf or beastlike, Hobbes has also shown how such passions compel him to be godlike.

Chapter 2

Thucydides on Human Nature

Now then, states lay down the death penalty for many things...Men take on the risk nevertheless, led on by their hopes. This means that either something still more frightening must be discovered or there is this, which is no restraint at all.

-Diodotus, 3.45

At first, Thucydides seems to have an equally pessimistic and deterministic view of human nature. And for good reason: like Hobbes, he too seems to suggest that human beings are governed not by reason but entirely by passion (motivated, as those Athenian envoys at Sparta tell us, primarily by fear, self-interest, and honor (1.75)), and, like Hobbes, he too seems to think that human nature is constant and hence knowable. Or as he himself tells us: “both past events and those that at some future time, *in accordance with human nature, will recur in similar or comparable ways* (1.22) (Italics mine). As a result, given Hobbes’s self-professed admiration for Thucydides and given especially the latter’s influence on Hobbes’s work, it seems reasonable, at first, to conclude that the two more or less agree on the question of human nature—that Hobbes in effect found in Thucydides precisely what he describes as both the nature and natural condition of man in the first part *Leviathan*.⁴⁴

In this chapter, however, I challenge this too frequently assumed conclusion and instead argue to the contrary—namely, that Thucydides’ understanding of human nature, despite being also and in some ways more pessimistic, is nonetheless different from that of Hobbes and in a fundamental way. First, I examine those passages that are often said to directly inform Hobbes’s understanding of human nature in *Leviathan* in an effort to point out that, despite providing an interpretation of human nature that is, undoubtedly

⁴⁴As discussed in the introduction, many scholars either explicitly or implicitly argue as much. Among international relations scholars, for instance, are Hans J. Morgenthau, Kenneth Waltz and John J. Mearsheimer. Alternatively, among political theorists are Clifford W. Brown Jr.; George Klosko and Daryl Rice; Michael Palmer; and Marc Cogan.

pessimistic, the behavior of individuals in them does not simply coincide with nor confirm Hobbesian assumptions about the nature of human beings. These include The Plague at Athens and the Civil War at Corcyra. Next, I turn to another passage, The Mytilenean Debate, in order to explain why. Essentially, I argue that in this passage, Thucydides provides us with another, implicit teaching on human nature that stands in opposition to that of Hobbes—one that, as we shall see, argues that the fear of violent death *is not* the most powerful passion in the human psyche and that human beings, despite being governed primarily by passion, are nonetheless open to reason (and not simply as reckoning or rationality). In other words, I argue that, unlike Hobbes, Thucydides does not believe that passion determines human behavior or that human nature is, in essence, mechanistic. Finally, I turn to Pericles' Funeral Oration in order to show how for Thucydides, unlike Hobbes, human beings are motivated by both necessity *and* a genuine concern for justice—that is to say, by primordial passions *and* transcendental longings. They are, to be sure, more than mere machines, exhibiting what Hobbes reduces to calculable behavior; they are human beings with disordered souls characterized, in essence, by a tension between what necessity or the primordial imposes on them, on the one hand, and what their desire for justice or the transcendental asks of them, on the other.

Pathways To Conflation: The Plague at Athens and The Civil War in Corcyra

To begin, let us first examine those passages that are said to most closely parallel and inform Hobbes's account of human nature in *Leviathan* and that, as a result, have led many to wrongly conflate Thucydides with Hobbes on the question of human nature. The first is what has come to be known as the Plague at Athens—a passage in which Thucydides describes the disturbing effects of a mysterious disease that broke out in Athens during the summer of 430, killing as many as one third of the city's inhabitants.⁴⁵ According to

⁴⁵Donald Kagan, *The Reinvention of History* (New York: Penguin Books, 2009), 81.

Thucydides, it “first attacked the people in the Peiraeus,” the port of Athens, leading some citizens to conclude that the Spartans had “put poison in the wells.” (2.48) Unlike poison, however, the plague spread like a disease, reaching the “upper city as well” and causing “many more to die.”⁴⁶ (2.48) Not only, he tells us, did the disease infect the minds and bodies of Athenian citizens but the Athenian body politic, bringing death to the former and lawlessness to the latter. As a passage, therefore, the Plague is about the breakdown of moral and political order, making it, in effect, a passage that Hobbes (given the nature of his modern philosophical project) would have paid close attention to; for, as we shall see, not only does it seem to confirm his understanding of human nature (as Cogan among others have noted) but in so doing his description of the natural condition of mankind as well—that is, as a war of all against all.

At the beginning of the passage, Thucydides describes the plague’s effect on human beings—that is, its symptoms both physical and mental, as well as the futility of trying to treat them. The physical symptoms were horrific: people were first “afflicted” by a high fever, redness, and burning in the eyes. “Internally,” he goes on to say, they suffered from a bloody tongue and throat, which made for “foul-smelling breath.” Next, “sneezing and hoarseness ensued” resulting in a “violent cough” and “violent convulsions.” Finally, he writes, they developed small blisters and sores, while a “burning” grew inside their bodies. In sum, he tells us, while “the illness first settled in the head...beginning at the top,” it eventually made its way “through the entire body,” all the way to the bottom: “the toes.” (2.49)

Mentally, the symptoms were (and according to Thucydides) even more disturbing. “What was *most terrible*” he writes, “in the whole affliction was the despair when someone

⁴⁶In a later passage, Thucydides notes that “no fewer than four thousand four hundred from the hoplite ranks and three hundred cavalymen died, and an untold number of the general population.” (3.87)

realized he was sick.” (2.51) (Italics mine) By despair, of course, Thucydides means a loss of hope—a spiritual as opposed to physical symptom causing the soul along side the body to atrophy and decay. Or as he himself puts it: “for immediately forming the judgment that there was *no hope*, they tended much more to give themselves up instead of holding out...and the fact that from tending one another they died like a flock of sheep; this brought on the most destruction.” (Italics mine) (2.51)

Finally, when it came to treating the disease, Thucydides tells us that attempts were as futile as the symptoms were destructive. “In the first place” he writes, doctors, who treated it in ignorance, had no effect (being themselves the ones who died in proportion to having the most contact with it), nor did any other human agency, and their supplications at sanctuaries and recourse to prophecies and the like were all of no avail. In the end, they abandoned these, vanquished by the disaster.” (2.48) In other words, neither medicine nor prayer proved effective when it came to treating it. Those who prescribed failed, and those prophesized were proven wrong leading both to abandon, again, any hope of mitigating its disastrous effects. In short, writes Thucydides, “the nature of the plague, as an occurrence beyond all accounting, not only in other respects affected each person more harshly than is humanly bearable...” (2.50)

Not only was the plague unbearable from a human standpoint, however; we also learn that it affected each citizen more harshly than was both *politically and morally bearable* as well. Following his description of its effect on the mind and body, Thucydides proceeds to describe its effect on the body politic. Indeed, beyond bringing death and despair to thousands, the plague brought disorder to the polis sparking the breakdown of moral and political order on a scale previously unknown to Athens. As Thucydides explains:

In other matters as well, the plague was the starting point for greater lawlessness in the city. Everyone was ready to be bolder about activities they had previously enjoyed only in secret, since they saw the sudden change for both those who were prosperous and suddenly died and for those who previously owned nothing but immediately got their

property. And so they thought it appropriate to use what they had quickly and with a view to enjoyment, considering their persons and their possessions equally ephemeral. No one was enthusiastic over additional hardship for what seemed a noble objection, considering it uncertain whether he die before achieving it. Whatever was pleasant immediately and whatever was conducive to that were deemed both noble and useful. Neither fear of the gods nor law of man was a deterrent, since it was judged all the same whether they were pious or not because of seeing everyone dying with no difference, and since no one anticipated that he would live till trial and pay the penalty for his crimes, but that the much greater penalty which had already been pronounced was hanging over them, and it was reasonable to get some satisfaction from life before that descended. (2.53)

In addition to claiming the lives of thousands, then, the plague claimed civility itself. First, Thucydides tells us, came the death of moderation: people became bolder on account of the fact that the rich died while the poor prospered. Next, came the death of the noble, and connected to that, the honorable: people became unwilling to act on behalf of “noble objections”—that is, unwilling to do what would have previously been considered honorable—opting to do instead what was pleasurable or useful. Finally, came the death of both human and divine law: in the same way that both medicine and prayers failed to treat the sick, both the constitution and the gods ceased to function as deterrents against crime. In short, transcendental concerns for piety and justice fell victim to primordial desires and the imposition of necessity. Mere life, and satisfying what was necessary for it, eclipsed any concern for that of the good.

What Thucydides, therefore, describes in terms of how human beings behave when confronted by the prospect of violent death from disease during the plague—that is, when brought down to the level of primordial necessity—seems to inform (if not directly parallels) Hobbes’s description of how men behave in the state of nature. Indeed, although different in content from the “natural condition of mankind,” the plague as a passage reveals to us, in many ways, the same interpretation of human nature put forth by Hobbes in *Leviathan*. Whereas during the plague, people became “bolder” in their actions (a boldness that, according to Thucydides, arose from the realization that all men, rich and poor, found themselves equally subject to disease—that is to say, found themselves *equal before the*

prospect of death), human beings in the state of nature are bold by definition; for as Hobbes tells us, they too are, in essence, equal before death (equal in the capacity to kill one another) and, as a result, equal in the hope of attaining certain ends. (XIII.3). Furthermore, whereas during the plague, people abandoned the pursuit of virtue and honor in order to pursue the useful and pleasant, men in the state of nature, according to Hobbes, pursue not only what is useful—security—but, in addition and by “contemplating their own power in the acts of conquest,” what is “farther than their security requires:” what is pleasant. (XIII.4) Finally, whereas during the plague, both human and divine law ceased to deter crime rendering nothing unjust, in the natural condition of mankind, writes Hobbes, “the notions of right and wrong, justice and injustice, there have no place.” (XIII.13) In short, the plague as a passage reinforces Hobbes’s theoretical construct as a historical case study lending support to his interpretation of human nature in part one of *Leviathan*. Faced with the prospect of dying and absent any order in terms either human or divine law, the behavior of otherwise civilized democrats devolved into that power seeking, egoistical tyrants.

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Another passage, however, that is frequently taken to support Hobbes’s understanding and description of human nature in *Leviathan* is the Civil War at Corcyra. As a passage that, like the Plague at Athens, also highlights the breakdown of moral and political order, it too qualifies as a passage that Hobbes undoubtedly paid close attention to; for it deals with Hobbes’s chief concern as a philosopher—that is, civil as opposed to foreign war, or the dissolution of peace inside as opposed to outside the *polis* (the dissolution of the commonwealth).⁴⁷ As W. Robert Connor observes, “Corcyra’s political anarchy readily symbolizes a moral anarchy. Now all the conventions of Greek life—promises, oaths,

⁴⁷In Edwin Curley’s edition of the *Leviathan*, for instance, Curley makes a footnote in Chapter Thirteen, stating that “Hobbes may be thinking of Thucydides’ description of the civil war in Corcyra, though his account of the anarchy resulting from the plague in Athens is also pertinent.” (p.77)

supplication, obligations to kin and benefactor and even that ultimate convention, language itself—give way. It is Hobbes' *bellum omium*."⁴⁸ In short, it too seems to function as a historical case study for what Hobbes, in *Leviathan*, describes in theory as the natural condition of mankind.

Although particular in content, as a passage the Civil War at Corcyra is intended to convey the nature of civil war in general—or as Thucydides puts it: the “kind of viciousness” that, “on account of the civil wars,” “was established” in the Hellenic world as a whole. (3.83) Hence, in the same way that the plague first attacked people in the port of Athens, spreading only later to the upper city, the phenomenon of civil war (that human plague, as Strauss calls it) first broke out in Corcyra, spreading only later to “the rest of Hellas.” (3.82) Furthermore, like the plague, which, according to Thucydides, originated in Ethiopia and migrated north, the civil war in Corcyra began only upon the arrival of a group of prisoners from Epidamnos who had migrated south. (3.70) Simply put, both occur as a result of the migration of foreign bodies, whether human or non-human, into a new environment.

In keeping with his account of the plague, then, Thucydides begins his account of the civil war at Corcyra in much the same way—that is, by describing first its human and then its political symptoms. Having been again, brought down to the level of primordial necessity—having been tossed into a state of insecurity and anarchy—people became bolder in both speech and action; moderation gave way to extremism. As Thucydides explains:

So the condition of cities was civil war, and where it came later, awareness of earlier events pushed to extremes the revolution in thinking...In self-justification men inverted the usual verbal evaluations of actions. Irrational recklessness was now considered courageous commitment, hesitation while looking to the future was high-styled cowardice, moderation was a cover for manhood, and circumspection meant inaction, while senseless anger now helped to define a true man, and deliberation for security was a specious excuse for dereliction. The man of violent temper was always credible, anyone opposing him was suspect. The intriguer who succeeded was intelligent, anyone

⁴⁸W. Robert Connor, *Thucydides* (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1984), 99.

who detected a plot was still more clever, but a man who made provisions to avoid both alternatives was undermining his party and letting the opposition terrorize him.

In short, just as the inversion of status among the rich and poor ushered in the death of moderation during the plague, the inversion of “usual verbal evaluations” ushered in the death of moderation during the civil war at Corcyra: To be rash became courageous, to exercise caution became a sign of cowardice, to follow moderation became a sign of weakness, and to exhibit spirited anger became magnanimous. As a result, while “the leading men in the cities,” writes Thucydides, “through their emphasis on an attractive slogan for each side—political equality for the masses, the moderation of aristocracy—treated as their prize the public interest to which they paid lip service and, competing by every means to get the better of one another, boldly committed atrocities and proceeded to still worse acts of revenge, stopping at limits set by neither justice nor the city’s interest but by the gratification of their parties at every stage.....the citizens in the middle,” he goes on to explain, “either because they had not taken sides or because begrudged their survival, were destroyed by both factions.” (3.82) In other words, the “leading men” opted for violent and extreme rhetoric as a means to ensure their respective side’s victory, while those who refrained were destroyed in the process.

The end result was, again, the failure of either human or divine law to deter crime. According to Thucydides, people “strengthened their trust in one another less by religious law than by association in committing some illegal act,” and as a result “one was praised for outracing everyone else to commit a crime—and for encouraging a crime by someone who had never before considered one.” Neither side, therefore, “acted with piety.” (3.82) As Thucydides tells us: “There was no secure principle, no oath that was feared, but those who were strong, in contemplation of the impossibility of security, all took measure to avoid suffering rather than allowing themselves to feel trust.” (3.83)

Like in his account of plague, then, Thucydides' account of the civil war at Corcyra presents us as readers with the chaos that ensues when there is no common power present "to keep men in awe." To be sure, Thucydides makes no mention of "industry" or economic activity, "culture," or "navigation," not to mention "commodious building" and "art." In short, there is no description of what Hobbes calls society; there is only a description of the nasty and brutish behavior of individuals who, out of anxiety sought power for security and out of fear, tended to avoid one another. Or as Thucydides himself tells us: "in contemplation of the impossibility of security, all took measure to avoid suffering than allowing themselves to feel trust." (3.83) Furthermore, like during the plague, where inequalities among citizens in terms of wealth and stature faded as citizens began to realize that they were equally subject to death and disease—that is to say, equal in their mortality—during the civil war at Corcyra we learn that inequalities among citizens in terms of intellect also faded. As Thucydides explains: "The weaker intellect were more often the survivors; out of fear of their deficiency and their enemies' craft, lest they be defeated in debate and become the first victims of plots as a result others' resourceful intellects, they went straight into action." (3.83) Thucydides' account of the civil war at Corcyra therefore also seems to support Hobbes's assertion that human beings are by nature equal in Chapter Thirteen of *Leviathan*. Finally (and perhaps most important to note), is Thucydides' brief description of "universal laws" at the end of the passage—laws, he tells us, "that offer hope of salvation to all in adversity." (3.84) According to Thucydides, despite their apparent existence even they fail to rein in human nature; for, "men see fit to do away with [such laws] at the outset in taking revenge instead of letting them stand until they actually run into danger and find need of them." (3.84) Like Hobbes's "natural laws" in Chapters Fourteen and Fifteen of *Leviathan*, then (which also happen to offer hope of salvation to all in adversity), the universal laws to

which Thucydides refers are also powerless against human nature; laid bare, human nature stands in opposition to them.⁴⁹

When taken together, then, the Plague at Athens and the Civil War at Corcyra seem to confirm that, Thucydides like Hobbes, has a pessimistic and deterministic view of human nature—pessimistic given the selfish and egoistic behavior typical of those he describes, and deterministic insofar as they appear to be governed entirely by passion and a general desire for power. It would seem, therefore, that both passages confirm what is, for better or worse, conventional wisdom regarding the philosophical relationship between Thucydides and Hobbes—namely, that Hobbes, on account of his self-professed admiration for Thucydides, derived his understanding of human nature from reading the latter's work, using it to inform his modern philosophical project. Again, as Cogan argues in *The Human Thing*: "That Thomas Hobbes should have found Thucydides congenial enough to warrant translation is hardly surprising. The two share an almost identical view of the nature of mankind, of its motives, of the origin of those motives, and of the usual result when this nature is allow a free reign to operate."⁵⁰

The Plague at Athens and The Civil War at Corcyra Reconsidered

As we shall now consider, however, a closer reading of the same passages nevertheless reveals that there remains a fundamental difference between Hobbes's account of human nature in *Leviathan* and that of Thucydides in the *History*. As shown above, on the surface passages such the Plague at Athens and Civil war at Corcyra seem to confirm that Thucydides has a similar if not the same interpretation of human nature as Hobbes. It is important to note, however, that Thucydides' description of human behavior

⁴⁹Consider, for instance, Chapter Seventeen, titled "Of the Causes, Generation, and Definition of a Commonwealth," in which Hobbes states that "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." (XVII.2)

⁵⁰Cogan, *The Human Thing*, 187.

during the plague and civil war is not simply interchangeable with Hobbes's description of human behavior in his state of nature—that is, the “natural condition of mankind.” Indeed, although Athens during the plague, like Hobbes's state of nature, found itself without order (both moral or political, human and divine)—that is to say, although Athens found itself, for all intents and purposes, in a state of war or anarchy—compassion and pity, a commitment to virtue and honor, and a sincere desire for justice among Athenians did not simply vanish or atrophy. Likewise, although the civil war in Corcyra brought people down to the level of primordial necessity, the Corcyreans did not simply forget about justice despite acting in otherwise egoistical and self-interested ways.

Consider first, Thucydides' description of the plague. Not only does he describe the death of hope and moderation—and along with them, human and divine law—but, at the same time, a stubborn commitment on the part of some, despite this situation, to honor and virtue—to the noble. While “some died in neglect” others died having been “given a great deal of attention,” he writes, and while certain people were “unwilling in their fear to approach” others, there were also those did “draw near” and died on account of “making some claim to virtue;” for, “out of honor,” he tells us, “they did not spare themselves in visiting friends.” (2.51)⁵¹ Furthermore, “those who [did survive] felt more pity” (a passion that Rousseau, and not Hobbes attributes to human beings in the state of nature), “for anyone dying or suffering because they had foreknowledge,”⁵² and although the survivors were “in a confident state as to themselves, they were nevertheless “congratulated by the others.” (2.51) Finally, Thucydides tells us that, despite developing “an indifference toward sacred and profane alike,” the Athenians did not simply abandon belief in the divine

⁵¹Interestingly, in Hobbes's translation he uses the word “honestest” as opposed to the word “virtue,” and the word “shame” as opposed to the word “honor” in this passage—perhaps to downplay the otherwise manly quality of the former when compared to the latter.

⁵²This is true of Thucydides himself who, “as one who had the plague” and “saw others suffering from it” decided to “say what it was like in its course” so that “anyone who studied it” could not possibly “fail to recognize it,” should ever strike again. (2.48)

entirely: “Among those [Athenians] who knew it,” he writes, “there was also mention of the oracle given to the Spartans, who were told when they asked the god whether they should go to war that, if they fought hard, victory would be theirs and he himself would join them. So they took the events to correspond.” (2.54) In other words, despite the moral and political chaos surrounding them, some Athenians nevertheless looked to the gods for answers. In short, as a catalyst for death and disorder, the plague did not succeed in destroying civility in its entirety. Life, to be sure, had become “poor, nasty, and short,” but it was not always solitary and was not always brutish. The human concern for justice, for the transcendental, did not simply vanish.

And neither did it during the civil war at Corcyra, either. As discussed above, Thucydides’ description of how people behaved during the civil war at Corcyra, like during the plague, closely parallels the behavior of human beings in Hobbes’s state of nature. At the same time, however, the behavior exhibited by the Corcyreans is not simply Hobbesian. For example, according to Thucydides, individuals “strengthened their trust in one another less by religious law than by association in committing some illegal act.” (3.82) That they strengthened their trust *at all*, however, is significant; for, according to Hobbes, the natural condition of mankind is one devoid of trust insofar as there is “no society;” trust is wholly conventional.⁵³ For Thucydides, by contrast, the human capacity for trust—which implies a kind of justice—remains intact regardless of convention. In other words, for Thucydides, the human capacity for justice is as natural as the human tendency towards its opposite. Thucydides therefore seems to confirm what Socrates argues in Book One of the *Republic*: that even “pirates” and “robbers” practice some form of justice, if only to accomplish “some common unjust enterprise.” (351c) In short, like life during the plague, life during the civil

⁵³Although Hobbes does not explicitly say there is no trust, his description of all that *does not* exist in the state of nature (industry, commodities, commodious living, letters, arts, culture, society), along with his use of the word “solitary” in describing man’s life, implies a complete absence of it.

war at Corcyra was not simply solitary and devoid of trust, even if it was, for many Corcyreans, brutish and short.

In fact, one might even argue that in a perverse kind of way human beings became more social: “revenge mattered more than not being harmed in the first place,” writes Thucydides (3.82); the primordial desire for self-preservation proved less strong a passion than the human desire for revenge, thereby bringing people together. Hence, as Johnson explains: “in civil war, men are all too social, that is, too concerned with their fellow men. There is no more social an emotion than the desire for revenge.”⁵⁴ As opposed to avoiding one another (and hence the fear of violent death), then, individuals sought each other out, becoming either friends or enemies: partisans pursuing vengeance for the sake of vengeance as opposed to individuals pursuing power for the sake of preservation. Simply put, the continual fear of violent death that, according to Hobbes, impels men to prioritize life over death and avoid war—that inclineth them to peace—had little effect. Instead, writes Thucydides, men “placed revenge above pity,” and “gain above justice,” to a point where they forgot about or ignored their immediate self-interest and the rational fear of violent death altogether.

Furthermore, although Thucydides writes that the “citizens in the middle” were destroyed, it is nevertheless important to consider why. According to Thucydides, there are two reasons—that they “did not take sides,” on the one hand, or that they “begrudged their survival,” on the other. In other words, according to Thucydides, certain citizens, on account of the moderate natures, either refused to participate in and condone the extremism that befell Corcyrean politics, or more simply, remained inactive so as to “survive.” The behavior of neither, then, simply confirms Hobbessian assumptions about human nature. Rather, it suggests that despite the otherwise extreme and violent circumstances, certain human

⁵⁴Johnson, *Thucydides, Hobbes, and the Interpretation of Realism*, 40.

beings refused to adapt. They were not as Hobbes would have us believe, compelled by their passions to act in a certain way given the circumstances. Instead, they either chose to resist or ignore altogether the extremism that befell Corcyrean politics—choosing in effect to pay the ultimately price: death.

Finally, consider how the civil war ends. Trapped in a building and surrounded by their enemies, a group of Corcyrean oligarchs, Thucydides tells us, decided to *kill themselves*, fearing what the people would do to them if they did not. As Thucydides explains, the Corcyrean people climbed on top of the building and “piercing through the roof, threw down the tiles and shot arrows” at those inside. And although the oligarchs protected themselves “as well as they could, most of them” writes Thucydides, “killed themselves, either by plunging into their throats the arrows fired down or by hanging themselves with cords from some beds they happened to have inside and with strips taken from their clothing.” (4.48) They too, it seems, overcame their fear of violent death; for, as Thucydides tells us, they killed themselves in violent and painful ways (with arrows or by hanging)—not only, presumably because they feared what the Corcyrean people might do to them, but out of honor or complete and utter despair.

In sum, despite informing Hobbes’s interpretation of human nature there are nevertheless examples of behavior in both Thucydides’ account of the plague and civil war at Corcyra that challenge, or at the very least, call into question the pessimism and determinism characteristic of it. People did not simply act in ways indicative of having an exclusively primordial condition. They did not simply abandon the human concern for justice, honor, or virtue, no matter how partisan, and self-interested that concern became. Furthermore, and perhaps most important, Thucydides, unlike Hobbes, never argues that such behavior is natural. In fact, one might even argue that Thucydides’ overly graphic

descriptions of human behavior during the plague and civil war at Corcyra are indicative of how *unnatural* such behavior actually is.

A Gift From The Gods: Thucydides' Hidden Teaching on Human Nature

The question that remains, then, is how can we account for such anti-Hobbesian behavior? The answer, in my view, lies in another famous passage titled the Mytilenean Debate; for, in this passage we are presented with a somewhat different and more profound interpretation of human nature that, when taken into account, explains not only the anti-Hobbesian behavior discussed above, but in so doing reveals an implicit teaching on human nature that Hobbes and many interpreters of Thucydides subsequent to him, either ignore or overlook.⁵⁵

The debate itself is over whether and to what extent the Mytileneans as a people should be punished for attempting to carry out a premeditated revolt against Athens. According to Thucydides, what the Athenians found particularly unnerving was that Mytilene had revolted “without being subjects like the others.” (3.36) As Orwin notes, “almost alone among the allies” Mytilene “had never been reduced to subjection and tribute but had retained her walls and fleet.”⁵⁶ Moreover, because a Peloponnesian fleet had actually dared to venture into Ionia to support the Mytileneans, the revolt itself seemed to have been long planned. (3.36) As a result and for this reason, writes Orwin, “retributive justice [became] the Athenian concern, [and] premeditated treason the verdict.”⁵⁷ “In a rage,” Thucydides tells us, the Athenians “voted to put to death not only the men there but also all Mytilenean adult males and to enslave the women and children.” (3.36)

⁵⁵That Hobbes either ignores or overlooks this teaching is perhaps not a coincidence. He may in fact do so on purpose insofar as it undermines his own account of human nature, and hence modern philosophical project on which that account is predicated. For a list of interpreters that also either ignore or overlook this teaching, see footnote one.

⁵⁶Orwin, *The Humanity of Thucydides*, 143.

⁵⁷Ibid.

The next day, however, writes Thucydides, the Athenians “experienced immediate remorse and reconsideration about deciding on a savage and extreme resolution to destroy a whole city rather than the guilty ones.” (3.36) In other words, they began to feel that a punishment of this nature might, in fact, qualify as unjust and therefore called for an assembly to discuss the matter again. The first to speak at this assembly was Kleon, whose name means something like “make famous.” According to Thucydides, Kleon was “in general the most violent of the citizens and by far the most persuasive.” (3.36) Arguing almost entirely from the perspective of retributive justice, Kleon argues for capital punishment and is in favor of their initial decision; for according to him, not only did Mytilene revolt but had committed an act of calculated aggression, of deliberately taking sides with Athens’ “worst enemies.” (3.39) In effect, Kleon argues that by following him and killing the Mytileneans, the Athenians “will act both justly and expediently toward them—justly insofar as Mytileneans deserve to die; and expediently insofar as killing them would fall in line with Athenian self-interest.

Following Kleon, however, a man by the name of Diodotus, son of Eukrates came forward. His name, it is said, translates into something like “gift from the gods,” and for good reason; for as we shall see, Diodotus’s speech contains within it what amounts to arguably the most philosophical hence divine statement on human nature in the *History*. In contrast to Kleon, he argues (or, at least claims to argue) solely from the perspective of necessity or self-interest. Worried, however, that his argument might come across as more of a justification for Mytilene’s unjust actions than it will prudent advice, Diodotus begins his speech by offering a certain disclaimer—in effect persuading the Athenian *demos* of the justice inherent in his supposed “amoral” approach:

I have not come forward to speak in opposition, nor to bring as far as the Mytileneans are concerned. For the debate, if we are sensible, is not about their guilt but about the right planning for ourselves. And no matter how guilty I proclaim them, I will not on that account urge you to kill them if it is not expedient, nor that because there is some

excuse they should keep their city, if does not appear beneficial. I consider our deliberations to be more about the future than the present. And where Kleon is most insistent, that it will eventually be in the interest of fewer revolts if we set the death penalty, I am equally insistent myself about what is best for the future, with the opposite conclusions. I beg you not to reject what is useful in my proposal because of what is attractive in his. His proposal might well have appeal as more just according to your present anger against the Mytileneans; but we are not taking them to court to get justice but deliberating as to how they might be of use to us.

From the perspective of Diodotus, then, the issue is not, as Kleon has presented it, one of justice but rather expediency. Deliberation, insofar as it implies taking into account consequences (and more specifically, the possibility for unintended ones) requires putting future concerns ahead of satiating present and ultimately fleeting desires. After all, it was only yesterday that the Athenians were united in their desire to destroy Mytilene. Today, however, they are less than keen on actually doing so. From the perspective of Diodotus satisfying today's desires at tomorrow's expense makes for "inferior policies" (3.46).

Of course, in order actually to convince the Athenian *demos* of his argument, Diodotus will also have to refute Kleon's previous contention that, not only is it just but also necessary to kill the Mytileneans. He does this by calling into question the overall wisdom of capital punishment: to qualify as wise, capital punishment must have a deterring effect.

According to Diodotus, however, it does not. As Diodotus explains:

Now then, states lay down the death penalty for many things, crimes that are not comparable to this but less important. Men take the risk nevertheless, led on by their hopes, and no one has ever yet faced the danger already resigned to failing in the attempt. And did any city in revolt ever undertake this with what seemed inferior resources, whether its own or through alliances? It is likely that long ago milder ones were used for the worst offenses, and after a while, since these were disregarded, there were many elevations to the death penalty; yet this is disregarded too. This means that either something still more frightening must be discovered or there is this, which is no restraint at all, but either poverty, which brings about boldness through compulsion; abundance, which brings about ambition through insolence and pride; or other circumstances because of human passion, depending on how each of these is ruled by some irresistible force, will lead men into danger. And in every case hope and desire—the one leading while the other follows, the one thinking up the scheme while the other holds out the full assistance of fortune—do the greatest damage, and although invisible, hey power over perils that can be seen. On top of these, fortune contributes no less incitement; for at times, by lending a hand unexpectedly, it leads men on to take risks even in unfavorable circumstances and especially whole cities, in proportion to the greatest consequences, freedom or rule over others, and together men irrationally have the individual impression of being greater. In short, it is impossible and very foolish for

anyone to believe, that when human nature is eagerly pressing toward some accomplishment, there is some deterrent to stop by force of law or by any other threat.

For Diodotus, then, the death penalty, despite its obvious implications as a punishment, is essentially ineffective when it comes to deterring crime or criminal behavior. Men, he argues, will take on risks nevertheless. This is because, as he points out, hope is more powerful than fear as a passion in the human psyche. Whether rich or poor (the former engendering ambition through insolence and pride, and the latter “boldness through compulsion”) men, on account of their hopes and connected to them, desires (*eros*), will always and forever tempt fate—that is to say, follow what amount to irresistible and invisible forces, regardless of the potential unintended consequences.⁵⁸ Finally and on top of this lies the independent variable of fortune—a variable that, on account of its inherently elusive and unpredictable nature will “lend a hand unexpectedly,” convincing not only men but also *entire cities* to make unwise decisions. (Italics mine). In short, the fear that comes from death, violent or otherwise, according to Diodotus, is, despite its persuasiveness as passion, no match for the hope that springs from desire (*eros*) and the confidence that arises from good fortune, rendering law, no matter how coercive, essentially powerless against human nature. Unlike Kleon, therefore, who argues that capital punishment would satisfy what both justice demands and necessity compels the Athenians to do, Diodotus argues that it would satisfy neither. (3.47)

When taken into account, then, Diodotus’ speech and argument against capital punishment amounts to more than just a sober response to the demagoguery of Kleon. Indeed, given its teaching on human nature it also (and for our purposes) helps to explain

⁵⁸According to David Grene, Hobbes’s translation of this passage is “misleading.” In Hobbes’s translation, Diodotus is quoted as saying “Yet encourage by hope, men hazard themselves; nor did any man ever yet enter into a practice which he knew he could not go through with.” But as Grene notes, the Greek actually translates to “Yet exalted by hope they take the risk and no one yet has ever condemned in advance his success in the design and therefore has not gone to meet terror.” As opposed to Lattimore’s or Grene’s translation, then, Hobbes’s translation seems to downplay the language of risk suggesting that only men who “know” the full weight of the actions, engage in death defying behavior. (*The Peloponnesian War: The Complete Hobbes Translation*, 182.)

the otherwise anti-Hobbesian behavior of those discussed above. In fact, when considered in light of what Diodotus argues, such behavior begins to make a lot more sense. Consider: from the perspective of Hobbes, the behavior of those during the plague who sacrificed their lives in order to visit their dying friends qualifies, whole heartedly, as irrational and mad, whereas from the perspective of Diodotus it qualifies as natural. Human beings, insofar as they are human, find the fear that comes from death or the prospect of dying, often less persuasive as passion than they do desire, including a desire for honour and virtue. Similarly, from the perspective of Hobbes, the behavior of those individuals who put revenge ahead of self-preservation during the civil war at Corcyra qualifies again, as wholly irrational, whereas from the perspective of Diodotus, it again qualifies as natural; for according to him, the human hope and desire for justice (as partisan and partial as it may and can be) is nevertheless more powerful as a passion than the fear of death, violent or otherwise.

Unlike Hobbes, then, who argues (hopes?) that man's fear of violent death will compel him to submit to a sovereign for the sake of peace and security—that the fear of violent death will lead men to reason as reckoning—Diodotus argues that despite its persuasiveness as a passion, the rational fear of death, violent or otherwise, is simply not as reliable as Kleon and Hobbes would have it, and will not (because it does not) restrain what is an otherwise unruly human nature regardless of its otherwise obvious implications. Diodotus, therefore, offers an interpretation of human nature that not only challenges that of Hobbes, but in some ways seems more pessimistic given the fact that, when “eagerly pressing toward some accomplishment,” there seems to be *nothing at all* that is powerful enough to deter and order it. Indeed, emphasizing the power of hope and desire over the minds of men regardless even of economic circumstances—that is to say, “whether compelled by poverty or encouraged by abundance”—he argues that human passion “ruled

by some irresistible force" will, more often than not, "lead men into danger." Furthermore, he notes that, in addition to the invisible forces of hope and desire, the independent variable of fortune or chance guarantees it, leading them "to take risks even in unfavorable circumstances." As a result, it would that Diodotus views human nature as even less governable by reason than does Hobbes.

But is it? Equally important to consider is the irony underlying Diodotus' argument—and connected to it, how the Mytilenean debate ends; for it too reveals something about the nature of human beings that challenges Hobbes's account in *Leviathan*. Indeed, although Diodotus seems to argue that human nature is impervious to reason, his doing so (especially against and in response to someone as impervious to reason as Kleon), actually contradicts or challenges the core of his argument. As the voice of reason and an exponent of sober second thought in the debate, Diodotus gives a speech informing the Athenian *demos* about the relative weakness if not absence of reason in human beings, thereby showing us implicitly that human nature, despite finding hope, desire, and fortune irresistible—despite being governed entirely by passion—is nevertheless open to reason via speech. By denying the strength of reason in men and human affairs, Diodotus' speech nevertheless convinces the Athenian *demos* of pursuing a more reasonable policy: "In the show of hands, writes Thucydides, "the resolutions were nearly equal, but that of Diodotus prevailed." (3.49).

Rather than endorsing the fear of violent death as a mechanism (in the most literal sense of the term) for making men act "rational," Diodotus instead reveals its impotence so as to achieve a more *reasonable and humane ie. Just* outcome in the Mytilenean debate. (More on this below). Indeed, rather than "trust" (as does Hobbes) in the power of death to deter criminals (human beings in general for Hobbes), Diodotus suggests instead, considering "ways to use moderate punishment." (3.46) His reason is that, whereas the

death penalty makes “it hopeless for rebels to have any possibility of repenting and atoning” for their mistakes, a moderate punishment would enable them to “come to terms” and “pay tribute in the future.” (3.46) In other words, by extending to the Mytileneans some measure of mercy (not, to be sure, forgiveness), not only would they spare the majority of Mytileneans from despair and place them in a desperate (unpredictable) situation, but they would also empower the Athenians both economically and politically insofar as it would first, preserve Mytilene as a source of future revenue; and second, ensure that the “common people in every city” ie. democrats remain friendly towards Athens in the future. (3.47) Diodotus therefore persuades the Athenians that an act such as this, that is, “of voluntarily submitting to injustice” would prove “much more useful for the security of their empire” than punishing those they “should not.” (3.47) In other words, and anticipating what Socrates argues in the *Gorgias*, Diodotus persuades the Athenian *demos* that it is, in fact, sometimes better to suffer an injustice than to commit one in return. Whereas Diodotus relies on speech or rhetoric in order to direct the Athenian *demos* towards reason, Hobbes relies on what Diodotus singles out as ineffective when it comes to ensuring that human beings act rationally: violent death.

As for Thucydides himself, he seems to be in fundamental agreement with Diodotus; for throughout his *History*, he provides numerous examples of both individuals and cities alike that fall victim, not to the paralyzing and otherwise rational fear of violent death but to the siren songs of hope, desire, and fortune, and in so doing brings his readers to reason in the same ironic way. For example, in Book Four, he points to the example of Brasidas, a Spartan general, who “not only behaved moderately in general but was spreading the word everywhere that he was sent out in order to liberate Hellas.” (4.108) According to Thucydides, “when the cities subject to Athens learned about the capture of Amphipolis and what the terms were, also about his gentleness, they were strongly motivated toward

revolutionary action, urging him to make the rounds among them.” (4.108) Indeed, “it was obvious to them that they could do so with impunity,” hence underestimating Athenian power. (4.108) Only later did they realize “their decisions were based more on vague wishes than on secure foresight.” (4.108) Excited by the prospect of change, they fell victim to what Thucydides describes as “*the human habit of entrusting desires to heedless hopes, while using arbitrary reasons to dismiss what is unacceptable.*” (Italics mine) (4.108) In the next book, therefore, Thucydides himself not only echoes precisely what Diodotus argues in the Mytilenean Debate—namely, that on account of hope and desire, human beings will usually resort to wishful thinking at the expense of sound calculation—but, at the same time and in so doing, he engenders a soundness of mind on the part of his readers in the same way that Diodotus engenders a soundness of mind on the part of the Athenian *demos*.

Accordingly, reason for Thucydides *is not* the same as it is for Hobbes—that is, simply as “reckoning.” Indeed, whereas Hobbes’s understands reason as purely instrumental, Thucydides’ understanding of reason is more dialectical insofar as it transcends mere calculation (addition and subtraction). Beyond reckoning, Thucydides’ understanding of reason, as exemplified by Diodotus in the Mytilenean debate (and by extension himself) implies a kind of practical wisdom that, beyond (but not above instrumental reasoning), also seems to take into account questions of right and wrong, justice and injustice; for although Diodotus claims to argue from the perspective of necessity, he does so because, at the same time, it is also more humane. Indeed, although he claims that they are not “taking [the Mytilineans] to court to get justice,” but instead “deliberating as to how they might be of use to [them],” he nevertheless tells the Athenian *demos* that if they “destroy the people of Mytilene who did not take part in the revolt...in the first place [they would] be *committing injustice.*” (3.47) Despite claiming to do so, then, Diodotus does not turn ignore the question of justice—at least not to the extent that he

would have his audience believe. He too recognizes that the Mytileneans are guilty, making the debate as much about justice as it is about determining what is most expedient. The difference between him and Kleon therefore lies not so much in a commitment to satisfying either the Athenian desire for retributive justice, on the one hand, or doing simply what is expedient, on the other, but how each of them chooses to reconcile the tension between the two. Whereas Kleon does so by arguing that capital punishment is both just and necessary, Diodotus does so by arguing that capital punishment is not only unnecessary but also unjust. In effect, although he claims to give “no priority to pity or evenhandedness,” (3.48) opting instead to evaluate the situation solely from the perspective of expedience, his doing so actually leads to a more evenhanded outcome—that is, one of moderate punishment that avoids what he himself considers the injustice of Kleon: destroying the Mytilene in its entirety. Diodotus’ reasoning, then, is not simply instrumental. Although he claims to follow solely what expedience necessitates, he does not simply ignore what justice asks. He engages in a cost-benefit analysis that nevertheless takes into account justice. He reconciles the tension between necessity and justice in a way that satisfies the demands of both.

Through the example of Diodotus, therefore, Thucydides provides an alternative and implicit account of human nature that is fundamentally different from that of Hobbes. To be sure, like Hobbes, Thucydides recognizes that there is a similitude of passions in human beings; for he too recognize that all men “desire, fear, and hope”—and often for different things (objects). But for Thucydides, unlike Hobbes, understanding the similitude of passions in human beings does not necessarily make for understanding the entirety of human behaviour. As opposed to Hobbes, who regards fear and the fear of violent death as *the* ordering passion in the human psyche, Thucydides recognizes instead, hope and desire as passions that will always and forever stand in the way of the otherwise paralyzing and obedience engender passion of fear. Furthermore, as the irony of Diodotus’ argument

suggests, although governed primarily by passion, for Thucydides, human beings are nevertheless open to and can be brought in line with reason, without being subjected to the rational fear of violent death.⁵⁹ As result, Thucydides does not simply view human beings, as does Hobbes, in a pessimistic and deterministic light. Rather, he understands them as prone to folly (but not impervious to reason) on account of their otherwise optimistic hopes and desires. In other words, he understands them more in terms of having what Plato and Aristotle define as disordered souls, as opposed to being soulless automata as they are for Hobbes. (More on this in Chapter Four)

Between Necessity and Justice: The Primordial Transcendent in Thucydides

In *Twilight of the Idols*, Friedrich Nietzsche writes that, “in the great fatality of Christianity, Plato is that ambiguity and fascination called the ‘ideal’ which made it possible for the nobler natures of antiquity to misunderstand themselves and to step on to the bridge which led to the ‘Cross...” He goes on to explain, however, that for him, the cure to that ambiguity and fascination, the cure to the ideal which has made it possible for noble natures to “misunderstand themselves,” has always been Thucydides. “My recreation, my preference, my cure from all Platonism has always been Thucydides,” he writes. The reason, according to him, is that Thucydides, unlike Plato or even Aristotle, is a realist. As Nietzsche himself puts it:

Thucydides, and perhaps the Principe of Machiavelli, are related to me closely by their unconditional will not to deceive themselves and not to see reason in reality—not in ‘reason,’ still less in ‘morality’....For the deplorable embellishment of the Greeks with the colours of the ideal which the ‘classically educated’ youth carries away with him into life as the reward of his grammar-school drilling there is no radical cure than Thucydides. One must turn him over line by line and read his hidden thoughts as clearly as his word: there are few thinkers so rich in hidden thoughts. Sophist culture, by which

⁵⁹One might also argue that merely reading Hobbes’s *Leviathan* accomplishes the same goal—that is to say, that reading the *Leviathan* or Hobbes’s philosophy brings human beings in line with reason without subjecting them to the fear of violent death. Important to recognize however, is that Hobbes nevertheless relies on fear in order to bring his readers to reason in a way that Thucydides does not. Whereas Thucydides brings his readers in line with reason by highlighting its weakness in the world, Hobbes brings his readers to reason by relying on the fear that comes from reading about the fear of violent death and the natural condition of mankind.

I mean realist culture, attain in him its perfect expression—this invaluable movement in the midst of the morality and ideal swindle of the Socratic schools which was then breaking out everywhere. Greek philosophy as the decadence of the Greek instinct; Thucydides as the grand summation, the last manifestation of that strong, stern, hard matter of factness instinctive to the older Hellenes. Courage in the face of reality ultimately distinguishes such natures as Thucydides and Plato: Plato is a coward in the face of reality—consequently he flees to the ideal; Thucydides has himself under control—consequently he retains control over things...⁶⁰

For Nietzsche, then, to enter into the world of Thucydides is to escape from that of Plato and the idealism it represents. As a sophist (by which Nietzsche means realist) Thucydides represents a strong, stern, hard matter of factness about the truth that neither Plato nor his Christian descendants were courageous or man enough to face. Thucydides therefore represents a cold-hearted realism that, by way of both Machiavelli and Hobbes, would eventually become the foundation of modern liberalism: the covenant and the commonwealth, the city, as not only a refuge from but conquering of the indifference and harsh reality of what lies outside and beyond it: the twin peaks of chance and necessity that so determine human and thus political life.

Nietzsche, however, is not the only interpreter or reader of Thucydides to point out his realism. As I alluded to in the introduction, many others (especially those in the contemporary field of international relations) tend to more or less agree. As opposed to Plato and Aristotle (not to mention Augustine and Aquinas) who focus on questions related to justice or of the “best regime,” it is often held that Thucydides focuses primarily on pointing out the particularities of a cold realism, placing fear, honor, and self-interest at the root of human conflict. As Leo Strauss puts it, the world of Thucydides “is no longer the world of political philosophy, of the quest for the best regime which is possible, although it never was, is or will be actual, for the shining and pure temple built on a noble elevation, far

⁶⁰Friedrich. Nietzsche, “What I Owe to the Ancients,” in *Twilight of the Idols, Or, How To Philosophize with a Hammer*. Translated by Duncan Large (New York: Oxford University Press, 1998), Aphorism 2.

away from vulgar clamor and everything else disharmonious.”⁶¹ No, Thucydides writes from the street, and when we open his “pages, we become at once immersed in political life at its most intense, in bloody war, both foreign and civil, in life and death struggles.”⁶² Accordingly, it is often held that Thucydides avoids such questions—questions of justice and of the “best regime”—focusing instead on the “real world of power politics—a world of debate and decision, of victory and defeat, of glory and infamy.”⁶³ Put another way, Thucydidean thought is said to opt for *what is*, leaving idealistic questions of *what ought* to the realm of philosophy. In this view, Thucydides plays the role of a historian and not a philosopher or even poet, whose *History* and its content, “by avoiding patriotic storytelling, will perhaps seem the less enjoyable for listening.” (1.22)

But is it? As a closer reading of the *History* in fact reveals, the aforementioned view is an over-simplification and, in my view, only half true. Indeed, although Thucydides explicitly separates his own history from “that of the poets, who exaggerate the importance of their themes,” he nonetheless and at the same time attributes to his *History* an immortal and hence “romantic” or poetic-like quality, as it was composed not as a “competition piece to be heard for the moment,” but rather, as a “possession for all time.” (1.22) Standing in opposition to the realism that Nietzsche attributes to Thucydides, then, is to a certain degree, Thucydides himself. The idealism or romanticism implicit in how he defines the nature of his *History* is not, to be sure, characteristic of a realist; for a true realist, like a scientific historian, would hold that nothing lasts forever and that nothing is a possession for all time—not even the realism to which he or she subscribes. Rather, Thucydides’ description of his work is indicative of the fact that, beyond recounting a particular war, it also contains within it philosophical truths about not only the nature of war but the human

⁶¹Leo Strauss, *The City and Man* (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 1964), 139.

⁶²Strauss, *The City and Man*, 139.

⁶³Thomas Pangle, Ahrens Dorf, Peter J. *Justice among Nations: On the Moral Basis of Power and Peace* (Lawrence: University of Kansas Press, 1999), 13.

condition in general. In other words, underlying this romantic or poetic quality is both history *and* philosophy, for “poetry is between history and philosophy,” writes Strauss.⁶⁴ Whereas “the historian presents what has happened” the poet presents the kind of things that might happen.”⁶⁵ Hence, “poetry is more philosophic and more serious than history;” for it “states the universals” while “history states the singulars.”⁶⁶ Thucydides is not merely a historical realist; he is, rather, a historian-poet—a realist who nevertheless recognizes the philosophic aspect of human existence, and hence the idealism of human beings as a part of (and not separate from) the reality and world they inhabit.

It is true, then, that Thucydides is courageous in the face of reality; but not simply as Nietzsche would have it. His courage lies in his ability to recognize both what the primordial imposes on human beings, but always in connection to what justice and the transcendental nevertheless asks of them. Indeed, despite what passages such as the Plague at Athens and the Civil War at Corcyra have lead many to assume, Thucydides does not simply subscribe to a primordial view of the cosmos and human nature—one that focuses exclusively on what necessity compels to the exclusion of what justice asks. Equally important to recognize is that passages such as the Mytilenean Debate, in which he provides an alternative and implicit account of a human nature that prioritizes hope and desire over fear, suggest that the compulsion that comes from necessity, from the primordial, in fact represents only one side of Thucydides’ ontological worldview. The other, which emphasizes the power of hope and desire in politics, is that of the transcendental and justice more generally. As Strauss explains:

The speeches written by Thucydides convey thoughts which belong, not to the speakers, but to Thucydides...because “the wording of the speeches surely is Thucydides’ own work.” For instance, the first speech occurring in the work opens Just (Right) and the second speech, which is a reply to the first, opens with Necessary (Compulsory). The

⁶⁴Strauss, *The City and Man*, 142.

⁶⁵Ibid.

⁶⁶Ibid.

thought indicated by these two opening words taken together, the question of the relation of right and necessity, of the difference, tension, perhaps opposition between right and compulsion—a thought which is not the theme of either speech—is Thucydides' thought. This thought so unobtrusively and so subtly indicated illumines everything which preceded the two speeches and everything which follows them. These two opening words indicated the point of view from which Thucydides looks at the Peloponnesian War.⁶⁷

Evaluated through this lens, Thucydides' main causes of war—namely, fear, honor, and self-interest—become causes that, when taken together, point to the ambiguity of trying to reconcile the human desire for justice with necessity, and the inevitable hypocrisy that ensues. Not simply fear, nor self-interest, and not simply honour; but fear combined with self-interest, both in connection to one's honour, i.e. necessity justified, is the Thucydidean insight—one reflective of the realism, but also of the idealism (longing for justice) characteristic of human beings, and the subsequent tension between the two in the human soul and politics in general. Unlike Hobbes, therefore, Thucydides recognizes that human existence is not merely primordial and that human beings, no matter how self-interested or egoistic they may seem or be in their everyday actions, nevertheless exhibit a longing for something higher that cannot be reduced simply to madness or delusion—something that instead and at the same time signals an enduring and inescapable concern for justice on the part of human beings.

In fact, the passions of hope and desire that, according to Diodotus, so often lead to wishful thinking are also and at the same time precisely what enable Thucydides' characters to transcend their primordial existence as human beings. Indeed, in "Pericles' Funeral Oration," Thucydides (in opposition to Hobbes) reveals that it is not fear, but, rather, hope and desire that serve as the true bonds of community and commonwealth. In other words, he reveals that it is not simply economic self-interest and security that keeps community together (even if it is, according to the Archeology, why they come into being.) Rather, it is

⁶⁷ Strauss, *The City and Man*, 174.

also that which inspires in human beings a sense of purpose or that which transcends it, to which the passions of hope and desire lend themselves.

As a speech, it contains two themes: Athenian exceptionalism, and sacrifice. To begin, Pericles' praises the former. Specifically he claims that Athens "as a whole is an education for Hellas." (2.41) Not only her form of government (merit based democracy), but also her approach to warfare—that is, relying on "courageous readiness for action that comes from within" as opposed to trusting in "contrivance and deception"—her superior education, and overall way of life—that is, her innovative daring—makes Athens alone, surpass "her reputation when put to the test." (2.37-41). Athens as a city, in short, is not simply a refuge from the harsh and unforgiving reality of *physis*. In other words, it is not simply convention or *nomos* for the sake of security and economic well-being. Rather, it is *nomos* for the sake of something higher and more noble; for according to Pericles, Athenians "love beauty while practicing economy, and wisdom without being enervated." (2.36). Athens, in short, represents a civilizational project—the peak of human and political life. "Compelling every sea and land to become open to [her] daring, she has "polulated every region with lasting monuments" that represent acts of both "harm and good." (2.41)

As Pericles goes on to explain, for the aforementioned reasons Athens, unlike other cities, is also a city worth dying for, and that as a result, Athens engenders virtue in its citizens. While praising the dead, he tells his audience that:

It is for such a city, then, that these men nobly died in battle, thinking it right not to be deprived of her, just as each of their survivors should be willing to toil for her sake...For it is their virtues, and those of men like them, that have given honor to the qualities I have praised in the city, and for few other Hellenes would it be manifest, as it is for them, that reputation is equal to the deeds....Thinking defeat of the enemy more desirable than prosperity, just as they considered this the fairest of risks, they were willing to vanquish him at that risk and long for the rest, leaving to hope the uncertainty of prospering in the future but resolving to rely on their own actions in what confronted them now, and recognizing that it meant resisting and dying rather than surviving by submission, *they fled disgrace in work but stood up to the deed with their lives and through the fortune of the briefest critical moment*, at the height of glory rather than fear, departed. (2.41-42) (Italics Mine)

Embracing risk and leaving to hope the uncertainty of prospering in the future, those who have died, Pericles tells us, did so in order to flee from “disgrace.” And to do so, they relied on fortune at “the briefest critical moment” by placing their desire for glory before fear. In an ironic contrast to Diodotus, Pericles praises the passions of hope and the independent variable of fortune, both of which have enabled human beings to transcend themselves as citizens, by making them willing to die for Athens. The passions of hope and desire that lead so often men to ruin are also, it turns out, responsible for Athenian greatness.

As for those who remain, Pericles demands of them what their forefathers have already shown. He asks them to become “lovers” of their city, “reflecting whenever her fame appears great [to them], that men who were daring, who realized their duty, and who honored in their actions acquired this, men who even when they failed in some attempt did not on that account think it right to deprive [Athens] of their virtue, but to offer it to her as their finest contribution. As Micheal Palmer explains: “The key to Pericles’ attempted dissolution is his exhortation to his fellow citizens to gaze upon the power of Athens and become her lovers. The most private thing, *eros*, is given full due but its object becomes the most public thing, the city.”⁶⁸ In marking the passions of hope and desire that according to Diodotus so often lead to wishful thinking as the strongest passions in the human psyche, Thucydides shows how they are, at the very same time, passions indicative of the human longing for justice. In short, Thucydides shows them to be passions that also enable human beings to transcend their otherwise primordial existence.

Summary

Many scholars assume that Hobbes and Thucydides share a similar if not the same interpretation of human nature. And while this is not without warrant, assuming as much nevertheless amounts to an oversimplification of the philosophical relationship between

⁶⁸Michael Palmer, *Love of Glory and the Common the Good* (Boston: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, Inc, 1992) 26.

the two. Specifically, it glosses over what, in this chapter, I have argued is a fundamental difference between Hobbes's account of human nature in *Leviathan* and that of Thucydides in his *History*: namely, a recognition on the part of Thucydides that human beings are motivated by both necessity *and* a genuine concern for justice—that is to say, by primordial passions *and* transcendental longings—and that they are, at the end of the day, more than mere machines, exhibiting what Hobbes reduces to calculable behavior. Indeed, by examining those passages that are often said to directly inform Hobbes's understanding of human nature in *Leviathan*, I have made the case that, despite providing an interpretation of human nature that is, undoubtedly pessimistic, the behavior of individuals in them does not simply coincide with nor confirm Hobbesian assumptions about the nature of man. And by turning to The Mytilenean Debate, I explained why: in the debate, Thucydides provides us with another, implicit teaching on human nature that stands in opposition to that of Hobbes—one that argues that the fear of violent death is not the most powerful passion in the human psyche, and that human beings, despite being governed primarily by passion, are nonetheless open to reason in the classic sense. Finally, by turning to Pericles' Funeral Oration, we saw how for Thucydides and as opposed to Hobbes, human beings are motivated by both necessity *and* a genuine concern for justice—that is to say, by primordial passions *and* transcendental longings and that as a result, they resemble more so human beings with souls characterized by a tension between what necessity or the primordial imposes on them, and what their desire for justice or the transcendental asks of them. To account for this fundamental difference, then, let us next turn to Aristotle, a philosopher for whom Hobbes, in contrast to his admiration for Thucydides, held significant contempt.

Chapter Three:

Hobbes's Attack on Aristotle

...the praise of ancient authors, proceeds not from the reverence of the dead, but from the competition, and mutual envy of the living.

-Hobbes, A Review and Conclusion

In the previous chapter I argued that, for all of their similarities and despite what many scholars tend to overlook, there remains nevertheless a fundamental difference between Hobbes's account of human nature in *Leviathan*, and what I have argued is a more nuanced and profound account of human nature provided by Thucydides in his *History*. Indeed, whereas Hobbes puts forward a pessimistic and deterministic account of human nature rooted in an exclusively primordial understanding of the passions and human behavior, Thucydides provides an interpretation that, although also pessimistic nonetheless acknowledges a genuine concern for justice on the part of human beings, and one that singles out hope and desire as opposed to fear as the most powerful and persuasive passions in the human psyche. Simply put, Thucydides, unlike Hobbes, understands the human condition in terms of a tension between the primordial and the transcendental insofar as he recognizes that, despite what the primordial and that violent teacher, war, imposes on human beings, hope and the human longing for something higher nevertheless springs eternal. The question that remains, therefore, is how to account for this fundamental and often overlooked difference, given not only the otherwise obvious similarities between both accounts but also and especially Hobbes's self-professed admiration for Thucydides.

The answer, in my view, can be found by looking to Aristotle and Hobbes's attack on him, which will be the focus of this chapter. Discussing first, why Hobbes held so much contempt for Aristotle, I then show how the *Leviathan* as a work functions, in large part, as an attack on and replacement for the latter's *Metaphysics*, *Politics* and *Nicomachean Ethics*.

Finally, I turn to the question of human nature in order to show how Hobbes's account of human nature in *Leviathan* (and as discussed in Chapter One) is not only intended to replace that of Aristotle's in the *Politics*, but in so doing eradicate as much as possible from the human psyche and political life something that for Aristotle is a natural part of the human condition, but for Hobbes, makes human beings apolitical and "mad:" (VIII.19) namely, the ancient concept of spiritedness or *thumos*.⁶⁹ In so doing, I essentially argue that, in order to advance his modern philosophical project (to save mankind from the miserable condition of war), Hobbes not only rejects Aristotle's political science but moral and political psychology and understanding of human nature underlying it—an understanding that, to a significant extent and as I will ultimately show in Chapter Four, closely parallels that of Thucydides. In order to understand the difference between Thucydides and Hobbes on human nature, then, we must first take into account and analyze Hobbes's attack on Aristotle.

"The Worst Teacher That Ever Was"

Throughout *Leviathan*, Hobbes makes numerous implicit and explicit attacks on the political science of antiquity by either distorting its teachings or denouncing them outright. In Chapter Seventeen, for instance, he falsely attributes to Aristotle the idea that men as "political creatures" are apt to behave like "ants or bees." (XVII.6) And in Chapter Thirty One, he erroneously defines Platonic metaphysics by equating them with "sciences mathematical," thereby ignoring completely that which transcends them—the ideas or forms.⁷⁰ (XXXI.41) In both instances, it might be argued, Hobbes is attempting to undermine

⁶⁹Although Hobbes, unlike Aristotle, never uses the term *thumos*, he does use term "vain-glorious," which, as we shall see and I explain below, serves as a replacement term for *thumos* and stems from his reductionism, discussed in Chapter One.

⁷⁰In *Natural Right and History*, Leo Strauss observes that "By being both mathematical and materialistic-mechanistic, Hobbes's natural philosophy is a combination of Platonic physics and Epicurean physics" (Strauss, 170.) Hobbes's definition of Plato's metaphysics as "sciences mathematical" in Chapter Thirty One therefore amounts to a reduction of the latter's metaphysics to

Platonic and Aristotelian political science—what Hobbes refers to as “poisonous” and “seditious doctrines” (XXIX.6)—by distorting what each of Plato and Aristotle wrote so as to make their ancient teachings either coincide with or seem overly opposed to those of his own.

He also, however, is keen simply to denounce their teachings outright. For example, as soon as Chapter One, Hobbes points to the difference between his understanding of sense, and that of Aristotle’s. According to Hobbes, sense is activated by nothing more than the “motion of external things upon our eyes, ears, and other organs, thereunto ordained.” (1.5) He goes on to explain, however, that “the philosophy-schools, through all the universities of Christendom, grounded upon certain texts of Aristotle teach another doctrine,” and that as a result, certain things “must be amended” in it, “amongst which the frequency of insignificant speech is one” (I.5) Likewise and in Chapter Four, Hobbes attacks those who value the authority of an Aristotle, a Cicero, or a Thomas when it comes to learning rhetoric. Specifically, he equates words with numbers and writes that, although “words are wise men’s counters” they are not, to be sure, “the money of fools, that value them by the authority of an Aristotle, a Cicero, or a Thomas, or any other doctor whatsoever, if but a man (IV.13) Finally, in Chapter Twenty One, he not only criticizes the ancient understanding of liberty—an understanding found in the “the histories and philosophy of the ancient Greeks and Romans” that, according to him, produces “sedition and change of government,”— he also criticizes “opinions concerning the institution and rights of commonwealths from Aristotle and Cicero, and other men, Greeks and Romans, that living under popular states, derived those rights, not from the principles of nature, but transcribed them into their books out of the practice of their own commonwealths.” (XXI.9)

mathematics or geometry—a reduction, in effect, of the fourth rung in Plato’s image of the divided line to the third.

His most damning attack on antiquity, though, does not appear until Chapter Forty Six, titled “Of the Darkness from Vain Philosophy and Fabulous Traditions.” In this chapter, he reveals just how much he resents the political science of the past by taking the “school of the Grecians” to task: “What has been the utility of those schools?...Their natural philosophy “was rather a dream than science;” their moral philosophy “a description of their own passions;” and their logic “nothing else but captions of words,” writes Hobbes. (XLVI.11) As a result, “they make the rules of good and bad by their own liking and disliking, by which means, in so great diversity of taste, there is nothing generally agreed on, but every one doth (as far as he dares) whatsoever seemeth good in his own eyes, to the subversion of the commonwealth.” (XLVI.11) In other words, as opposed to looking at the similitude of passions, the Greeks look to the objects of them, agreeing on nothing in particular by following whatever seems good to each in his own eyes and, in so doing, subverting the commonwealth—engendering faction at the expense of peace. In short, from distortion to denunciation, throughout *Leviathan* Hobbes is waging modern philosophical warfare on the political science of antiquity in an effort to replace it with his own—that is, with what he considers a more reliable and realistic modern alternative, intended specifically to provide what Plato, Aristotle, and Cicero, among others, have not: peace.

Important to note, however, is that although he seems to exhibit a profound contempt for antiquity in general, it is the political science of Aristotle for which Hobbes holds the most contempt. Indeed, whereas at the end of Part Two of *Leviathan* Hobbes nevertheless compares the nature of his work to the nature of Plato’s *Republic* (XXXI.41) writing even that Plato was “the best philosopher of the Greeks,” (XLVI.11) his opinion of Aristotle amounts literally to the following: “And I believe that scarce anything can be more absurdly said in natural philosophy,” he writes, “than that which is now called Aristotle’s

Metaphysics; nor more repugnant to government than much of that he said in his *Politics*; or more ignorantly than a great part of his *Ethics*.” (XLVI.11)

The reason, according to Hobbes, is that all three are, to a significant extent, responsible for corrupting the university and Church, and hence Christian revelation—those institutions and religious doctrines that, according to him, are largely responsible for the “disorders of the present time,” the English civil war. As Hobbes explains:

The enemy has been here in the night of our natural ignorance and sown the tares of spiritual errors. And that, first, by abusing and putting out the light of the Scripture; for we err, not knowing the Scriptures. Secondly, by introducing the demonology of the heathen poets, that is to say, their fabulous doctrine concerning demons, which are but idols or phantasms of the brain, without any real nature of their own distinct from human fancy (such as are dead men’s ghosts, and fairies, and other matter of old wives’ tales). Thirdly, by mixing with the Scripture divers relics of the religion and much of the vain and erroneous philosophy of the Greeks (*especially of Aristotle*). (XLIV.3) (*Italics mine*)

In other words, those responsible for sowing the tares of what Hobbes refers to as “spiritual errors” include not only those who have abused and “put out the light of Scripture,” but the heathen poets and those who mix with Scripture the vain philosophy of the Greeks, including and especially that of Aristotle. Indeed, according to Hobbes, it is specifically Aristotle’s “metaphysics, ethics, and politics,” which have led to the “frivolous distinctions, barbarous terms, and obscure language of the Schoolmen taught in the universities (which have been all erected and regulated by the Pope’s authority)” and that “serve to keep these errors from being detected, and to make men mistake the *ignis fatuus* (delusions) of vain philosophy for the light of the Gospel.” (XLVII.16) Simply put, it is the political science of Aristotle that, although filtered through the Christian philosophy of Thomas Aquinas, is largely responsible for engendering the sickness and disease that is the natural condition of mankind: civil war.

It should therefore come as no surprise that, according to Aubrey’s biography of him, Hobbes considered Aristotle “the worst teacher that ever was” and that he devotes almost an entire chapter of *Leviathan* to systematically attacking him: “Now to descend to the

particular tenets of vain philosophy, derived to the Universities and thence into the Church, partly from Aristotle, partly from blindness of understanding, I shall first consider their principles,” writes Hobbes. (XLVI.14) Considering first, the idea of “abstract essences”—that is, “essences separated from bodies”—which, according to him, has made its way into the church and via the philosophy of that Aristotelian, Thomas Aquinas, and considering second, Aristotle’s “moral and civil philosophy” which “hath the same or greater absurdities,” Hobbes rejects outright Aristotle’s political science so as to replace it with a modern alternative intended to correct and amend what it has wrought (XLVI.31) “For without their authority,” he writes, “there could at first no seditious doctrine have been publicly preached.” (XLVII. 18)

The *Leviathan* as an Attack on Aristotle’s *Metaphysics*, *Politics*, and *Ethics*

It should also, therefore, come as no surprise that, to a significant extent, *Leviathan* as a work functions, in large part, as a replacement for Aristotle’s *Metaphysics*, *Politics*, and *Ethics*—Hobbes’s medicinal alternative to Aristotle’s disease engendering thought. Consider first Aristotle’s *Metaphysics*. As mentioned in Chapter One, Hobbes’s assertion in Chapter One of *Leviathan* that all thought derives from sense signals a significant break from the transcendentalism of the ancients and Christians who precede him. It also, however, represents a significant break from Aristotle’s teleological view of nature and doctrine of causality on which it is predicated, and as described in his *Physics* and *Metaphysics*. According to Aristotle, there exist four causes: material, formal, efficient, and final. Whereas material is matter or “that from which as a constituent...something is generated,” formal is the form that something takes once matter has been used to generate it. Finally, whereas efficient is “that from which change or coming to rest first begins” (that is, *techne* or art), final cause “means the end” or “that for the sake of which”—namely, something’s purpose. (*Physics*194b17-195a3) For Aristotle, then, nature is purposive

insofar as what is natural is but part of a larger whole, giving it a final cause or purpose. As he himself puts it in the *Politics*: “Nature does nothing in vain.” (*Politics*1253a17-9) But for Hobbes, by contrast, because nature has no *telos* nature *is* vanity. Insofar as life is but a “motion of limbs” and nature “matter and motion” everything is equally subject to the same mechanical laws of force and counter-force that determine, not only the motions of matter around us, but our own motions—passions and hence thoughts and behavior as human beings. Causality for Hobbes, therefore, is confined solely to the material world and hence man’s material existence. In other words, while there is material, formal, and efficient cause, there is nothing final—that is, at least not in the Aristotelian sense. Insofar as there is no *Summum Bonum*, there can be no final cause beyond that of human agency. Simply put, what is good or final, including human nature, has no connection to the immanent and is instead defined entirely by human beings and the various “objects” or “ends” they desire, fear, or hope to attain.⁷¹

Accordingly, although it may at first seem like Hobbes returns to a sophistic or pre-Socratic understanding of the *cosmos*, whereby nature is also understood in terms of motion or chaos, it is nevertheless important to recognize that unlike the pre-Socratics Hobbes believes in the human capacity to bring order to chaos—that is, to bring order or rest to nature as motion and hence peace to the natural condition of mankind (*eirene* to *polemos*). In other words, while Hobbes seems to share with the pre-Socratics and Sophists an understanding of nature as motion, and although he nevertheless adopts Aristotle’s first three causes, he also dispenses with final cause by rooting it in the human capacity to

⁷¹In the *Platonic Leviathan*, Leon Craig argues that Hobbes’s philosophy, although different from Aristotle’s, is nevertheless “teleological in the in the sense permitted by Baconian science, wherein the appeal to Final cause is restricted to actions that arise from within human life.” (pg. 112) While I agree that, for Bacon and Hobbes, “final cause is restricted to actions that arise from within human life,” that is precisely the point: when Final cause is left to man, *nothing is teleological*. Insofar as cause becomes confined to the material, sensual and phenomenal world, Final cause, now determined and decided by man, becomes as conventional—hence, unnatural and variable ie. not final—as the commonwealth itself.

conquer nature. His understanding of nature is defined not simply in terms of motion, but in terms of a motion that can be conquered. Or as Hobbes himself tells us, “Nature (the art whereby God hath made the governs the world) is by the art of man, as in many other things, so in this also imitated, that it can make an artificial animal.” (Introduction.1) Like (as?) God, man shares in the capacity to create.

Whereas for Aristotle, then, philosophy or science amounts to knowledge of final causes and first principles—the purposiveness of nature—for Hobbes, it amounts to geometry, a science that allows for human beings to impute to nature a purpose. As “the most exact of the sciences,” writes Aristotle, philosophy is “connected particularly with primary things,” which are, to be sure, “furthest removed from the senses.” (*Metaphysics*982a) Philosophy is therefore “not productive”—that is to say, utilitarian; for “it was because of wonder,” and not necessity, “that men both now and originally began to philosophize.” As Aristotle explains:

And so, if men indeed began to philosophize to escape ignorance, it is clear that they pursued science for the sake of knowledge and not for any utility. And events bear this out. For when more or less all the necessary sciences existed, and also those connected with leisure and lifestyle, this kind of understanding began to be sought after. So it is clear that we seek it for no other use but rather, as we say, as a free man is for himself and not for another, so is this science the only one of the sciences that is free. (*Metaphysics*, 982b).

As an end in itself, the human capacity for philosophy points to the human longing for the divine. Philosophy is “that which a god would most choose” he writes. “For god is thought to be among the causes for all things and to be a kind of principle, and also god would have such knowledge either exclusively or mainly.” (*Metaphysics*983a) Philosophy for Aristotle, in short, has a transcendental component to it. For Hobbes, by contrast, philosophy has no such component, making it simply knowledge of generation. Or as Hobbes puts it: “By philosophy is understood the knowledge acquired by reasoning from the manner of the generation of anything to the properties, or from the properties to some possible way of

generation of the same, to the end to be able to produce, as far as matter and human force permit, such effects as human life requireth.” (XLVI.1) In other words, for Hobbes, unlike Aristotle, philosophy is productive or active insofar as it amounts simply to knowing cause and effect relationships determined by the motions of matter around us. Again—all thought derives from sense; philosophy, therefore, is rooted reason understood simply as reckoning—that is, an “adding and subtracting” of the “consequences of general names agreed upon for the marking and signifying of our thoughts.” (V.2) By replacing Aristotle’s understanding of natural philosophy with his productive alternative, therefore, Hobbes’s metaphysical teaching in *Leviathan* functions, to a significant extent, as a replacement for Aristotle’s in his *Metaphysics*.

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Consider second Aristotle’s *Politics*. In the *Politics*, Aristotle begins by explaining the generation of the *polis*. In keeping with his doctrine of causality, he argues that, because “every city is some sort of partnership, and that every partnership is constituted for the sake of some good, it is clear that all partnerships aim at some good, and that the partnership that is most authoritative of all and embraces all the others does so particularly, and aims at the most good of all. This is what is called the city or the political partnership.” (*Politics*1252a1-5) As a result, writes Aristotle, such a partnership represents the natural outcome of first, households uniting as villages, and second, villages uniting as cities—that which “while coming into being for the sake of living...exists for the sake of living well.” (*Politics*1252b127-30) By contrast, however, and at the beginning of Part Two of *Leviathan*, Hobbes flips what Aristotle describes as the generation of the *polis* in the *Politics* on its head. Indeed, in his own description of “the causes, generation and definition” of a *polis* or “commonwealth,” Hobbes begins first, by explicitly stating, in direct contrast to Aristotle, that the end of a commonwealth is security—that is, living as opposed to living well: “The

final cause, end, or design of men" (hence, as opposed to nature) "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." (XVII.1) Furthermore, Hobbes argues that it derives neither from the laws of nature, "nor from the conjunction of few men or families," and "nor from a great multitude." (XVII.1-4) In other words, unlike the *polis* for Aristotle, the commonwealth for Hobbes does not represent the natural outcome of families uniting as villages, and villages uniting as cities for the sake of some good and beyond that, the highest good. Rather, the commonwealth is wholly conventional—it exists, according to Hobbes, by covenant only. Whereas Aristotle considers man the material of the polis, the constitution its form, statesmanship or (*politike*) its efficient cause, and "living well" or the "good life" its final purpose (end), then, Hobbes first conflates material with efficient cause by making man both the matter and maker of the commonwealth, and second, conflates formal with final by reducing the good life to mere life: preservation. The final cause of the commonwealth, therefore, is neither virtue nor living well but the condition necessary for a "more contented life:" peace. The final cause, in other words, *is the covenant*—that which, for Aristotle, exists as a form for the sake of something higher: living well.⁷²

Accordingly, in addition to implicitly rejecting Aristotle's doctrine of causality and understanding of the *polis*, Hobbes explicitly rejects his typology of regimes in Book Four of the *Politics*; for, having already stated that there is no *Summum Bonum*, and moreover, that the end or final purpose of government is living or security as opposed to living well or

⁷²On this point, I am indebted to Tom Darby, who was the first to bring to my attention Hobbes's implicit rejection of Aristotle's doctrine of causality in the introduction to *Leviathan*, but that also occurs at the beginning of Part Two—a rejection that, as Strauss notes "was completed only in connexion with Hobbes's mathematical and scientific studies." For as Strauss explains, "as late in the *Elements*, in his definition of the State, i.e. at a central point, Hobbes asserts the aim of the State to be, along with peace and defence, common benefit. With this he tacitly admits Aristotle's distinction between the reason of the genesis of the State and the reason of its being. On the other hand, in parallel passages in the later presentations, more faithful to his own intention, according to which the necessity and the possibility of the State are understood only from the fear of violent death, he leaves out common benefit and thus rejects the above mentioned Aristotelian distinction." (Strauss, *The Political Philosophy of Hobbes*, 33).

virtue, Hobbes conflates not only formal with final cause but in doing so, conflates Aristotle's distinction between monarchy and tyranny, aristocracy and oligarchy, and polity and democracy, as effective and defective regime types. As Hobbes argues In Chapter Nineteen of *Leviathan*, titled "Of the Several Kinds of Commonwealth," there are but three, not six, forms of government: monarchy, democracy, and aristocracy. (XIX.1) And while "there be other names of government in the histories and books of policy," such names are but "of the same forms misliked." (XIX.2) In other words, they are but names used by those who, living under a monarchy, democracy, or aristocracy, are displeased. "They that are discontented under monarchy call it tyranny, and they that are displeased with aristocracy call it oligarchy;" writes Hobbes. (XIX.2) Insofar as there is no *Summum Bonum* and final cause in the Aristotelian sense, names such as tyranny and oligarchy become reflective merely of personal preference—abuses of speech insofar as they become metaphors that deceive.

In contrast to Aristotle, then, evaluating or comparing regime types for Hobbes consists of comparing not what is better or worse but "the difference of convenience, or aptitude to produce the peace and security of the people, for which end they were instituted." (XIX.4) In effect, whereas for Aristotle the best practical regime is a polity—a mixture of democracy and oligarchy—because it supports a middling "way of life" in which it is possible for the most to participate in as citizens (*Politics*, 1295a129-30), for Hobbes the best practical regime is monarchy insofar as it is least prone to falling victim to "those things that weaken a commonwealth." According to Hobbes, "where the public and private interest is the same with the public, there is the public most advanced." (XIX.4) Hence, monarchy is best regime type insofar as "in monarchy the private interest is the same with the public." (XIX.4) Unlike democracy or aristocracy, which engender "treacherous action" and "civil war" on account of the fact that the public's prosperity relies on the private

fortune of many, monarchy is inherently more stable because the public's prosperity relies more so on the private fortune of one. (XIX.4) Again and like Hobbes's metaphysical teaching discussed above, his political teaching in *Leviathan* functions largely as a replacement for Aristotle's in his *Politics*.

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Finally, consider Aristotle's *Nicomachean Ethics*. According to Aristotle, whereas the family and village serve as partnerships intended to satisfy our primordial necessities, the *polis* serves as a partnership intended to satisfy our transcendental longings: our desire for a *Summum Bonum* that, according to Hobbes, does not exist. Hence, while economic well-being—that is, self-sufficiency—is a necessary pre-condition for political life, it is not, to be sure, sufficient for it. What is sufficient for it, rather, is virtue. In the *Ethics*, Aristotle divides the virtues into two categories: moral and intellectual. Whereas moral virtue derives from habituation, intellectual virtue derives from education. The moral virtues, he tells us, are dependent upon striking a mean condition between deficiency and excess. As Aristotle explains: “virtue of character...is concerned with feelings and actions, and among these there is excess and deficiency, and the mean... therefore, virtue is a certain kind of mean condition, since it is, at any rate, something that makes one apt to hit the mean.”(NE1106b) As a result, whereas courage requires striking a mean between cowardice and rashness, and temperance a mean between insensitivity and dissipation, shame amounts to striking a mean between shamelessness and constant shame. (NE1107b-1108b) Furthermore, whereas gentleness is the mean condition between being “slow to anger,” on the one hand, and being irritable, on the other, greatness of soul is the mean condition between smallness of soul and vanity. (NE1107b-1108b). As a sort of mean condition, therefore, practicing moral virtue amounts to practicing moderation.

Key to doing so, however, is acting voluntarily and beyond that, choosing to act. By acting voluntarily, Aristotle means acting in a way that “lies in the agent’s power to perform” with “full knowledge” and “without ignorance either of the person being acted on, the instrument used, or the result he intends to achieve.” (NE1135a20-27). By choosing to act, however, he means something altogether different. While choice “clearly seems to be something voluntary, it is not the same as voluntariness,” writes Aristotle. (NE1111b7-8) Hence, although making a choice presupposes acting voluntarily, choosing is not simply a voluntary action. In addition to a voluntary action, making a choice requires deliberation and according to Aristotle, deliberation is an investigation of the means needed to attain a certain end; it is “concerned with things attainable by human action.” (NE1113b32-33) This makes the object of deliberation and the object of choice “identical,” writes Aristotle. Whereas choice “is the starting point of action,” the starting point of choice is “desire and reasoning directed toward some end”—deliberation (NE1139a31). Choice, therefore, is a “deliberate desire for things that are within our power: we arrive at decision on the basis of deliberation, and then let the deliberation guide our desire.” (NE1113a10) And for Aristotle, a morally strong person—that is to say, a morally virtuous man—is one who “acts from choice.” (NE1111b15)

But as it turns out, acting from choice alone does not necessarily make for practicing moral virtue; for “no choice will be right without practical wisdom and virtue.” (NE1145a5). Practicing virtue in the full sense also requires exercising what Aristotle calls “practical wisdom,” which, as opposed to choice or choosing “determines the steps” that, “in the nature of the case, must be taken to implement [a choice].” (NE1144a20-23) In other words, practical wisdom amounts to good or sound deliberation—determining the *right means* needed to attain *the right end*. According to Aristotle “a man of practical wisdom is he who has the ability to deliberate.” (NE1140a) Once the end (the mean) has been chosen, practical

wisdom functions as the handmaiden of choice; it reveals the steps that must be taken in order to implement it. Or as Aristotle puts it: “virtue makes us aim at the right target, and practical wisdom makes us use the right means.” As a result, practical wisdom is integral to practicing moral virtue insofar as it enables one to hit the target chosen: moderation or the mean condition. This is why, for Aristotle, “virtue in the full sense cannot be attained without practical wisdom.” (NE1144b18-20)

For Hobbes, however, there is neither moral nor intellectual virtue in the Aristotelian sense. In Chapter Six of *Leviathan*, Hobbes writes that the “the definition of the will given commonly by the Schools, that it is a rational appetite, is not good. For if it were, then could there be no voluntary act against reason.” (VI.53) What Hobbes is attacking is Aquinas’ understanding of the will—an understanding that although Christian, is nonetheless informed and influenced by Aristotle’s understanding of choice.⁷³ Indeed, insofar as choice is both desire and reasoning directed towards some end, it anticipates as a concept what Aquinas defines as man’s rational appetite or rational desire—the will. For Hobbes, however, the will is nothing but the “last appetite or aversion immediately adhering to the action,” or rather, “the last appetite in deliberating.” (IV.53) There is, in short, no such thing as choice or a will separate from the passions as there is for Aristotle and following him, Aquinas. To choose, rather, is to act in accordance with the passions—not against, or opposed to them. In effect, for Hobbes, the starting point of action is not

⁷³As David Gallagher points out in his article “Thomas Aquinas On The Will as Rational Appetite:” “Like Aristotle, whose doctrine in this area [Thomas] takes over pretty much intact, Thomas understands deliberation (*consilium*) as the cognitive process by which means are discovered and decided upon in the light of some already desired end. While brute animals arrive at their judgments by natural instinct, human agents do so only by thinking. Means (i.e., what an action will directly effect) are judged according to their suitability for achieving a given end, an end which is either another activity distinct from the action performed, or simply the instantiation of something like justice or friendship. From this point of view the decisive difference between the activity of brutes and of humans derives from the absence of a capacity to deliberate in the former and its presence in the latter. Thus the rationality which distinguishes human behavior from animal behavior is that found in deliberation. If this is so, then we can see that Thomas’s understanding of the will never strays from Aristotle’s fundamental conception of choice as “deliberative desire.”

choice but the passions themselves. As Hobbes explains, “though we say in common discourse, a man had a will once to do a thing, that nevertheless he forbore to do, yet that is properly but an inclination, which makes no action voluntary; because the action depends not of it, but of the last inclination or appetite.” (VI.53) Whether voluntary or not, therefore, action always springs from the passions; for, as Hobbes tells us, “if the intervenient appetites make any action voluntary, then by the same reason all intervenient aversions should make the same action involuntary; and so one and the same action be both voluntary and involuntary.” (VI.53) As stated in Chapter One, for Hobbes human beings are governed entirely by passion.

Important to note, then, is that, without choice or the idea of the will as a rational appetite, the intellectual virtue of practical wisdom on which practicing moral virtue in the full sense is dependent, does not, for Hobbes, exist. Indeed, insofar as choice or the will, according to Hobbes, is determined by the passions, choosing to act in a moral as opposed to immoral way—that is to say, choosing virtue as opposed to vice (the mean between two extremes)—is no longer a possibility for human beings. One is left free to choose only “what the whole sum of desires, aversions, hopes and fears” incline us towards—that is, the last appetite in deliberation. Simply put, for Hobbes there is no practical wisdom in the Aristotelian sense. There is only “prudence,” which has no moral dimension to it. Simply put, there is only what Aristotle refers to as “cleverness,” which sometimes appears to be practical wisdom (insofar as it too is indicative of “a power to perform those steps which are conducive to a goal we have set”), but is nonetheless different.⁷⁴

Also important to recognize, therefore, is that moral virtue as understood by Aristotle cannot and does not, for Hobbes, exist either; for, having reduced choice to

⁷⁴According to Aristotle cleverness is practical wisdom stripped of its moral content: “if the goal is noble, cleverness deserve praise; if the goal is base, cleverness is knavery.” As a result, writes Aristotle, “men of practical wisdom are often described as “clever and knavish.” (NE1144a25-30)

inclination—to a passion—and having effectively stripped practical wisdom of its moral content, what would otherwise qualify as a moral virtue for Aristotle, for Hobbes collapses instead back into the passions. For example, whereas Aristotle defines courage as a mean between cowardice and rashness making the courageous man, on account of his practical wisdom, one “who endures and fears the right things, for the right motive, in the right manner—that is, when “choice and purpose are added to it”—Hobbes defines courage simply as a “hope of avoiding hurt by resistance.” (VI.6) As mentioned in Chapter One, it is reduced simply to one’s appetite or desire to avoid pain. In other words, it is reduced simply to what Aristotle attributes not to courageous men, but to beasts: “Now courageous men act the way they do because it is noble, and a spirited temper gives them support. But wild beasts are motivated by pain. They attack only when they are wounded or scared, but not (when they are left in peace) in a forest.” (NE1116b30-34). For Hobbes, therefore, courage does not reflect a mean or moral condition, but rather, another passion or emotion—a cause as opposed to degree of behavior—along with rashness and cowardice (fear). As Hobbes explains:

...writers of moral philosophy, though they acknowledge the same virtues and vices, yet not seeing wherein consisted their goodness, nor that they come to be praised as the means of peaceable, sociable, and comfortable living, place them in the mediocrity of the 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 (XV.40)

Whether a mean condition or an extreme, then, Hobbes reduces all of the various moral and immoral dispositions that Aristotle discusses in the *Nicomachean Ethics* to mere passions or emotions in the *Leviathan*, making them, in effect, equal causes (as opposed to degrees) of behavior.⁷⁵

⁷⁵This is also why, for example, both Aristotle’s list of moral virtues in the *Nicomachean Ethics* and his list of emotions in the *Rhetoric*, are all in one way or another included in Hobbes’s more comprehensive list of the passions in Chapter Six of *Leviathan*.

To sum up: from Aristotle's *Metaphysics* to his *Politics* and *Ethics*, Hobbes's *Leviathan* functions, in large part, as an attack on and replacement for each. As Hobbes himself tells us: "To what purpose (may some man say) is such subtlety in a work of this nature, where I pretend to nothing but what is necessary to the doctrine of government and obedience?...It is to this purpose: that men may no longer suffer themselves to be abused by them that by this doctrine of separated essences, built on the vain philosophy of Aristotle, would fright them from obeying the laws of their country with empty names, as men fright birds from the corn with an empty doublet, a hat, and a crooked stick." (XLVI.18) In other words, the purpose of his seemingly innocent work in which he pretends "to nothing but what is necessary to the doctrine of government and obedience" is, in actuality, to subvert the vain philosophy Aristotle, on which Aquinas' doctrine of separated essences, among other ideas conducive to sedition or disease, is built. Hence, in order to advance his modern philosophical project—in order to save mankind from the miserable condition of war—he rejects and replaces that which he considers most responsible for preventing them from escape.

Of Beasts and Gods: Hobbes and Aristotle on Human Nature

That he does, however, also means that his account of human nature (discussed in Chapter One) functions as an attack on replacement for Aristotle's in the *Politics*; for just as Hobbes's account of human nature in *Leviathan* conditions the entirety of his political science, so too does that of Aristotle. In effect, in order to replace Aristotle's political science with his more modern and reliable alternative, Hobbes also replaces Aristotle's account of human nature with that of his own. In other words, part of Hobbes's attack on Aristotle and by extension, Aquinas, is his pessimistic and deterministic account of human nature, discussed in Chapter One.

If we recall, I began that Chapter by briefly discussing a passage from the Preface of *De Cive*, in which Hobbes argues that, when taken together, two sayings—one from Cicero and the other from Marcus Telesius—reveal the truth about the human condition: namely that, outside of the state, man is to man an aarant wolf, and that within it, man is to man godlike insofar as he exhibits certain virtues, including justice and charity, that are normally associated with the “Deity.” Furthermore, I concluded that chapter by returning to those sayings so as to show how Hobbes’s systematic analysis of human nature in the first part of *Leviathan* serves only to theoretically substantiate what Hobbes, in *De Cive*, argues is the truth they reveal: namely, that absent government, the natural condition of man is like that of a wolf (solitary, nasty, brutish and short), and that present government he becomes godlike (capable of justice and charity). This I argued, is a pessimistic and deterministic understanding of human nature that serves primarily to prop up his modern philosophical project intended not only to save his fellow Englishman from the “disorders of the present time,” but also Mankind from “that miserable condition of war.”

In addition to propping up his modern philosophical project, however, it also replaces Aristotle’s account of human nature in the *Politics*, which, as opposed to Hobbes’s account of human nature, argues that man is neither beastlike nor godlike but between the two—that is, political by nature. By political, Aristotle means, in essence, man’s unique ability to articulate, discuss, and argue over questions pertaining to justice and injustice, the noble and ignoble, and the beautiful and base. As he himself puts it:

The voice indeed indicates the painful or pleasant, and hence is present in other animals as well; for their nature has come this far, that they have a perception of the painful and pleasant and indicate these thing to each other. But speech serves to reveal the advantageous and the harmful, and hence also the just and the unjust. For it is peculiar to man as compared to the other animals that he alone has perception of good and bad and just and unjust and other things of this sort. (*Politics*1253a19-18)

In other words, whereas both animals and men alike can communicate pleasure and pain, it is on account of man’s unique capacity for speech, his ability to reason and therefore *justify*,

that he is, unlike other animals, political by nature. Man, in short, has *logos*, which serves not only to reveal how he feels—that is to say, what he senses—but *why* he feels what he has sensed; for only human beings, according to Aristotle, can perceive a priori categories of good and bad, just and unjust, making them alone among the animals capable of rationalizing the otherwise irrational and primordial passions that they nevertheless remains subject to.

For Aristotle, therefore, man is by nature between a beast and a god insofar as his necessity, his “living” as opposed to “living well,” is representative of his primordialism while his capacity for speech and by extension, justice—his capacity to argue over what constitutes “living well”—is representative of his longing for the divine. “That man,” therefore, “is much more a political animal than any kind of bee or any herd animal is clear,” writes Aristotle. “For as we assert, nature does nothing in vain; and man alone among the animals has speech.” (*Politics*1253a17-9) Put another way, insofar as our necessities and our appetites (*epithumia*) are indicative of the fact that we are not complete, our capacity for reason or speech (*logos*), not to mention desire or love (*eros*), suggests that we are nonetheless a part of a bigger whole. Whereas a part, therefore, for Aristotle, presupposes a whole, man presupposes a city and therefore politics, making “he who is without a city through nature rather than chance...either a mean sort or superior to man,” that is, “a beast or a god.” (1253a128) Aristotle, then, and like Thucydides, seems to recognize the human condition in terms of both the primordial and the transcendental, and a tension between the two: beastlike and godlike (More on this in Chapter Four).

According to Hobbes, however, and as mentioned above, man is either beastlike or godlike—godlike within a state or commonwealth, and a beastlike without it. Hence, the human capacity for speech on which Aristotle bases his interpretation of human nature does not, for Hobbes, make human beings political by nature; it makes them quarrelsome

and cantankerous: apolitical. In other words, given man's exclusively primordial condition, the human capacity for speech is indicative not of the human concern for justice and connection to the immanent, but rather, the ability for human beings to either rationalize, or worse, mask, what are always and otherwise self-interested primordial desires—chief among which, as we have seen, is the desire for power. Simply put, the human capacity for speech is precisely the problem. As Hobbes explains: "It is true that certain living creatures (as bees and ants) live sociably one with another (which are therefore by Aristotle number amongst political creatures) and yet have no other direction than their particular judgments and appetites, nor speech whereby one of them can signify to another what he thinks expedient for the common benefit; and therefore some man may perhaps desire to know why mankind cannot do the same." (XVII.6) But the reason, according to Hobbes, is *precisely because human beings, unlike ants and bees, have the capacity for reason and speech*. Indeed, whereas these creatures, writes Hobbes, (having not, as man, the use of reason) do not see, nor think they see, any fault in the administration of their common business," among human beings, "there are very many that think themselves wiser, and abler to govern the public, better than the rest" and therefore "strive to reform and innovate, one this way, another that way; and thereby bring it into distraction and civil war." (XVII.9) Furthermore, whereas creatures that live sociably, "though they have some use of voice (in making known to one another their desires and other affections)," they do not, like men, have "that art of words by which some men can represent to others that which is good in the likeness of evil, and evil in the likeness of good, and augment or diminish the apparent greatness of good and evil, discontenting men, and troubling their peace at their pleasure." (XVII.10) Whereas for Aristotle, therefore, the human capacity for reason and speech is what makes human beings fit for political community and the *polis* itself natural (between beasts and gods), for Hobbes,

it is precisely what prevents them from entering into a covenant—it is what, in addition and in connection to their passions, keeps them beastlike as opposed to godlike.

So it follows that, for Hobbes, speech must be reformed according to the dictates of reason (as reckoning) and science so as to prevent human beings from using (abusing) it in a way that engenders war, thus keeping them in their natural condition. Unlike Aristotle in the *Ethics*, who is content simply to point out that “the good cannot be universal” (and hence tacitly accept that debate among and war between human beings will forever be a natural part of their condition) (NE1096a27-28), Hobbes argues instead that, if the good is *not* universal, *there is no universal good*; there is no *Summum Bonum*. Again, focusing on the objects of the passions (those objects on which the Greeks have focused and founded their political science and philosophy), serves only to subvert the commonwealth. As a result, when employed in a way that acknowledges or even alludes to a *Summum Bonum*, rhetoric or speech becomes dangerous and serves only to plant the seeds of sedition. For Hobbes, therefore, it must be reformed.⁷⁶

⁷⁶That Hobbes believed as much is also demonstrated by the fact that he went so far as to translate in so doing significantly alter (amend) Aristotle’s chief work on speech. Said to be one the few works of Aristotle that, according to Aubrey, Hobbes *did* hold in high regard, Aristotle’s *Rhetoric* seems, at first, to have also heavily influenced Hobbes’s account of the passions in *Leviathan*. As Leo Strauss explains: “It would be difficult to find another classical work whose importance for Hobbes’s political philosophy can be compared with that of the *Rhetoric*. The central chapters of Hobbes’s anthropology, those chapters on which, more than on anything else he wrote, his fame as a stylist and as one who knows men rests for all time, betray in style and contents that their author was a zealous reader, not to say a disciple of the *Rhetoric*.” (*The Political Philosophy of Hobbes*, p. 35) Despite what Strauss regards as evidence to the contrary, however, Hobbes’s translation of Aristotle’s *Rhetoric* is no less an attack on its author than is his *Leviathan* or Aristotle’s political science and moral and political psychology in general; for it too is said to be translated in a way that nonetheless lends support to Hobbes’s very unAristotelian modern philosophical project. As Mark E. Wildermuth explains: “Thomas Hobbes frequently puts his own distinctive mark upon the systems of thinking from which he borrows. Neither Galileo’s method nor Euclid’s geometry resist Hobbes’s tendency to reconfigure the thinking of others to suit his own rhetorical and political purposes. The same may be said of Aristotle’s *Rhetoric* which, in Hobbes’s hands, undergoes a transformation that makes it, as some have argued, a useful theory of discourse for creating the kind of philosophy espoused in *Leviathan*.” (“Hobbes, Aristotle and the Materialist Rhetor,” p.77) Indeed, what Hobbes assures his readers contains “in substance all that Aristotle hath written in the three books on that subject,” is actually an abridged translation that either oversimplifies or simply does not include certain passages that might otherwise challenge Hobbes’s larger philosophical project. Or As John T. Hardwood puts it: “While neither an original work of rhetorical theory nor even a full translation of the *Rhetoric*, the Briefe is

As briefly mentioned in Chapter One, Hobbes lists four special uses and corresponding abuses of speech. Special uses of speech, writes Hobbes, consist of first articulating, and second, communicating cause and effect relationships to one another. (IV.3) They also include making known our wills to one another and pleasing others by playing with our words, albeit in an innocent manner. Alternatively, abuses of speech include: the wrongful registering of our thoughts, leading to self-deception; using words metaphorically and unintentionally deceiving others; lying or intentionally deceiving others; and grieving an enemy. (IV.4) Important to note, however, is that whereas the special uses of speech are intended to lend support to what Hobbes, in the next chapter, defines as “science,” their corresponding abuses, which make men not political but apolitical, undermine it. Science, according to Hobbes, is “a knowledge of all the consequences of names appertaining to the subject in hand.” (V.17) As a result, it is dependent, above all, on an “apt imposing of names” ie. on not only communicating in an honest way cause and effect relationships, but also making our wills known to one another, and playing with words in an innocent, as opposed to harmful way. (V.17) In short, it is dependent upon staying true to what Hobbes lists as special uses of speech and hence avoiding their corresponding abuses, which lead to deception. As Hobbes himself tells us: Of the various causes of “absurd conclusions” in reasoning, “the first” is beginning from anything other than set definitions, or “settled significations of words,” and from there onward, giving the wrong name to causes or objects by way of using metaphors. (V.8-16)⁷⁷ Again, because the capacity for

interesting both for what it retains of the original and for what it alter; it illuminates Hobbes’s understanding of rhetoric and anticipates (some would say shapes) his discussion of rhetoric and language in his major political works.” (*The Rhetorics of Thomas Hobbes and Bernard Lamy*, p. 3-4)

⁷⁷Of course, this begs the inevitable question: how does Hobbes reconcile his own use of metaphors without himself abusing speech? Does not his use of the word *Leviathan* (a metaphor for commonwealth), for instance, in fact contradict his own argument? Perhaps. But according to Bryan Garsten what at first appears like a blatant contradiction is in fact no contradiction at all. As Garsten explains: “If the question is how Hobbes could have both attacked rhetoric and used it, the answer is that he used to rhetoric to attack rhetoric. While he used traditional forms or techniques of rhetoric,

reason and speech is what, at the end of the day, prevents human beings from living sociably (like ants and bees), it must be made scientific so as to lend support to, as opposed to naturally undermine, the commonwealth.

To return then: when it comes to human nature, Hobbes argues that human beings are beastlike and in general, naturally predisposed to becoming enemies insofar as they are motivated primarily by a primordial desire for power that “ceaseth only in death.” Yet, such an interpretation directly opposes and in so doing replaces that of Aristotle who argues instead that human beings are between beasts and gods and as such, naturally predisposed to becoming citizens or friends insofar as they, like the partnerships and cities they form, exist not merely for the sake of living but for the sake of living well. Such a disagreement, however, hinges on the interpretation of *logos* and speech as either a capacity indicative of man’s concern and desire for justice, for the transcendent, which makes human beings by nature political and the *polis* or city mankind’s natural environment; or, as a capacity that prevents them entering into a covenant. For Aristotle and in opposition to Hobbes, it is the former: according to him, insofar as nature is purposive and connected to the immanent, the human capacity for speech is ultimately what separates us from ants or bees, thereby making human beings political animals. According to Hobbes, however, such a capacity separates human beings from other social creatures not because it makes them political, but because it makes them asocial or apolitical: insofar as there exists nothing that is immanent,

he put those forms to a novel use and offered rhetoric a new function. The new function of rhetoric was to end its old function.” (*Saving Persuasion: A Defense of Rhetoric and Judgment*, p.27) In other words, treating the problem of speech like any other political problem, Hobbes relies again on the logic of force and counter-force in order to solve it. Viewing the old rhetoric (Aristotle’s and Cicero’s to be specific) as a force to be reckoned with, Hobbes employs that of his own in order to counter it in effect ending the old rhetoric by replacing it with that of his own. Or as Garsten puts it: “Hobbes did not use metaphors and other rhetorical tropes as a way to articulate an argument for deliberating citizens. Rather, he used such devices as a way to close off deliberation so that his advice would not be merely another opinion but the founding and final one.” (*Saving Persuasion*, p.27) Alas, just as he does not use Christianity, in Parts Three and Four of *Leviathan*, as a way to reach out to the faithful but to reconcile their faith with the natural dictates of reason he discusses in Parts One and Two (in effect, ending its old form), neither does he use rhetoric to engage in argument with his readers; he uses it in order to end argument altogether.

speech is a capacity that enables human beings to either relate cause and effect relationships to one another, or mask what are by nature their asocial primordial desires, chief among which is his desire for power. In order to replace Aristotle's political science and the moral and political psychology underlying it with that of his own, therefore, Hobbes also and necessarily replaces Aristotle's understanding of human nature so as to advance his modern philosophical project for peace.

Spiritedness Versus Vainglory and Madness: Hobbes, Aristotle, and the Psychology of
Thumos

Beyond the human capacity for speech or *logos*, however, there is another and, for our purposes, more important aspect of the human condition that, for Aristotle, makes human beings political by nature (and hence one more that Hobbes must confront and overcome in order to advance in his modern philosophical project). I am referring, of course, to the Platonic/Aristotelian concept of *thumos* (spiritedness)—the definition of which is elusive but essential for understanding Aristotle's political science and account of human nature and therefore Hobbes's attack on him. Indeed, as Barbara Koziak puts it in *Retrieving Political Emotion*: "Although Aristotle takes *logos* (reason, speech, argument) as the unique capacity of human beings that enables them to be political animals, we must keep in mind that speech is emotional—in fact, emotion is necessary to successful rhetoric—and that reason ultimately articulates what is hidden in judgments inherent in emotions."⁷⁸ Or as Aristotle himself puts it in the *Rhetoric*: "the emotions are those things through which, by undergoing change, people come to differ in their judgments." (*Rhetoric*1378a8) As a result and as Koziak goes on to explain, *logos* therefore "requires that the capacity of *thumos* be already present for political community."⁷⁹ An important part of Hobbes's attack on Aristotle's political science and moral and political psychology, then, is his own treatment of

⁷⁸Barbara Koziak, *Retrieving Political Emotion* (University Park, Pennsylvania: The Pennsylvania State University Press, 2000), 97.

⁷⁹Ibid.

thumos—his attempt, as we shall see, to eradicate as much as possible what for him amounts to an politically volatile, and sedition inducing passion from both the human psyche and politics in general.

And for good reason: for the ancients, *thumos* is the outstanding feature of warlike and honor loving individuals and in its most basic form reveals itself through anger or righteous indignation—precisely what makes a human being capable of rising above the otherwise rational fear of death, violent or otherwise. According to Aristotle, anger can be defined as a “desire, accompanied by [mental and physical] distress, for apparent retaliation because of an apparent slight that was directed, without justification, against oneself or those to one.” (*Rhetoric*1378b1) One of the best examples of *thumos* as anger, then, is the rage of Achilles in Homer’s epic, *The Iliad*. After his slave girl, Briseis, is taken from him, Achilles lashes out in a fit of uncontrollable rage—an intuitive reaction to a perceived injustice, inflicted upon him by Agamemnon. “Anguish gripped Achilles” writes Homer, “the heart in his rugged chest was pounding, torn...” (*Iliad*220) In response, Achilles insists that Agamemnon return Briseis to him so as to uphold the integrity of a justice, a principle, he believes in: namely, that the best warrior should receive what it is owed to him. As the best warrior, what is owed to Achilles is honor paid in the form of a slave girl for having risked his life on the battlefield. Having been deprived, however, of not only what is his but also what is *rightfully* his, Achilles’ *thumos* takes over, revealing itself in the form of spirited anger for having something *wrongfully* taken from him.

As the example of Achilles illustrates, *thumos* is indicative of one’s overall sense of self-worth (honor) and connected to it, justice, which therefore makes it intimately connected to *logos* or the human capacity for speech and reason—that is, the human capacity, as mentioned above, to discuss the just and unjust. In fact, for this very reason, in the *Republic*, Socrates defines *thumos* as that which is between *eros* and *logos*, the desiring

and reasoning parts of the tripartite soul. Although at first he describes *thumos* in terms simply of an “irresistible and unbeatable” force, the presence of which “makes every soul fearless and invincible in the face of everything” (just as, for instance, the rage of Achilles, presents itself as an irresistible and unbeatable force, making him in effect, fearless as a warrior) in Book Four, he nevertheless separates *thumos* as a passion from *eros* so as to reveal its connection to *logos*. As Socrates explains:

And what about when a man believes he’s being done injustice? Doesn’t his spirit in this case boil and become harsh and form an alliance for battle with what seems just; and, even if it suffers in hunger, cold and everything of the sort, doesn’t it stand firm and conquer, and not cease from its noble efforts before it has succeeded, or death intervenes, or before it becomes gentle, having been called *by the speech within him*...? (Italics mine) (440c-d)

According to Socrates, then, although harsh, firm, and even death defying, *thumos* as a passion is nonetheless connected to *logos* or reason insofar as it tends to form an alliance with what seems just, and can be tamed by the speech that exists “within” a human being.

This is also, however, the case for Aristotle. Inheriting from Socrates and Plato the concept of *thumos*, he first discusses it in terms of an intuitive reaction that arises without forethought in response to a perceived injustice—similar to the rage of Achilles. Specifically, he says that, “acts due to anger [*thumos*] are rightly judged not to be committed with malice aforethought,” for “the initiative rests not with the man who acts in anger but with him who provokes it.” And as he goes on to explain, “the issue is not whether the act took place or not but whether it was just; for feelings of anger are aroused by an apparent injustice.” (NE1135b26-29) In other words, *thumos* is reactionary by nature and tends to reveal itself through anger (rage), following an attack on one’s being, physical or otherwise. As Aristotle later notes, however, for this reason *thumos* is also connected to reason or *logos*. As Aristotle explains in Book Seven of the *Ethics*:

At this point we may observe that moral weakness in anger is less base than moral weakness in regard to the appetites. For in a way, anger [*thumos*] seems to listen to reason, but to hear wrong, like hasty servants, who run off before they have heard everything their master tells them, and fail to do what they were ordered, or like dogs,

which bark as soon as there is a known without waiting to see if the visitor is a friend. In the same way, the heat and swiftness of its nature make anger hear but not listen to an order, before rushing off to take revenge. For reason and imagination indicate that an insult or a slight has been received, and anger [*thumos*], drawing the conclusion, as it were, that it must fight against this sort of thing, simply flares up at once. Appetite, on the other hand, is no sooner told by reason and perception that something is pleasant than it rushes off to enjoy it. Consequently, while anger somehow follows reason, appetite does not. (NE1149a24-36)

For Aristotle, therefore, and like Plato, *thumos* is nonetheless connected to reason insofar as it seems to “listen” to it (for reason indicates that an insult or slight has been received), making it between reason, on the one hand, and desire, on the other. Hence, although Aristotle does not, to be sure, inherit Plato’s understanding of the tripartite soul, he nevertheless understands the psychology of *thumos* in a similar way. As mentioned above, only human beings, according to Aristotle, share in the capacity for reason and can discuss the just and unjust. That Aristotle, in his *Rhetoric* then, begins his account of the passions by first discussing anger is also indicative of the ambiguous relationship between *thumos* and *logos*. After all, to be angry implies having been wronged which in turn, implies having a reason to justify it—that is, a grievance that serves to justify how one feels after having been slighted, rightly or wrongly.

Important to note, then, is that the rage of Achilles and *thumos* in general is not simply an expression of and reaction to pain in the physical sense—it is an expression of mental frustration as well: his capacity as a political animal to perceive the just and unjust and respond accordingly, as he does through rage and as we later find out, grief.⁸⁰ In effect, *thumos* is as much a part of man’s political nature as *logos* insofar as it plays the role of intermediary between the human capacity for reason, on the one hand, and satisfying our otherwise primordial desires, on the other. In fact, as anger it represents precisely this: a *desire for justice*, not yet satisfied. It functions as some kind of arbiter or intermediary

⁸⁰“Achilles wept,” writes Homer. (*Iliad*413) “Reaching out his arms, again and again, he prayed to his dear mother: “Mother! You gave me life, short as that life will be, so at least Olympian Zeus, thundering up on high, should give me honor—but now he gives me nothing.” (*Iliad*415-419).

between desire and reason and is indicative of a kind of tension between the primordial and the transcendental, characteristic of the human condition. It is, in addition to *logos*, also what makes human beings between beasts and gods, for it is indicative of the attempt at trying to reconcile what our desires and appetites as animals incline us towards, with our capacity as moral and political beings to justify them.

For Hobbes, however, *thumos*, like *logos*, and the relationship between the two, does not, as it does for Aristotle, amount to further evidence of man's nature as a political animal. Rather, it points again to man's apolitical nature as an animal that is by nature vain and motivated exclusively by his primordial passions. In other words, insofar as Hobbes rejects and replaces Aristotle's understanding of human nature as political, he also rejects and replaces the notion that *thumos*, like *logos*, makes human beings social instead defining it in what amounts to a novel and completely different way.

As explained in Chapter One, because there is no *Summum Bonum* for Hobbes he discusses the passions (as opposed to Aristotle) only as they reflect and are indicative of the exclusively primordial existence of human beings. And as noted above, for this very reason, that which makes human beings political by nature for Aristotle (speech) must, for Hobbes, be reformed according to reason and science so as to prevent it from being used (abused) by human beings for the purposes of simply masking their otherwise apolitical primordial desires—chief among which is the desire for power. Hobbes's primordialism and the reductionism to which it leads, however, also informs how he treats the ancient concept of *thumos*. Indeed, as opposed to Plato and Aristotle who understand *thumos* as that which is between *eros* and *logos* and to a certain extent, informed by the latter, Hobbes severs its connection to reason in the classic sense altogether by reducing reason as *logos* to reason as rationality (reckoning). As mentioned earlier, reason for Hobbes is instrumental—it does not, as it does for Aristotle, or Plato, represent any human connection to the immanent. As a

result, neither does *thumos* as a passion: just as Hobbes, for instance, collapses what Aristotle defines as moral virtues back into the passions (in effect, severing them from reason as a faculty independent from passion) so he severs the concept of *thumos* from *logos* in effect annihilating the ancient conception of tripartite soul and beyond that, Aristotle's moral and political psychology altogether. As opposed to understanding *thumos* as something connected to reason as *logos*, Hobbes instead, understands and treats it as just another passion—an extension of the primordial desire for power after and power that, according to Hobbes, so defines the nature of human beings.

In effect, *thumos* for Hobbes is not *thumos* per se and representative of a tension between the primordial, on the one hand, and the transcendental, on the other, as it is for Plato and Aristotle. For Hobbes, rather, it becomes what he terms vainglory insofar as spiritedness and anger become passions indicative only of man's vanity—his egoistic, purely selfish, and primordial nature. Not surprisingly, therefore, in Chapter Six of *Leviathan*, Hobbes defines behavior as exemplified by Achilles above, not as spirited but instead as “vainglorious.” According to Hobbes, vainglory can be defined as “joy, arising from imagination of a man's own power and ability, is that exultation of the mind which is called glorying.” (VI.39) And as he goes on to explain: “the vainglory which consisteth in the feigning or supposing of abilities in ourselves (which we know are not) is most incident to young men, and nourished by the histories or fictions of gallant persons.”(VI.41) Insofar as Achilles, then, is driven by honor and experiences “joy arising from” his “power and ability” (not to mention the flattery of others) he is not, for Hobbes, simply thumotic or the embodiment of *thumos*, but rather, the embodiment of vainglory. Moreover, insofar as vainglory is nourished by “the histories or fictions of gallant persons,” for Hobbes it is

nourished by the example of Achilles himself—a problem he was well aware of, and through his own translations of Homer, one he tried to fix.⁸¹

Important to note, however, is that Hobbes not only redefines and in so doing reduces *thumos* to vainglory, as if the latter becomes merely a synonym for the former. As we later find out, he reduces *thumos* more generally to what he terms “madness.” For Hobbes, “to have stronger and more vehement passions for anything that is ordinarily seen in others is what which men call Madness,” and “the passion whose violence or continuance maketh madeness is either vainglory, which is commonly called pride and self-conceit, or great dejection of mind.” (VIII.16;18) In other words, the passion that leads to insanity or madness is either great vainglory—that is, great anger—or “dejection of mind,” by which Hobbes actually means grief.⁸² Whereas the first, writes Hobbes, “subjecteth a man to anger, the excess whereof is the madness called rage and fury,” the second, “subjects a man to causeless fears, which is a madness commonly called melancholy.” (VIII.18-19) In short, whereas *thumos*, for Plato and Aristotle leads to rage but is necessary for moral courage, for Hobbes it leads only to madness: Achilles’ rage, on the one hand, juxtaposed by his grief or despair on the other. Achilles is not simply the embodiment of vainglory; he is the embodiment of insanity.

Unlike Aristotle, therefore, Hobbes does not inherit from Plato the term or idea of *thumos* and recognize it as a capacity representative of our political natures—that is,

⁸¹Three years before his death, Hobbes published his last works: a translation of Homer’s *Iliad* and a translation of Homer’s *Odyssey*. According to Hobbes, he did so because he “had nothing else to do.” But according to Eric Nelson, editor of *Thomas Hobbes’s Translations of Homer: The Iliad and the Odyssey*, in saying this, Hobbes was “only joking.” (Introduction, XIX) The truth was that he “saw it as his task...to tame Homeric Poems and make them safe for philosophy.” (Introduction, XXII) As a result, “Hobbes routinely departed from Homer’s Greek and from previously published translations and commentaries in order to bring the Iliad and the Odyssey into alignment with his view on politics, rhetoric, aesthetics, and theology. Hobbes’s *Iliads and Odysseys of Homer* are a continuation of *Leviathan* by other means.” (Introduction, XXII)

⁸²According to Hobbes, dejection of mind is “grief from opinion of want of power” (VI.40) making “sudden dejection...the passion that causeth weeping.” (VI.43)

connected to *logos*. Instead, he redefines it on his own terms and in his own way. Given his bifurcation and reduction of the tripartite soul into reason reckoning, on the one hand, and passion on the other, it no longer represents or functions as some kind of intermediary between *eros* and *logos*, and the primordial and transcendental poles that for Aristotle so defines human nature. Rather, it functions as a passion that (like most passions) stands in opposition to reason and instead serves only to corrupt reason understood as reckoning: rationality. Or as Hobbes himself puts it: “glorying to no end, is vain-glory, and contrary to reason; and to hurt without reason, tendeth to the introduction of war; which is against the law of nature and is commonly stiled by the name of cruelty.” (XV.19)

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But is it? Important to note is that because Hobbes reduces reason to rationality, in effect, severing *thumos* from reason as *logos* and reducing it simply to another passion or appetite (vainglory), he also makes it governable, and in theory largely eradicable as a passion from the human psyche in a way that, for Plato and Aristotle, is inconceivable. For Plato and Aristotle, the key to governing *thumos* lies in making it the ally of *logos*—the perfectly just city or more simply and practically, the common good. In other words, it lies in educating thumotic young men, like Achilles, in a way that will make them loyal to and defenders of reason as opposed to desire, justice as opposed to injustice, and philosophy as opposed to tyranny. In Book Two of the *Republic*, for instance, Socrates likens *thumos* to the nature of a noble dog who “is to be as gentle as can be with [those who are familiar] and people they know and the opposite with those don’t know.” (*Republic*375e) As a result, he attributes to *thumos* a dual nature making it conducive as a passion to both peace and war, justice and injustice alike. Furthermore, in Book Four, he suggests that *thumos* can become the natural ally of *logos*, providing it be educated in a way that brings it in line with the latter. As Socrates explains:

Isn't proper for the calculating part [*logos*] to rule, since it is wise and has forethought about all of the soul, and for the spirited part [*thumos*] to be obedient to it and its ally?...So, as we were saying, won't a mixture of music and gymnastic make them accordant, tightening the one and training it in fair speeches and learning, while relaxing the other with soothing tales, taming it by harmony and rhythm...And these two, thus trained and having truly learned their business and been educated, will be set over the desiring [*eros*]...and they'll watch it for fear of its being filled with the so called pleasure of the body and thus becoming big and strong then not minding its own business, but attempting to enslave and rule what is not appropriately ruled by its class and subverting everyone's entire life."(*Republic*441e-442b)

By virtue of a proper education in both music and gymnastic, then, the thumotic warrior, like a dog, will become as gentle as possible towards his fellow citizens and a defender of peace while remaining, at the same time, vicious towards his enemies in the event of war. In short, the key to governing *thumos*, for Plato, lies in educating otherwise young tyrannical men in a way that will make them partisans of *logos* as opposed to *eros*, and hence defenders or "shepherds" of the perfectly just city.

But the same, however, is more or less true for Aristotle. At the beginning of the *Ethics*, he explains why a young man (such as Achilles) is "not equipped to be a student of politics." (*NE*1095a3) Specifically, he argues that, because a young man "has no experience in the actions which life demands of him," and because he follows his emotions (*pathos*) as opposed to his reason (*logos*), his studying of politics (the end of which is action) would be "pointless and unprofitable." (*NE*1095a4-6) As he goes on to explain, however, "those who regulate their desires and actions by a rational principle will greatly benefit from a knowledge of this subject." (*NE*1095a10-11.) Hence, insofar as *thumos* can help regulate desires by a rational principle, the key to peace becomes educating young thumotic men in a way that will bring their otherwise spirited and volatile natures under the rule of reason. Inheriting from Plato the notion that *thumos* has a dual nature, however, Aristotle goes one step further, casting it also and more generally as the basis for community and friendship. As he explains in the *Politics*: "It is evident, therefore, that those who are to be readily guided to virtue by the legislator should be both endowed with thought and spirited

[thumotic] in nature. For as to what some assert should be present in guardians, to be affectionate toward familiar persons but savage toward those who are unknown, it is spiritedness that creates affectionateness; for this is the capacity of soul by which we feel affection.” (*Politics*1327bl36-42) As a result, provided young men, like Achilles (and spirited citizens more generally) are guided to virtue by a legislator—that is to say, they receive a proper education—they can be taught to serve friends (and hence their city) as opposed to themselves. The key to governing *thumos* is again, to provide otherwise tyrannical young men, like Achilles, with an education designed to transform them into partisans of the *polis*, able to satisfy an otherwise unruly desire for honor by practicing civic virtue and serving the common good as opposed to themselves instead. Whereas Plato’s prescription for rest or peace, therefore, entails ordering *thumos* towards *logos*, and (hence thumotic auxiliaries towards the perfectly just city) so as to reign in an otherwise unruly *eros* characteristic of tyranny, Aristotle’s prescription entails ordering spirited citizens towards the common good and hence making citizens friends so as to prevent faction and civil war from breaking out among them; for as Aristotle, quoting Euripides, notes “harsh are the wars of brothers.” (*Politics*1328a15)

For Hobbes, however, such a prescription is not only unreliable but also impossible. Given his reduction of *thumos* to vainglory and vainglory to madness, relying on moral education and the ordering of *eros* towards *logos* by way of *thumos* as a prescription for peace (like Plato and Aristotle) means, at the end of the day, leaving politics and the fate of peace itself in the hands of vainglorious men who prefer honor to peace at the expense of engendering sedition and war. Put another way, it amounts to leaving the goal of peace, and Hobbes’s modern philosophical project in the hands of the insane and criminal: “Of the passions that most frequently are the causes of crime, one is vain glory, or a foolish overrating of their own worth, as if difference of worth were and effect of their wit, or riches,

or blood, or some other natural quality.” (XXVII.13) As a result, instead of educating *thumos* and spirited young men or citizens in a way that will make them allies of *logos* and the common good (and hence, enemies of an unruly *eros* or self-interested partisan desires) Hobbes opts for another prescription—one that, although wholly modern can nevertheless be clarified and perhaps better explained by first returning to Homer.

As previously mentioned and as the example of Achilles illustrates above, *thumos* is ultimately what enables human beings to transcend their otherwise rational fear of violent death insofar as satisfying the human desire for justice, vengeance, and honor, necessarily requires engaging in what, on the surface, seems like wholly irrational behavior. As Diotima explains to Socrates in the *Symposium*: “inasmuch as in the case of human beings, if you were willing to glance at their love of honor, you would be amazed at their irrationality unless you understand what I have said and reflect how uncanny their disposition is made by their love of renown, and their setting up immortal fame for eternity; and for the sake of fame even more than for their children, they are ready to run all risks, to exhaust their money, to toil at every sort of toil, and to die.” (39c-d) That Hobbes, however, understands spiritedness simply as vainglory and the passions more generally from an exclusively primordial point of view, his prescription for peace and for governing *thumos* lies, rather, in eradicating as much as possible spiritedness from the human psyche and hence, in the very lesson Achilles as a vainglorious warrior learns and tells Odysseus only after he has died:

No winning words about death to me, shinning Odysseus!
By god, I'd rather slave on earth for another man—
some dirt poor tenant farmer who scrapes to keep alive—
than rule down here over all the breathless dead.”⁸³

In a way, what Achilles learns in death is precisely the lesson that Hobbes wishes to teach to the living: better to be a “subject” living under an absolute monarch in peace, than to pursue

⁸³Homer, *The Odyssey*, translated by Robert Fagles (New York: Penguin Books), lines 555-558.

honor for the sake of honor and end up living a solitary, brutish, nasty, and short life, as a beastlike tyrant immersed in a war of all against all. Better to live according to fear as opposed to honor as a godlike subject under Hobbes's king of the proud: Leviathan.

Rather than rely on moral education, therefore, Hobbes opts instead for fear—the passion, as we have seen, “to be reckoned upon.” “Of all the passions that inclineth men least to break the laws is fear. Nay (excepting some generous natures) it is the only thing (when there is appearance of profit or pleasure by breaking the laws) that makes men keep them,” writes Hobbes (XXVII.19) Moreover, and as we also saw in Chapter One, fear is the only reliable passion that, more than any other, inclines human beings towards peace. In order to teach the living what Achilles learns only in death, therefore, Hobbes suggests pitting fear and, more specifically, the rational fear of violent death against the otherwise irrational desire for power that human beings by nature and in general exhibit. Unlike Plato or Aristotle's prescription for peace, in other words, Hobbes's prescription eradicates pride or vainglory as much as possible from the human psyche by tempering it with the fear of violent death, so as bring human beings in line with reason as rationality.

In sum, whereas *thumos* for Plato and Aristotle is a passion connected to reason in need of an education, *thumos* as vainglory and madness for Hobbes is disconnected and opposed to reason and hence, in need of eradication. Insofar as it can (and more often than not, does) make human beings blind to necessity and unwilling to act in accordance with their immediate self-interest (blind, in other words, to reason understood as reckoning) it stands in the way of education. Hence, as opposed to relying on education as a vehicle for taming and ordering *thumos* towards *logos* (which for Hobbes is impossible, given the nature of his philosophical project) Hobbes's solution is to eradicate as much as possible in the human psyche that which, as opposed to Aristotle, he reduces to a wholly belligerent passion: vain-glory. In short, in order to govern *thumos*, Hobbes opts for the education that

Achilles has received in the *Odyssey*, as opposed to the education that Socrates or Aristotle would give him in either the *Republic* or the *Politics* and *Ethics*.⁸⁴ He replaces the ancient prescription for peace with a more reliable alternative: the tempering of vanity or pride by way of fear in the service of reason.⁸⁵

Summary

I began this chapter by stating that in order to account for the difference between Hobbes and Thucydides on the question of human nature discussed in Chapter Two, we must first look to Aristotle and Hobbes's attack on him. In this chapter I have focused on doing just that. Discussing first, why Hobbes held so much contempt for Aristotle I then showed how the *Leviathan* as a work functions, in large part, as a replacement for Aristotle's *Metaphysics*, *Politics*, and *Ethics*. Finally, I turned the question of human nature, and showed how Hobbes's account of human nature in *Leviathan* (summarized in Chapter One) not only replaces that of Aristotle in the *Politics*, but insofar as it does, eliminates as much as possible from the human psyche and political life something that for the Aristotle is a natural part of

⁸⁴In the *Republic*, for instance, Socrates suggests that, as part of their education the auxiliaries and guardians of the perfectly just city should be "told things that will make them fear death least." Otherwise, he asks Glaucon, "do you believe anyone who has this terror in him would ever become courageous?" (*Republic*386a) Likewise, in the *Ethics*, Aristotle notes that "the kind of courage that comes from a spirited temper seems to be the most natural and becomes true courage when choice and purpose are added to it." (*NE*1117a2-5) As a result, when governed by a rational principle—when habituated by way of a moral education—*thumos* as courage becomes a moral virtue.

⁸⁵In "Elements of Spiritedness in Hobbes," Timothy Fuller argues that, rather than attempt to eradicate *thumos* from or temper the desire for honor in the human psyche by way of fear, Hobbes merely redefines it in a way that makes it conducive to obeying the natural laws of mankind. As he himself puts it: "Spiritedness becomes continual willing to mediate and this to preserve the conditions in which men honor the providential intention. From this perspective, law-abidingness is a high moral achievement dependent on the individuals' continually willing to regulate their passions as natural beings in favor of civil association: this is spiritedness as self-limitation." As much as I find this interesting, in my view, it wrongfully conflates the concept of *thumos* with the modern concept of the will, and ascribes to Hobbessian man a will in the Kantian sense of the term—that is, a will that stands in opposition to inclination and passion. As discussed in Chapter One, for Hobbes, the will is nothing other than "the last appetite in deliberating." In short, *the will is akin to acting on an inclination*, making one's willingness to obey ie. self-limiting, a matter not so much of honor but of fear. This is why the natural condition of mankind (war) brings us to reason via the fear of violent death and not via honor. Honor or *thumos*, for Hobbes, leads us away from reason towards war. Hobbes replaces *thumos* as the natural ally of *logos* with fear as the natural ally of reason, *precisely because* spiritedness is too unreliable as a passion for order.

the human condition, but for Hobbes makes human beings apolitical and “mad:” *thumos*. In so doing, I ultimately concluded that in order to advance his modern philosophical project—that is, to save mankind from the miserable condition of war—Hobbes replaces Aristotle’s political science and the moral and political psychology underlying it by replacing his understanding of human nature on which it is predicated with that of his own. Having discussed at length Hobbes’s attack on Aristotle, therefore, we can now return to the question of human nature in Hobbes and Thucydides; for as we have seen, just as Thucydides recognizes the human condition in terms of a tension between the primordial and the transcendental, so Aristotle understands human beings in a way that places them between beasts and gods.

Chapter Four:

Hobbes's Attack on Thucydides?

And as to rebellion in particular against monarchy; one of the most frequent causes of it, is the reading of the books of policy, and histories of the ancient Greeks...

-Hobbes, *Leviathan*, XXIX.14

As I pointed out in both Chapter One and the previous chapter, for Hobbes, war and civil war in particular, like plague, is a disease. And just as disease can be cured by way of modern science and medicine, so war can be cured by way of a medicinal and modern political science—one that, as was previously discussed, is intended to replace the political science of Aristotle and ancient prescription for peace with a more realistic and reliable alternative. Indeed, rather than casting *thumos* as the potential ally of *logos* so as to make it capable of reining in an unruly *eros* (like Plato) or casting it as the basis for friendship and community like Aristotle, Hobbes's political science reduces *thumos* to vainglory and madness and argues instead for the tempering of it by way of fear (and more specifically, the fear of violent death) so as to bring otherwise spirited human beings in line with reason (but only as reckoning and therefore rationality). Hobbes's political science, then, counsels not for an ordered soul but instead annihilates the soul altogether by severing from reason in the classic sense that which makes us, according to Aristotle, political by nature—our desire for justice as expressed by our *logos*: our thumotic natures as political animals. Hobbes, in short, rejects outright Aristotle's political science, moral and political psychology, and own account of human nature underlying it, so as to cure mankind from the disease it supposedly engenders: civil war.

In this chapter, then, my aim is to show how Hobbes's rejection of Aristotle's political science, and by extension, Aristotle's understanding of human nature discussed in Chapter Three, can ultimately be used to account for the difference between Hobbes's understanding of human nature summarized in Chapter One, and that of Thucydides in

Chapter Two. Discussing first Hobbes's affection for Thucydides and how it actually and ironically stems from his contempt for Aristotle, I then question the extent to which this is theoretically possible given that, as an ancient Thucydides in part represents a tradition that Hobbes fundamentally rejects. Next, and in keeping with Chapter Three, I argue that because the *Leviathan* as a work functions as an attack on and replacement for Aristotle's *Metaphysics*, *Ethics*, and *Politics*, it also and in some ways can be read as somewhat of an attack on Thucydides' *History* which, as I will endeavor to show, contains arguments about all three that either anticipate or complement those of Aristotle. Finally, and by way of a summary, I return to the question of human nature and *thumos* and argue that Hobbes's dismissal of the idea that man is by nature a political animal and connected to it, his ambition to eliminate as much as possible spiritedness from political life first discussed in Chapter Three, helps to clarify what in Chapter Two I suggested is the major difference between Hobbes and Thucydides on the question of human nature—a recognition, albeit implicit, on the part of the latter of man's necessity or primordial existence *and* his transcendental longings or yearning for justice. In so doing, I ultimately argue that, whereas Thucydides implicitly accepts war and *thumos* as a natural part of the human condition Hobbes cannot and that latter's desire to eradicate *thumos* as much as possible from the human psyche and political life makes his attack on Aristotle, discussed in Chapter Three, somewhat of an unintended attack on the very thinker he admired most: Thucydides.

"The Greatest Historiographer that Ever Writ"?

In his verse autobiography, Hobbes writes that, after having graduated from Oxford and upon the recommendation of his college rector, he entered the service of Sir William Cavendish who, for the next twenty years, tutored him in the works of various "Latins" and "Greeks" including Homer, Virgil, Horace, Sophocles, and Aristophanes. (65-82) He goes on to write, however, that of all the works he read, none pleased him more than that of

Thucydides; for according to Hobbes, Thucydides “says democracy’s a foolish thing,” and that wiser than a republic “is one king.” (83-87) Already, therefore, and prior to the publication of either *De Cive* or *Leviathan*, Hobbes seemed to have found in Thucydides what in both works he himself argues—namely, that when it comes to producing peace and security, democracy is the least effective at doing so, making wiser than a democracy a single king, in which “the private interest is the same with the public.” (XIX.4) It would seem, then, that Hobbes’s self-professed admiration for Thucydides actually stems, in part, from his contempt for Aristotle who, as we saw in Chapter Three, argues instead that insofar as the “middling sort of life is best” a middling sort regime is foremost—that is, a polity. In fact, as Strauss notes: “at the time when the tradition stemming from Aristotle was being decisively shaken, Hobbes turned from Aristotle to Thucydides.”⁸⁶ In other words, at the time when Descartes and Bacon, among others, began to question the authority of antiquity, Hobbes turned from studying its philosophy to history. His love for Thucydides, therefore, actually and ironically stems from his contempt for Aristotle.

Important to note, however, is that his reason for turning from Aristotle to Thucydides is also somewhat ironic: according to Strauss, like Aristotle “Hobbes too understood Thucydides as a historian as distinguished from a philosopher.”⁸⁷ However, unlike Aristotle, Hobbes “understood the relation between the historian and philosopher differently.”⁸⁸ In the *Poetics*, Aristotle writes that “the distinction between historian and poet is not in the one writing prose and the other verse—you might put the work of Herodotus into verse, and it would still be a species of history.” Rather, the distinction between the two lies in this: that the historian “describes the thing that has been” while the poet “a kind of thing that might be.” As a result, writes Aristotle, poetry is “something more

⁸⁶Strauss, *City and Man*, 147.

⁸⁷*Ibid.*

⁸⁸*Ibid.*

philosophic and of graver import than history, since its statements are of the nature rather of universal, whereas those of history are singulars.” (*Poetics*1451b1-8) For Aristotle, then, whereas philosophy is about stating universals (first principles), history is about recounting particulars (the political effects of first principles). But for Hobbes, the opposite is true. For him, the distinction between historian and poet is not only rooted in the distinction between prose and verse, but also, in the fact that the *historian* (and not the poet) *is more philosophic* and of greater import. As Hobbes explains: unlike in a good poem, where fancy as opposed to judgment must be eminent, “in a good history,” judgment as opposed to “fancy” “must be eminent, because the goodness consisteth in the method, in the truth, and in the choice of the actions that are most profitable to be known.” (VIII.5) As a result, unlike Aristotle, Hobbes sees “the characteristic difference between the historian...and the philosopher in the fact that the historian presents the universals silently.”⁸⁹ He sees, in other words, the characteristic difference between the historian and the philosopher in the fact that the historian tacitly reveals what the philosopher explicitly argues.⁹⁰ History for Hobbes, therefore, is as productive as philosophy: the former through profitable instruction, and the latter through “reasoning from the manner of the generation of anything to the properties” and vice versa (XLVI.1) As opposed to Aristotle, he understands history and the historian (and for our purposes, Thucydides in particular) in the same way as his good friend and mentor, Bacon understands them. According to Schlatter, Bacon considered the *History* to be the most perfect type of historical writing: “In the *Second Book of the Advancement of Learning* he states that the business of the historian is to describe events and allow the reader to draw his own conclusions from them; such a view of the historian's task would lead the critic to prefer Thucydides to Livy or any of the other classic

⁸⁹Strauss, *The City and Man*, 144.

⁹⁰For example whereas Thucydides, according to Hobbes, tacitly reveals that democracy's a foolish thing, Hobbes explicitly argues as much.

historians.”⁹¹ Furthermore, he mentions Thucydides as one of the historians worthy of being incorporated without alteration or omission into a Universal History.⁹² As a result, “it is,” writes Schlatter, “entirely possible that Hobbes’s translation is a part of Bacon’s grand plan for collecting and digesting all knowledge as a preparation for its advancement.”⁹³

For Hobbes as for Bacon, therefore, Thucydides is not simply an ancient historian like, for example, Herodotus. According to Hobbes, “Herodotus undertook to write of those things, of which it was impossible to know the truth; and which delight more the ear with fabulous narrations than satisfy the mind with truth.”⁹⁴ Thucydides, by contrast, represents the birth of something new, making him a founding father of it; he is the founding father of scientific history.⁹⁵ I am referring, of course, to history in the scientific sense, which relies on causal reasoning (as opposed to theological or divine) and which takes as its guide, a dedication to objectivity and to conveying the facts surrounding certain events, as opposed to putting forth subjective opinions about those events. As Thucydides himself explains: “So devoid of effort is most people’s search for the truth [that] they would rather turn to what is readily available... I however, considered it my responsibility to write neither as I learned from the chance informant nor according to my own opinion, but after examining what I had witnessed myself and what I learned from others, with the utmost possible accuracy in each case.” (1.20-21) As the first “scientific” historian, therefore, Thucydides distances

⁹¹Schlatter, “Thomas Hobbes and Thucydides,” 356.

⁹²Ibid.

⁹³Ibid.

⁹⁴Thomas Hobbes, “The History of Thucydides,” in *The Peloponnesian War: The Complete Hobbes Translation*, edited by David Greene (Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, 1989), 579.

⁹⁵Bacon and Hobbes were not the only ones who thought of Thucydides as the founding father of scientific history. Consider, for instance, Rousseau’s endorsement of Thucydides in *Emile*, where he says that Thucydides is the “true model of historians” insofar as “he reports the facts without judging them,” but “omits none of the circumstances proper to make us judge them ourselves.” (p.239) Or, consider Hume’s evaluation of Thucydides in his essay “Of the Populoussness of Ancient Nations” in which he states that “the first page of THUCYDIDES is, in my opinion, the commencement of real history” and that “all preceding narrations are so intermixed with fable, that philosophers ought to abandon them, in a great measure, to the embellishment of poets and orators.”

himself from those who have preceded him, namely the poets “who have composed more for attractive listening than for truthfulness” making his *History* (unlike Homer’s *Illiad*) “not a competition piece to be heard for the moment,” but rather a “possession for all time.” (1.22)⁹⁶

For this reason, then, Hobbes, in the introduction to his translation writes that although “it hath been noted by divers that Homer in poesy, Aristotle in philosophy, Demosthenes in eloquence, and others of the ancients in other knowledge, do still maintain their primacy...in the number of these is justly ranked also our Thucydides.”⁹⁷ As a “workman no less perfect in his work,” writes Hobbes, Thucydides’ “faculty of writing history is at the highest;” for, as Hobbes explains, “the principal and proper work of history” is “to instruct and enable men, by the knowledge of actions past, to bear themselves prudently in the present and providently towards the future.”⁹⁸ And, insofar as this is the proper work of Thucydides’ *History*, there exists no other work “composed by another that doth more naturally and fully perform it.”⁹⁹ For Hobbes, therefore, Thucydides is the most political historiographer that “ever writ.” Or as Hobbes himself puts it: “Thucydides is one,

⁹⁶It seems that, to a significant extent, Thucydides’ method as a scientific historian influenced Hobbes’s own method as his translator. In his “Dedicatory Letter,” addressed to Sir William Cavendish, Hobbes writes: “I bring and present this gift of mine, THE HISTORY OF THUCYDIDES, translated into English with much more diligence than elegance, to your Lordship...I could recommend the author unto you, not impertinently, for that he had in his veins the blood of kings; but I choose rather to recommend him for his writing, as having in them profitable instruction for noblemen, and such as may come to have the managing of great and weighty actions.” Like Thucydides, therefore, who, avoids “patriotic storytelling” for the sake of accuracy, and who hopes that his *History* will be “judged useful by any who wish to look at the plain truth about both past events” and those that “will recur in similar of comparable ways,” Hobbes, in a complementary and flattering way begins his translation by making a similar statement: He has, like Thucydides, tried to avoid storytelling, opting for diligence over elegance so that like Thucydides, he might better convey the truth that lies within his work—namely, profitable “instructions for noblemen” occupied with “managing great and weighty actions.” He has, in short, without making it explicit, tacitly adopted Thucydides’ method—a preference for accuracy over embellishment—for his own, albeit similar purpose—that is, to provide his readers, like those of Thucydides, with accuracy.

⁹⁷Thomas Hobbes, “To The Readers,” in *The Peloponnesian War: The Complete Hobbes Translation*, edited by David Greene (Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, 1989), xxi.

⁹⁸Ibid.

⁹⁹Ibid.

who, though he never digress to read a lecture, moral or political, upon his own text, nor enter into men's hearts further than the acts themselves evidently guide him: is yet accounted the most politic historiographer that ever writ."¹⁰⁰

The reason, according to Hobbes, is that Thucydides "filleth his narrations with that choice of matter, and ordereth them with that judgment, and with such perspicuity and efficacy expresseth himself, that, as Plutarch saith, he maketh his auditor a spectator. For he setteth his reader in the assemblies of the people and in the senate, at their debating; in the streets, at their seditions and in the field, at their battles."¹⁰¹ In other words, Thucydides makes his readers witnesses. Agreeing wholeheartedly with Plutarch, Hobbes recognized "the gravity and the dignity of [Thucydides'] language," and how it brings the reader closer to the reality of the events that took place. Hobbes recognized the power inherent in Thucydides to transform, as much as possible, readers of his *History* into witnesses of the war he documents, and for this reason, decided to translate his work. As Hobbes explains: "These virtues of my author did so take my affection that they begat in me a desire to communicate him further: which was the first occasion that move me to translate him."¹⁰² In translating the *History*, Hobbes would let his contemporaries experience war without having to wage it, in the hopes of turning them against it.

Whereas Hobbes, therefore, thought of Aristotle as "the worst teacher that ever was," he thought of Thucydides as the "greatest historiographer that ever writ" and considered reading the latter a remedy for the corrupting influence of the former. As Schlatter puts it: Hobbes thought "*The History of the Peloponnesian War* was a necessary antidote to the poison of ancient political theory: the *Leviathan* complains that men have adopted the political opinions of Aristotle, Cicero, and other classical writers whose false notions of

¹⁰⁰Thomas Hobbes, "To The Readers," in *The Peloponnesian War: The Complete Hobbes Translation*, xxii.

¹⁰¹Ibid.

¹⁰²Ibid.

democracy and liberty lead directly to sedition and rebellion.”¹⁰³ In short, just as Nietzsche considered Thucydides the cure to Platonism, so Hobbes, it seems, considered reading his *History* a cure to the Aristotelianism that, as we saw in Chapter Three, he holds responsible for corrupting the university and Church and hence, the disorders of the present time.

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As it turns out, however, this is only half true. Indeed, although Hobbes admired Thucydides and looked to him for insight into the human condition and politics more generally, in the introduction to his translation Hobbes nevertheless recognizes that reading Thucydides, like reading Aristotle, Cicero, and other classical writers whose “doctrines” engender “sedition,” might also amount to drinking poison. Specifically, he writes that after completing his translation “it lay long beside [him]” and that his “desire to communicate it ceased...for [he] saw that, for the greatest part, men came to the reading of history with an affection much like that of the people in Rome: who came to the spectacle of the gladiators with more delight to behold their blood, than their skill in fencing. For they be far more in number, that love to read of great armies, bloody battles, and many thousands slain once, than that mind the art by which the affairs both of armies and cities be conducted to their ends.”¹⁰⁴ Despite his affection for Thucydides, then, Hobbes nonetheless recognizes a danger inherent in reading him. As a history of the “ancient Greeks,” Thucydides’ *History* of the war between the Athenians and Peloponnesians might in fact also qualify as one “from which young men (and all others that are unprovided of the antidote of solid reason), receiving a strong and delightful impression of the great exploits of war achieved by the conductors of their armies,” might be inclined to rebel against monarchy. (XXIX. 14)

¹⁰³Schlatter, “Thomas Hobbes and Thucydides,” 359.

¹⁰⁴Thomas Hobbes, “To The Readers,” in *The Peloponnesian War: The Complete Hobbes Translation*, xiii.

Reading Thucydides, it turns out, may have the same effect as reading Homer and the heroism of Achilles.

What Hobbes ultimately regarded as a “necessary antidote to Aristotle,” among others, then, he also recognized as potentially dangerous for the same reason. After all, Thucydides is still an ancient despite being heavily influenced by the Sophists, he does not simply adopt their primordial worldview, to which Machiavelli and Hobbes, in part return. Moreover, Thucydides is not simply a historian nor as “scientific” as Hobbes and Bacon suggest or wish to believe. As Strauss explains:

Thucydides has been called a “scientific historian...” But the differences between Thucydides and the scientific historians are immense. In the first place, Thucydides limits himself severely to military and diplomatic history and at most to political history; while he does not ignore the economic factor, he says amazingly little about it; he says next to nothing regarding cultural religion or intellectual history. Secondly, his work is meant to be a possession for all times, whereas the works of the scientific historians do not seriously claim to be “definitive.” Thirdly, Thucydides does not merely narrate and explain actions and quote official documents but he inserts speeches, composed by him, of the actors.¹⁰⁵

Despite his stated dedication to the revealing the truth about the war, then, Thucydides nevertheless differs significantly from a historian in the scientific sense. As noted above, that he refrains from offering any in-depth analysis of economic factors, let alone cultural or religious, and that he relies on speeches as opposed to narrative to recount what happened instead demonstrates on his part a wholesale aversion to the determinism and purely causal, other wise “scientific” approach to understanding history. As Kagan notes, “Thucydides’ conception of the study of political behavior differs in a fundamental way from the determinism that has been held to underlie the physical sciences. He lays great emphasis on the role of the individual in history and on his ability to change its course.”¹⁰⁶ In other words, unlike Hobbes, and as we saw in Chapter Two, Thucydides lays great emphasis on the role of statesmen in politics, fully recognizing the ability of one man,

¹⁰⁵Strauss, *The City and Man*, 141-142.

¹⁰⁶Kagan, *Thucydides: The Reinvention of History*, 15.

through leadership, to either save a city from its impending destruction (like Diodotus in the Mytilenean Debate) or instill in others a sense of meaning and purpose that brings them together as citizens (like Pericles in the Funeral Oration).

Upon deeper reflection, then, and as we shall now consider, it becomes apparent that, although Hobbes admired Thucydides for his method, in some ways his attack on the political science of antiquity, and on that of Aristotle in particular, discussed in Chapter Three, actually extends to certain aspects of Thucydides' thought as ancient historian as well; for, in addition to potentially giving young men a strong and delightful impression of the great exploits of war, Thucydides' *History* also and in various ways contains within it metaphysical, political and ethical positions that seem to anticipate those of Aristotle in his *Metaphysics*, *Politics* and *Ethics*, making the *History* not simply an antidote to Aristotle's political science, but in some ways, supportive of it.

The *Leviathan* as an Attack on the *History*?

Consider first metaphysics. Although Thucydides does not, to be sure, provide any explicit metaphysical teaching in the *History*, his understanding of the war as "the greatest disturbance to affect the Hellenes" and even "the majority of mankind," that is, as the greatest *kinesis* is telling of what one might label an implicit, metaphysical position; for Thucydides' use of the word motion (*kinesis*) as opposed to war (*polemos*) or strife (*stasis*) is significant. Indeed, according to Connor, "*kinesis* is an unusual word at this point in the development of Greek." Although "clear enough in general meaning," he writes, it is "obscure and surprising in this context" insofar as "it has a neutral, perhaps even technical or scientific tone."¹⁰⁷ Accordingly, in this context, the word motion as opposed to war carries with it certain metaphysical implications that the latter does not. Indeed, insofar as it has a scientific, if not phenomenological tone (in other words, insofar the Archeology that

¹⁰⁷Connor, *Thucydides*, 21.

follows it documents all of the movements or motions *leading up* to the war), it is indicative of how Thucydides understands not only the conflict between Athens and Sparta but also the nature of conflict in general and beyond that, the nature being or reality itself; for immediately following his use of the word “motion,” Thucydides extrapolates from the particular to the universal: it was a motion that not only affected Greece but, “one might say the majority of mankind.” (1.1) In short, given its surprising context, Thucydides’ use of the word motion gives us an indication of how he understands reality or nature as a whole, making his implicit metaphysical position at first, seem more in line with that of Hobbes who also understands nature as motion, albeit in a somewhat different manner.¹⁰⁸

Important to recognize, however, is that although Thucydides seems to understand nature in terms of motion or motion as natural, he seems also to be aware of the fact that motion is motion only insofar as it relates to rest and vice versa. As Strauss notes, “the Peloponnesian war, the greatest motion, follows on the greatest rest, embodies the greatest rest. Only for this reason can it be the greatest motion.”¹⁰⁹ As a result, for Thucydides, it might be argued, rest is as natural as motion, peace as natural as war and that together, they represent two sides of the same cosmological coin. As Strauss points out, “the understanding of the Peloponnesian war which makes manifest the nature of war makes manifest also the nature of peace.”¹¹⁰ Accordingly, for Strauss, the “interplay” of “motion and rest” in Thucydides represents “divine law properly understood.”¹¹¹ In other words, it represents Thucydides’ metaphysical worldview. As he explains, “the nature of man cannot be understood without some understanding of nature as a whole. War being a kind of

¹⁰⁸As I mentioned in Chapter Three, on the surface, it appears as though Hobbes in part returns to a pre-Socratic understanding of nature, insofar as he understands nature as motion, and therefore prioritizes motion over rest in his metaphysics.

¹⁰⁹Strauss, *The City and Man*, 156.

¹¹⁰*Ibid.*

¹¹¹*Ibid.*, 161.

motion and peace being a kind of rest, they are only particular forms of the universal, all-pervasive interplay of motion and rest.”¹¹²

The question that arises, then, is whether Thucydides, like the Sophists and pre-Socratics, understands nature in terms of chaos and motion, making him an exponent of the pre-Socratic understanding of nature to which Hobbes, following Machiavelli, in part returns. Or does he, unlike the pre-Socratics, understand the interplay between motion and rest, disorder and order, as two sides of the same cosmological coin that, despite being in opposition to one another, bare equal weight in the composition of reality and therefore have, not simply a pre-Socratic but in some ways *proto*-Socratic view of nature. Put more simply, are Thucydides’ metaphysics closer to those of the pre-Socratics in so far as he characterizes nature simply as motion to the exclusion of rest, or do they represent a half-way house between the pre-Socratics and Plato and Aristotle, insofar they also seems to recognize that motion is motion only in relation to rest and vice versa?

To be sure, Thucydides does not, like Aristotle, understand nature as purposive; he does, not in other words, have a teleological view of nature, never mind an ordered understanding of the *cosmos* like that of Plato. His metaphysical teaching, it would seem, is therefore more in line with that of the pre-Socratics and as a result, that of Hobbes. Important to note, however, is that despite sharing more in common with the Sophists and pre-Socratics, Thucydides himself is neither simply a sophist nor a tragedian. To take, for instance, the juxtaposition between Pericles’ funeral oration and the plague or the juxtaposition between the Melian dialogue and the Sicilian expedition as evidence of the fact that Thucydides is a tragedian, also ignores the simple fact that he himself goes out of his way to separate his work from those of the poets and above all, those of Homer, precisely for embellishing and exaggerating the importance of his themes—something that, according

¹¹²Strauss, *The City and Man*, 161.

to Socrates in the *Republic*, all poets, whether tragic or epic, are guilty of doing. Moreover, it ignores the fact that history is by nature already tragic. As Aristotle explains in the *Poetics*, although distinguished from poetry, history nevertheless lends itself to tragedy. Tragedy, he writes, “adheres to historic names; and for this reason: what convinces is the possible” and only “that which has happened is manifestly possible.” (*Poetics*1451b15-17) As a result, insofar as history is about recounting that which “has been,” or that which is *manifestly possible*, it already and by virtue of its content tends towards the tragic. Plagues kill; empires fall. And while it may, on the surface, appear as though both were fated (given the relative health and wealth, not to mention hubris of the Athenian people and empire) Thucydides nevertheless provides causal, as opposed to theological or divine explanations for both—telling us that the plague was, as opposed to what some claimed, not inevitable (2.54) and that Sicilian disaster, though punishing, was nonetheless avoidable, or as Strauss puts it “not doomed to failure.”¹¹³ Thucydides, then, is not simply a tragedian of the kind that Sophocles or Euripides are; for not only does he, like Plato, mark a turning away from antiquity and tragedy by challenging the authority of Homer and the poets, but as a historian is already pre-disposed to coming across as tragic, given the tragic nature of history in general.

Neither, however, is he simply a sophist. To take, on the other hand, the Athenian thesis as expressed by both the Athenian representatives at Sparta and on the island of Melos as evidence of the fact that Thucydides is a sophist or realist (as do Nietzsche and Hobbes), again ignores the simple fact that he refrains from explicitly endorsing that thesis.

As Strauss explains:

Today not a few people believe that Thucydides, far from being simply opposed to democracy, was in sympathy with the imperialism which went with the Athenian democracy or that he believed in “power politics;” accordingly they hold that Thucydides’ comprehensive view is stated by the Athenians in their dialogue with the

¹¹³Strauss, *The City and Man*, 27.

Melians. This interpretation is indeed rendered possible by Thucydides' reticence, by his failure to pass judgment on that dialogue. Yet the same silence would justify also the opposite interpretation.¹¹⁴

In other words, while many scholars today believe that Thucydides is simply a "realist," or as Nietzsche puts it, "a sophist," and hence take for granted that the Athenian thesis represents the view of Thucydides himself, his reticence, perhaps even refusal to pass judgment on it, might also suggest his disagreement with it—that he instead believes in the relative power of justice in politics, or at least sympathizes with those who appeal to it. As discussed earlier, Thucydides, in his account of the civil war at Corcyra, invokes what he terms "universal laws" that to offer hope for all in adversity. So too, however, do the irrational Melians on the island of Melos, before they are destroyed. In short, just as Thucydides is not simply a tragedian, nor is he simply a sophist. As Orwin puts it: "The perspective that finally emerges is neither democratic nor oligarchic, neither Athenian nor Spartan, neither sophistic nor tragic, neither Periclean and innovative nor pious and conservative—in short, it cannot be assigned to any conventional milieu."¹¹⁵

Metaphysically speaking, then, Thucydides does not, like the pre-Socratics, subscribe to a view of nature that amounts simply to chaos or strife. Thucydides is not Heraclitus any more than he is Sophocles or Gorgias.¹¹⁶ Rather, he occupies his own place in pre-Socratic thought—one no doubt influenced by a pre-Socratic view of the world but that, at the same time, is nonetheless different. That he understands nature as motion but only as it relates to rest, for instance, might also suggest that Thucydides' metaphysical worldview foreshadows or points toward that of Plato and Aristotle, as much as it resembles those of the Sophists and pre-Socratics. As Strauss writes, "however profound the difference

¹¹⁴Strauss, *The City and Man*, 145.

¹¹⁵Orwin, *The Humanity of Thucydides*, 8.

¹¹⁶In *Thucydides and the Philosophical Origins of History*, for instance, Darien Shanske argues that "Thucydides' metaphysics is Heraclitean," making him a "metaphysical realist" and, as Nietzsche argues, "a cure to Platonism." (p. 142.)

between Plato and Thucydides may be, their teachings are not necessarily incompatible; they supplement one another.”¹¹⁷ But the same is true when it comes to differentiating between Aristotle and Thucydides: however different Aristotle and Thucydides may be, their teachings can also be said to supplement one another. Whereas, writes Strauss, “Thucydides’ theme is the greatest war known to him, the greatest motion, the city described in both the *Republic* and the *Politics* is at rest.”¹¹⁸ Thucydides is only to Plato and Aristotle what motion is to rest. Together, they offer a comprehensive view of the whole and of political life in both the highest and lowest sense.

When taken into account, Hobbes’s metaphysics of motion—his understanding of nature as vanity—which, as we have seen, opposes Aristotle’s teleological view of nature, to a certain extent, also stands in opposition to that of Thucydides. What might otherwise seem self-evident—that Thucydides, like the Sophists and pre-Socratics, prioritizes motion over rest or sees motion as more natural than rest—is, upon closer inspection, a somewhat reductionist account of how Thucydides understands nature as a whole, and therefore does not do justice to the relative profundity of his thought when compared to Sophists and pre-Socratics. As a result, while such a position is not in any way akin to Aristotle’s teleological view of nature, neither is it simply an affirmation of the pre-Socratic view that Hobbes, along with Machiavelli and Bacon are said to in part return to—that is, as understanding nature in terms of motion. While Thucydides, therefore, is not simply an exponent of pre-Socratic thought (whereby nature is reduced to sheer happenstance and chaos, and the *polis* merely an artificial construction intended to protect human beings from it), neither is he an exponent of Hobbes’s deviated return to that view: nature as matter and motion. Whereas Plato and Aristotle exhibit a metaphysics of rest, and Hobbes a metaphysics of motion, Thucydides it might be said, strikes a mean between the two, giving priority to neither. For

¹¹⁷Strauss, *The City and Man*, 140.

¹¹⁸*Ibid.*

him, nature is characterized by dialectic between motion and rest, making the former as natural as the latter. In short, Thucydides' metaphysical position is one that anticipates that of Plato and Aristotle as much as it confirms that of the pre-Socratics, and to a limited extent, that of Hobbes. He occupies his own place in pre-Socratic thought and insofar as he does, he introduces a kind of proto-Socratic method for interpreting nature and being.

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Consider second, politics. As discussed in Chapter Three, for Aristotle, the *polis* or city is natural insofar as it comes into being and exists not only for the sake of living but for the sake of living well. For Hobbes, the opposite is true—namely, that the commonwealth is wholly conventional and, by comparison, comes into being and exists for the sole sake of living ie. security and peace. Important to note, however, is that Hobbes's understanding of the generation of the commonwealth not only opposes that of Aristotle's; to a considerable extent, it opposes that of Thucydides as well. Indeed, at the beginning of his *History*, Thucydides provides his readers with an archeology that, like Aristotle's generation of the polis, traces the evolution of "Hellas," and of Athens as a city as well. At first it seems as though Athens comes into being and exists solely for the sake of living—like the commonwealth for Hobbes: "For of the people driven from the rest of Hellas by war or faction, the most capable took refuge among the Athenians, considering it secure." (1.2) Also, the Athenians were "the first to put weapons aside and make their lives more sumptuous." (1.6) As we come to learn and is demonstrated by Pericles' funeral oration, however, while Athens came into being for the sake of security and commodious living, it continues to exist for the sake of something more: according to Pericles, the Athenians are by nature political (2.40). Moreover, Athens as a city and empire exists not only for the sake of security, but also for "for a love of honor" that, according to Pericles, "transcends profit," and brings "delight in the period of uselessness." (2.44) Whereas the Archeology, therefore, seems Hobbesian insofar as it argues that people moved to Athens for the sake of security

“commodious living,” the Pericles’ Funeral Oration serves as its Aristotelian rejoinder.¹¹⁹ In a way that anticipates Aristotle, then, Thucydides seems to also recognize that partnerships exist (or at the very least can) for the sake of some good, and one that transcends mere profit.

This, however, is not the only disagreement between Hobbes and Thucydides when it comes to politics. Despite what Hobbes would have us believe, it is not altogether clear that Thucydides, as opposed to Aristotle, favors monarchy as a regime type. In fact, there is as much evidence to suggest that he instead favors (or at the very least is equally sympathetic to) something akin to Aristotle’s polity. As mentioned above, Hobbes, in his autobiography, argues that Thucydides “says Democracy’s a foolish thing,” and “than a republic wiser is one king.” Hobbes, of course, is referring to Thucydides’ favorable judgment of Athens under Pericles before falling victim to the demagoguery of those who came after him. And in this judgment, Thucydides is unambiguously clear: “For as long as he presided over the city in peacetime he led it with moderation and preserved it in safety and it became greatest in his hand...and what was in name a democracy became in actuality rule by the first man.” (2.65) Important to recognize, however, is that Thucydides’ praise for Athens under Pericles, and his subsequent criticism of those who came after, does not necessarily make for a rejection of democracy altogether, as Hobbes in his autobiography seems to suggest. In fact, there are several instances in the *History* where Thucydides either implicitly or explicitly praises democracy as a regime type. At the beginning of Book Eight, for instance, in which he describes the general feeling of the Athenians following their city’s defeat in Sicily, Thucydides also makes a revealing and possibly positive statement about the nature of democracy. He writes that, in spite of their city’s loss, the Athenians came

¹¹⁹Also important to note, is that unlike Thucydides or Aristotle (and even Plato in the *Laws*), Hobbes does not have a phenomenological account of how the commonwealth comes into being. Insofar as it is wholly unnatural and exists by covenant only, it takes on the form of a theoretical abstraction that comes into being separate from nature.

together and “were prepared to be orderly in every respect in accordance with their immediate alarm, *just as a democracy is apt to behave.*”(8.1)¹²⁰ (Italics mine). Near the end of his *History*, Thucydides offers more praise for democracy when he passes judgment on the government of Five Thousand—a government intended to replace that of the Four Hundred and which consisted “of all who could also afford a suit of hoplite’s armor.” (8.97) During this period, writes Thucydides, “the Athenians clearly had their best government, at least in my lifetime; for a moderate blending of the few and the many came about, and it was this which first lifted the city out of the terrible current condition of its affairs.” (8.97) Thucydides, then, does simply view democracy in a negative light as Hobbes would have us believe.¹²¹ As Mara notes, Thucydides’ express endorsement of the politeia of the five thousand as the best Athenian regime during his time is far from being simply antidemocratic.¹²² Instead, it points to a recognition on his part of the comparative virtues of democracy when governed by a “blend of the few and the many.”

In effect, despite what Hobbes would have us believe Thucydides also seems to show an appreciation for a form of government that in fact anticipates what Aristotle refers to as polity in the *Politics*. As Palmer explains: “It is true that Thucydides never addresses himself to the question of the best regime in speech, but he does express a judgment

¹²⁰Although Connor describes Thucydides’ tone in this passage as “patronizing” (1984, p. 27), Steven Lattimore, in his translation, argues (and in my view, rightly so) that “it can hardly be maintained that this explicitly ideological comment is ‘scornful.’” (2007, p. 412.)

¹²¹Hobbes may have been aware of the fact that Thucydides was not as anti-democratic as Hobbes, in his verse autobiography would have us believe, and even went so far as to translate the passage about the government of Five Thousand in a way that downplays Thucydides’ otherwise obvious endorsement of democracy. As Richard Schlatter observes, Hobbes’s translation “provides some evidence that Hobbes did not regard the government of the Five Thousand as a ‘mixed government’ in the sense that the sovereign power was divided. He translates: “The Athenians called an Assembly . . . in which, having deposed the Four Hundred, they decreed the Sovereignty to the Five Thousand.’...But if the Five Thousand had the sovereignty (later translators do not use this word here-Crawley writes “government”) then according to Hobbes’ later thinking the government was not mixed, but a simple aristocracy...Because he chose to use in this passage the word “sovereignty”- a word so central in all his political thinking-we may surmise that Hobbes read here no more than a praise of a particular aristocratic government.” (“Thomas Hobbes and Thucydides,” 360).

¹²²Gerald Mara, “Democracy and Trust in Plato and Thucydides,” *The Journal of Politics* Vol. 63, No. 3, August (2001), 824.

concerning what was the best regime Athens ever had, at least in this lifetime, the measured blending of democracy and oligarchy of the regime of 411 B.C., a regime that seems to be an example of what Aristotle calls polity.”¹²³ In fact, insofar as the government of Five Thousand represents a blend of the few and the many, Thucydides' description of it seems to directly parallel Aristotle's definition of a polity or mixed regime: “Simply speaking, polity is a mixture of oligarchy and democracy,” he writes (*Politics*1293b134). Furthermore, polities, according to Aristotle, arise “only infrequently and in a few cities.” Accordingly, that the government of Five Thousand to which Thucydides refers only lasted a few short months, is hardly surprising; for as Aristotle explains: “it is also evident from these things why most regimes are either democratic or oligarchy. For as a result of the fact the middling element is often few in them, whichever is preeminent, whether those owning property or the people, oversteps the middle path and conducts the regime to suit itself.” (*Politics*1296a120-23) And the Athenian people, we learn, did just this. Following the overthrow of the oligarchic Four Hundred, and despite replacing it with the middling regime of the Five Thousand, “the people” writes Aristotle, “soon took away their control of the state,” in effect returning to democracy. (*The Athenian Constitution*, Chapter 34) In sum, whereas Hobbes insists that Thucydides, unlike Aristotle, is anti-democratic and hence pro-absolute monarchy, he nevertheless recognizes and makes a point of acknowledging how the government of Five Thousand, and not rule by a first man, qualified as the best in his lifetime.

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Finally, consider ethics. As discussed in Chapter Three, for Aristotle, there are two kinds of virtue, moral and intellectual, while for Hobbes, there is only good wit or prudence, which is similar to what Aristotle calls cleverness (practical wisdom stripped of its moral

¹²³Palmer, *Love of Glory and the Common Good*, 120.

dimension).¹²⁴ As for Thucydides, however, he seems to exhibit an understanding of virtue, both moral and intellectual, that implicitly anticipates what Aristotle, following him, explicitly argues. For example, in those passages that, as we have seen, are said to most closely parallel and inform Hobbes's understanding of human nature (The Plague at Athens and the Civil War at Corcyra), Thucydides discusses virtue in a way that, upon closer inspection, actually anticipates Aristotle's structure and understanding of moral virtue in the *Nicomachean Ethics*.¹²⁵ In the Plague at Athens, for instance, Thucydides points to the inversion of what was originally considered noble, as virtue became increasingly defined according to doing was pleasant or useful. "Everyone," he tells us, "was ready to be bolder about activities they had previously enjoyed in secret...and so they thought it appropriate to use what they had quickly and with a view to enjoyment" (2.53) Simply put, moderation and the practice of it—that is, the basis of moral virtue for Aristotle—gave way to hedonism. Similarly, in his account of the Civil War at Corcyra, Thucydides explains how "in self-justification men inverted the usual verbal evaluations of actions," inverting again, the usual evaluation of virtue. (3.82) As Thucydides explains:

Irrational recklessness was now considered courageous commitment, hesitation while tolling to the future was high-styled cowardice, moderation was a cover for lack of manhood, and circumspection mean inaction, while senseless anger now helped to define a true, and deliberation for security was a specious excuse for dereliction. The man of violent temper was always credible, anyone opposing him was suspect. The intriguer who succeeded was intelligent, anyone who detected a plot was still more clever, but a man who made provisions to avoid both alternatives was undermining his party and letting the opposition terrorize him. Quite simply, one was praised for outracing everyone else to commit a crime—and for encouraging a crime by someone who had never before considered one. (3.82)

¹²⁴As mentioned in Chapters One and Three, Hobbes reduces virtue to good wit, of which there is two sorts: natural and acquired. By natural, however, Hobbes does not mean "that which a man hath from his birth (for that is nothing else but sense, wherein men differ so little one from another and from brute beasts, as it is not to be reckoned amongst virtues)." Rather, he "means that wit which is gotten by use only, and experience, without method, culture or instruction."

¹²⁵On this point, I am indebted to Clifford Orwin, who, in his own reading of the Civil War at Corcyra points out that "Thucydides' treatment of the structure of virtue foreshadows that of Aristotle." See *The Humanity of the Thucydides*, 178.

As the above quote suggests, therefore, moral virtue for Thucydides seems to imply moderation and a mean condition, the destruction of which gives way to either excess or deficiency in action. During the plague, people became bolder in their actions as their concern for the noble gave way to their desire for the pleasant. Likewise, during the civil war at Corcyra, people became bolder in their actions as virtue gave way to partisanship: courage became confused for rashness, caution for cowardice, and moderation for manliness. In both cases, therefore, a form of extremism in which, as Orwin notes, “the excess of a disposition comes to be admired in place of its mean, and the mean comes to be despised as the deficiency of this excess,” replaced what Thucydides, and like Aristotle following him, understands as the basis for moral virtue: moderation.¹²⁶

Thucydides and Aristotle agree on more than what constitutes moral virtue, however. To a certain extent, Thucydides’ praise of Pericles as a man of judgment and moral character complements what Aristotle argues in the *Ethics* regarding practical wisdom—namely, that as an intellectual virtue, it amounts to more than just cleverness, because unlike cleverness it has a moral dimension to it. Indeed, according to Thucydides, Pericles was “influential through reputation and judgment, and notable for being most resistant to bribery.” Moreover, “he exercised free control over the people and was not led by them instead of leading them, because he did not speak to please in order to acquire power by improper means.” (2.65) Important to note, then, is that by acknowledging both Pericles’ judgment, “resistance to bribery,” and reluctance to “acquire power by improper means,” Thucydides seems to attribute to him not just a kind of wisdom but a kind of moral character as well, in effect recognizing him for being more than just a “clever” statesman,

¹²⁶Orwin, *The Humanity of Thucydides*, 178.

like Alcibiades.¹²⁷ Thucydides, therefore, does not, like Hobbes, strip what Aristotle calls practical wisdom of its moral dimension. Rather, he seems to recognize that Pericles is reputable precisely for his moral character as a man of wisdom. Furthermore, insofar as he characterizes Pericles' reign as "rule by the first man," and those who came after him as "more on an equal level with one another," he also seems to attribute to him what Aristotle himself attributes to Pericles—namely, the ability to see what is "good for himself, and for mankind," and the ability "of managing households and states." (*NE*1140b10-11)

In fact, the policy of Pericles is indicative of just this. At the end of Book One, Thucydides recounts a speech made by Pericles—a man who, Thucydides tells us, was "the ablest in both speaking and action." (1.139) In his speech, Pericles tells the Athenians that he has hope of prevailing, if only the Athenians agree (and in so doing resist their natural tendency towards "daring,") not to "add to the empire while at war and not to take on additional dangers." (1.144) That he advises as much and that his advice is accepted, however, is indicative of the fact that he was aware not only of what was good for himself as a ruler, but that he was also aware of what was good for the city. Indeed, unlike Alcibiades, for instance, who, as we find out in Book Six, is concerned primarily for what is good for him, often to the exclusion of what is good for the city, Pericles advocates a policy that takes into account both what is good for him and the city. Insofar as "out of the greatest dangers emerge the greatest honors for both the city and individual," he tells the Athenians, his policy serves as a historical example of what Aristotle defines as the essence of practical wisdom as an intellectual virtue—a virtue that Thucydides no less than Aristotle seems aware of, if not in theory than at least as it appears in practice. Alas, whereas for Hobbes there is no intellectual virtue and practical wisdom, not to mention moral virtue in the

¹²⁷Thucydides also praises Alcibiades for his skill as a ruler, but does not seem to praise him for his character: "as a public person, writes Thucydides, "he managed the war with the utmost skill..." (6.15). However, "he indulged himself in expenditures beyond his actual resources." (6.15)

Aristotelian sense, in Thucydides we are presented with judgments and examples that seem to anticipate both.

In short, from his metaphysical worldview, his understanding of politics and limited commentary on regimes, to his understanding of virtue, Thucydides would seem to share at least as much in common with Aristotle (if not more) as he does with Hobbes. Therefore, although Hobbes admired Thucydides for his method and like Nietzsche, thought of his thought as a kind of antidote or cure to the ancient tradition, in some ways his attack on the political science and philosophy of Aristotle, as discussed in Chapter Three, actually extends to certain aspects of Thucydides' thought as ancient historian as well: as we have seen, Thucydides' *History* also and in various ways contains within it, metaphysical, political and ethical views that either anticipate or closely parallel those of Aristotle in his *Metaphysics*, *Politics* and *Ethics*, making the *History*, not simply an antidote to his political science, but in some ways, supportive of it. In short, Hobbes's *Leviathan* and modern philosophical project in some ways, actually qualifies as an assault on the *History* and the thought of Thucydides as well.

Of Beasts and Gods Revisited: Human Nature in Hobbes, Aristotle, and Thucydides

Not surprisingly, then, just as Hobbes's account of human nature summarized in Chapter One functions as replacement for Aristotle's in the *Politics*, it also qualifies, to a significant extent, as a repudiation of Thucydides' account of human nature, discussed in Chapter Two. Consider: In Chapter Three, I pointed out that whereas for Aristotle the uniquely human capacity for speech (*logos*) makes human beings political by nature (between beasts and gods), for Hobbes, it makes them apolitical or asocial—that is, predisposed to becoming enemies as opposed to citizens, and hence by nature beastlike. Important to recognize, however, is that this does not mean that Aristotle, in contradistinction to Hobbes, has an altogether more optimistic view of human nature; for he

too and like Thucydides also recognizes the human capacity for vice and what otherwise qualifies as beastlike behavior. For example, in Book One of the *Politics*, Aristotle argues that, “just as man is the best of the animals when completed, when separated from law and adjudication he is the worst of all;” for “without virtue, he is the most unholy and the most savage of the animals, and the worst with regard to sex and food.” (*Politics*1253a1) Furthermore, whereas in Book Two, he argues that those evils said to arise from the “possession of private property,” are in fact due “to a very different cause”—the “wickedness of human nature,” (*Politics*1267b11) in Book Three, he notes that for a king to hand down his power to anyone but his children “is hardly to be expected, and is too much to ask of human nature.” (*Politics*1286b128) Even in the *Ethics*, a work devoted to discussing the uniquely human capacity for virtue, Aristotle does not hesitate to point out that, although capable of virtue, human beings are, more often than not, selfish and governed by passion. For example, while discussing the virtue of gentleness, Aristotle argues that “we regard the excess” (vengefulness) “as more opposed to gentleness than the deficiency,” for “it is *more human* to seek revenge.” (*NE*1126a30-32) (Italics mine) Likewise, while discussing friendship, he notes that “in the case of a loan...recipients have no interest in making a return,” for while “Epicharus would probably say that those who give this explanation ‘look at a thing only from the bad side,’ it seems to be *no more than human: most people memories are short, and they want to have good done to themselves rather than do it to another.*” (*NE*1167b25-28) (Italics mine) Finally, at the end of the *Ethics*, Aristotle notes that:

...while words evidently do have the power to encourage and stimulate young men of generous mind, and while they can cause a character well-born and truly enamored of what is noble to be possessed by virtue, they do not have the capacity to turn the common run of people to goodness and nobility. For the natural tendency of most people is to be swayed not by a sense of shame but by fear, and to refrain from acting basely not because it is disgraceful, but because of the punishment it brings. Living under the sway of emotion, they pursue their own proper pleasures and the means by which they can obtain them, and they avoid the pains that are opposed to them. But they do not even have a notion of what is noble and truly pleasant, since they have

never tasted it. What argument indeed can transform people like that?...Perhaps we must be satisfied if we have whatever we think it takes to become good and attain a modicum of excellence. (*NE*1179b10-20)

In short, although Aristotle does not, like Hobbes, reduce human beings to beasts or argue that they are by nature asocial and beastlike, neither does he argue that they are by nature godlike or naturally good. As Aristotle himself explains: “just as vice and virtue do not exist in brute beasts, no more can they exist in a god. The quality of gods is something more worthy of honor than (human virtue) or excellence, and the quality of a brute is generically different from (human) vice...If, [then], it is rare to find a man who is divine...it is just as rare that brute is found among men.” (*NE*1145a25-28) Again, as opposed to gods and beasts, human beings exhibit the behavior of both—that is, behavior reflective of both their primordial desires, on the one hand, and their transcendental longings, on the other—thus making them by nature, political animals.

The difference between Hobbes and Aristotle (and in my view Thucydides), then, is that whereas Aristotle is nonetheless willing to recognize and acknowledge the human capacity for virtue and justice despite man’s otherwise and often vicious behavior, Hobbes, on account of his primordialism, cannot. In other words, while Hobbes is all too willing to cast human beings as “unholy and the most savage of animals,” especially when it comes, as Aristotle tells us, “to sex and food” (security in the physical sense) he simply cannot accept the idea that “man is the best of the animals when completed.” Insofar as Thucydides, however, refrains from subscribing to an exclusively primordial understanding of the human condition—one that, for Hobbes, is necessary given his larger, modern philosophical project—he is not only able but as I have addressed in Chapter Two, willing to recognize, like Plato and Aristotle following him, that human beings are capable of and concerned with practising virtue and justice, even though they are, “the worst of all” animals when, as Aristotle puts, “separated from law and adjudication.” Just as we are presented with the

best of man in and through men like Diodotus and Pericles, so we are presented with the worst of man in both the plague and civil war at Corcyra. Unlike Hobbes, therefore, Thucydides does not view the human capacity for speech as something that makes human beings by nature asocial or apolitical. Rather, he views the human capacity for speech as something that, like for Aristotle, makes them inherently political—that is, able to argue over questions of justice and injustice, and capable of pursuing both. For every Pericles there is an Alcibiades, and for Diodotus there is a Kleon.

Of course, that Thucydides, like Aristotle, understands the human capacity for speech as a capacity that makes human beings political as opposed to apolitical, also means that he does not reduce, like Hobbes, speech or rhetoric to a problem in need of fixing. As mentioned in Chapter Three, whereas Aristotle is content simply to point out that, “the good cannot be universal,” (*NE*1196a27-28) (and hence tacitly accepts that argument and war are a natural part of the human condition), Hobbes argues, in essence, that such a statement is indicative only of the fact that there is no good at all. As a result, for him, speech must be reformed according to the dictates of reason and science so as to prevent human beings from arguing over a non-existent good “that cannot be universal,” and hence to prevent them planting the seeds of sedition. Speech must be reformed so as to prevent what are by nature, beastlike human beings from using language in a way that masks exclusively primordial, self-interested, and asocial desires.

For Thucydides, however, this is simply not the case. As mentioned above, although Thucydides is often credited for being if the not the first “scientific historian,” then, at the very least, a founding father of scientific history, his method nevertheless relies heavily on rhetoric in the form of speeches as opposed to narrative to convey the facts and truth about the war he claims to have uncovered. The reason is that despite his stated intention as a historian—that is, to uncover and separate “truest causes” from those most openly

expressed—he nonetheless recognizes that grievances and arguments more generally, as valid as they may or may not be, nevertheless retain an important role in determining the outcome of events. As a “scientific historian,” he is concerned, not simply with uncovering and discussing truest causes but more so with considering the ambiguity of a grievance or argument as it relates to a cause—that is to say, considering the ambiguity of *aitiai* (blame) as it relates to *prophasis* (cause). Put another way, as a historian-poet Thucydides remains concerned with value-normative questions of right and wrong, if only because for him such questions influence and inform what later manifest themselves as “truest causes.” As Cogan explains:

In the first three debates of his history, Thucydides has done much more than merely to portray the diplomatic stages by which the two powers came to war. He has actually embodied the processes of political action which brought the war about, as individual motivations became public ones, as events were interpreted in the light of these attitudes, and as responses appropriate to both event and attitude were formulated...These are processes of thought and choice which show us the combatants as conscious agents, and also give us a sense in which a war can be necessary without forcing us to say that states are moved only by hidden material factors. These processes exhibit to us the way in which there may be both “truest causes” (*prophasis*) and “allegations” (*aitiai*) without our being misled into believing that only one of these embodies the reality of the historical situation.¹²⁸

Accordingly, the fear of the Spartans, that for Thucydides, represents the “truest cause,” of the war, cannot be isolated as a variable from the rhetorical influence of, for instance, the Corinthians, who, prior to the war, accuse the Spartans of allowing Athens to grow her empire: “And you [Spartans] are to blame for this situation,” argue the Corinthians. “First by allowing the Athenians to fortify their city after the Persian War and set up the long walls subsequently, and by constantly, up to the present, withholding freedom not only from those enslaved by the Athenians but now even from your own allies.” (1.69) Such an accusation, one might argue, serves only to further contribute to Sparta’s fear, prod her sense of honor, and make her more aware of her self-interest. In other words, such an accusation plays a significant role in shaping what became the “truest cause” of the war, and

¹²⁸Cogan, *The Human Thing*, 137.

what only later became other motivating factors (honor/self-interest). Or, As Cogan puts it: “The *prophasis* as cause of the war is in itself merely potential, not actual. Without the *aitiai*, the fear Sparta had for Athens’ growth would not have been the *prophasis* of any war, for without some initiating event there would be no means by which this fear could itself become active as the cause of other events. For a *prophasis* to become the *prophasis* of something there must be *aitiai*. The moment of the *aitiai* is therefore also the moment of the actualization of the *prophasis*, and therefore of the event of which it is the *prophasis*, in this case the war.”¹²⁹ Alas, just as Plato understands rhetoric as a “persuasion device” and Aristotle, “a means of persuasion” (both of which accompany and inform statecraft), Thucydides too understands how rhetoric can be both used and abused by statesmen so as to influence and determine the outcome of events—so as to, in other words, either persuade those who might disagree, or worse, mislead those who are ignorant and naïve. Simply put, like Plato and Aristotle Thucydides too understands how rhetoric can be used for both good and ill, and as such, how it accompanies and informs good and bad statecraft.¹³⁰

For Hobbes, however, and as previously discussed, rhetoric leads to sedition because grievances amount, in essence, to rhetorical window-dressing intended, usually to mask one’s real, exclusively primordial motives. Not the justice of the situation, but man’s desire for power—not the objects of the passions, but the passions themselves, are what

¹²⁹Cogan, *The Human Thing*, 137.

¹³⁰Of course, none of this is to say that Thucydides’ understanding of rhetoric is Platonic, never mind Aristotelian; it is, however, in my view, and in keeping with his metaphysics, somewhat *proto*-Socratic as opposed to pre-Socratic because, like Platonic and Aristotelian philosophy, it is conscious of the relationship between statecraft and rhetoric on a level that transcends the sophists or pre-Socratics. Rhetoric for the pre-Socratics is a skill employed for sole purpose of achieving the most natural way of life—tyranny—within an otherwise conventional world: the *polis*. Its purpose is to enable one to get around the laws by “getting the better” of those around him—that is to say, “making the weaker speech the stronger” without getting caught. Hence, the pre-Socratics do not distinguish between better and worse types of regimes in the way that both Plato and Aristotle do, and that Hobbes, albeit in a more reductionist way than Plato and Aristotle, does. For the pre-Socratics, the prescription remains the same regardless of regime type: master rhetoric for the sake of getting the better whether in a tyranny or a democracy.

matter. As a result, Hobbes's method, as opposed to that of Thucydides, takes into account and relies only on *prophasis* (cause) to the exclusion of *aitiai* (blame); for the very concept of *aitiai* implies the potential existence of a good that, according to Aristotle, cannot be universal, but according to Hobbes does not exist. In other words, it implies the existence of a good that, in Hobbes's view, serves only to engender sedition and war. By contrast, Thucydides, understands that for every action taken there is a reason given and that because reasons vary—because they influence in different ways what only later become “truest causes,”—taking into account such reasons and grievances is as important for understanding causal factors (such as, for instance, the similitude of the passions), as it is for understanding how such factors cause certain events to begin with; for, although human beings are motivated by certain passions (some more so than others) such passions manifest themselves in different ways depending on how speech as a persuasion device is used or employed. For Thucydides, speech can be used in ways that might inspire a person to transcend or overcome his or her fear of violent death—and therefore qualify as a natural, as opposed irrational, phenomenon. By contrast, for Hobbes, because the fear of violent death must, on account of his philosophical project, become the most persuasive passion in human psyche, any use (abuse) of speech that might undermine its persuasiveness as a rational passion must be banned. Again, speech must be reformed according to the dictates of reason (as reckoning) and science in order to become conducive to peace.

Insofar as Thucydides, then, takes *aitiai* (blame) into account, and moreover, uses speeches and rhetoric to reveal the universal in the particular, he seems to accept (along with Aristotle) the notion that for better or for worse, human beings, on account of their capacity for reason and speech, are by nature political, and predisposed not simply to become enemies given their passions, but also to become citizens given their concern for justice and their ability to debate and discuss it. Indeed, whereas Hobbes argues that human

beings in general are naturally predisposed to becoming enemies insofar as they are motivated primarily by a primordial desire for power that “ceaseth only in death,” Thucydides, like Aristotle, seems to acknowledge that human beings, although the worst without law, are also naturally predisposed to becoming citizens or friends insofar as they, like the partnerships and cities they form, exist not merely for the sake of living but for the sake of living well. In other words, given his willingness as a historian to take into account rhetoric and speech as a natural part of political life, and given the fact that he, unlike Hobbes, does not share in the ambition to eliminate, as much as possible war from the human condition, he too seems to recognize that the human capacity for speech is indicative of man’s concern and desire for justice, for the transcendent, both of which makes human beings by nature political and the *polis* or city mankind’s natural environment. Thucydides, like Aristotle, regards human beings as neither beastlike nor godlike, but understands them as between beasts and gods.

Disordered Souls Versus Soulless Automaton: Hobbes, Aristotle, Thucydides, and the Psychology of *Thumos*

But again, *logos* or speech is not the only aspect of human nature that makes us political animals. As we saw in the previous chapter, *thumos* also plays a role and an important one at that. Again, as Koziak points out, insofar as speech is emotional *logos* already implies that *thumos* is present.¹³¹ Moreover, insofar as *thumos* reveals itself through anger it remains indicative of the uniquely human desire for justice that, as argued in Chapter Two, Thucydides, unlike Hobbes, retains an appreciation for in his interpretation of human nature. As a result, Hobbes’s desire not only to reform speech according to the dictates of reason and science, but also and more specifically his desire to eliminate as much as possible spiritedness from political life, also helps to clarify and explain the difference between Thucydides and Hobbes on the question of human nature pointed out in Chapter

¹³¹Koziak, *Retrieving Political Emotion*, 97.

Two. For, as an intermediary between *eros* and *logos* (and more generally, as a bridge between the primordial and the transcendental) the ambiguity of *thumos* as it relates to *logos* and *eros* parallels the tension between necessity and justice from which Thucydides, according to Strauss, looks at the entirety of the war.

As explained in Chapter Three, in its most basic form *thumos* reveals itself through anger, making one of the best examples of *thumos* as anger, the rage of Achilles in Homer's epic, the *Iliad*. Moreover, it was pointed out that the rage of Achilles is not merely indicative of physical pain but of a kind of mental frustration that derives specifically from the human capacity to intuit and articulate the just and unjust—man's capacity for reason or *logos* as a political animal. As a result, it was also argued that, insofar as *thumos* reveals itself through anger as a passion connected to and informed by reason, as an aspect of the human psyche spiritedness stands between reason and desire—between *eros*, on the one hand, and *logos*, on the other, as Socrates explains to Glaucon in the *Republic*, and as Aristotle (albeit without discussing it in the context of Plato's tripartite soul) also seems to understand it. Finally, as it was also argued, because Hobbes does not share with Plato or Aristotle the same understanding of reason and reduces it instead to reckoning (in effect, stripping it of any connection to the divine) he also does not share with them the same understanding of spiritedness as an intermediary between reason and desire. He reduces it instead to a passion not only disconnected from but in direct opposition to reason as reckoning: vainglory (madness). This, it was argued, ultimately enables him to replace the ancient prescription for peace—the idea of educating *thumos* and thumotic men in a way that will make them the allies of reason (*logos*) as opposed to the allies of an unruly *eros*, or more practically, educating young men who are governed primarily by their passions in a way that will make them partisans of the *polis* and citizen-friends—with a more modern alternative. By contrast, Hobbes proposes the tempering of vainglory with fear, in the

service of reason or more appropriately, rationality—a prescription conducive specifically to advancing his modern philosophical project (to save mankind from the miserable condition of war)

Important to note, however, is that because Thucydides, like Plato and Aristotle, is an ancient, he does not (and could not) share with Hobbes the goal of advancing such a project, and as a result, Hobbes's desire to replace that which he regards as a stumbling block to peace: *thumos*. As a result, Thucydides treats and recognizes the *thumos* or spiritedness of human beings for what it is—recognizing, in other words, its inherently volatile nature as a passion that can lend itself to both good and ill. In short, he recognizes it, albeit implicitly, in a way that aligns more so with how Plato and Aristotle understand and treat it, and hence in way that can be understood by returning to Plato's description of it in the *Republic* and Aristotle's in the *Ethics* and *Politics*.

As mentioned in Chapter Three, in Book Four of the *Republic* Socrates introduces *thumos* as one part of the tripartite soul, defining each part (*eros*, *thumos*, *logos*) as it relates to each class in the perfectly just city (bronze, silver, and gold). What was not mentioned, however, is that although Glaucon easily distinguishes between the bronze and the silver class, he nonetheless confuses the desiring with the spirited part of the soul: "Now, is the part that contains spirit and with which we are spirited a third," asks Socrates, "or would it have the same nature as one of these others?" "Perhaps," says Glaucon, "the same as the one of them, the desiring." (*Republic*439e.) Unable to clearly distinguish between the two, Glaucon is told a brief story, called the Story of Leontius, that Socrates uses to remedy his confusion—that is, to explicitly separate *eros* from *thumos* as different parts of the soul, and moreover, identify the latter as the natural ally of *logos*, just as the auxiliaries are identified as the "helpers of the rulers' convictions," or the natural allies of the guardians. (*Republic*414b)

According to Socrates, the story of Leontius is one that he “trusts.” Specifically, it takes place “under the outside of the North Wall” of Athens, where corpses lie next to the “public executioner.” Although Leontius desires to look, he also remains disgusted and turns away from the disturbing and shameful scene. Eventually, however, he becomes “overpowered by his desire,” which forces him to open his eyes and run towards the corpses, allowing them to feast on “the fair sight.” (*Republic*439e)

As mentioned above, the story of Leontius is first, intended to isolate *eros* from *thumos*, desire from spirit, in order to demonstrate how the latter sometimes makes war on the former, “as one thing against something else.” (*Republic*440a) That Leontius is torn between looking and not looking, that he both desires to look and desires not to look at the same time is evidence of the fact that *thumos* sometimes makes war on *eros*. More than that, however, the story is intended to show Glaucon how *thumos* is, in addition to being distinct from *eros*, can become the natural ally of *logos*:

And in many other places, don't we...notice that, when desires force someone contrary to calculation [*logos*], he reproaches himself and his spirit [*thumos*] is roused against that in him which is doing the forcing; and, just as though there were two parties at faction, such a man's spirit becomes the ally of speech [*logos*]?...(*Republic*440b)

As we have seen, that *thumos* can also be the ally of *logos* has profound implications for Platonic moral psychology. In Book Two, *thumos* is introduced as that which is responsible for courage in the face of death, and it is associated especially with defending one's own. In the story of Leontius, however, Socrates adds to this definition the ability to defend one's *logos* from one's *eros*, that is, the ability to defend oneself from oneself, or one's own from one's own. Hence, it renders *thumos* responsible not merely for indignant anger towards a given enemy, but for anger towards oneself or towards the enemy within (an unruly *eros*). Again, it renders *thumos* the ally of *logos*, connecting it to reason and speech, and capable of being educated—something that Aristotle also seems to agree with.

But to what extent is Socrates' story true, and the ancient prescription for peace as presented by Plato and Aristotle, plausible? Although intended to separate *thumos* from *eros* and present the former as the ally of *logos*, the story of Leontius ends in a way that nonetheless suggests otherwise. Indeed, that Leontius is nevertheless overcome by his *eros* might in fact suggest that *thumos* is equally loyal to *eros*, or that *thumos* might be the natural ally of both. In fact, it might even suggest the complete opposite—namely, that *thumos* is not the natural ally of *logos*, but rather, the natural ally of *eros*. To be sure, demonstrating theoretically the difference between *eros* and *thumos*—separating them as passions that sometimes oppose and “make war” on one another—does not necessarily depend on how the story ends: Socrates could have made the same if not a stronger argument—namely, that there is a difference between *eros* and *thumos*, that the latter sometimes declares war on the former, and that the former is therefore the natural ally of *logos*—had Leontius successfully resisted his desire. That he does not, however, is significant. For, it leaves open the possibility that *thumos* is, despite what Socrates claims, more susceptible to *eros* than connected to *logos*. After all, just as *thumos* in the story of Leontius fails to ally itself—at least to an effective point—with *logos*, allowing for an unruly *eros* to take control, so the auxiliaries in Book Eight fail to ally themselves with the Callipolis, causing its degeneration into a timocracy.¹³²

What Socrates, however, seems to imply in the story of Leontius is nevertheless made more explicit by Aristotle in his own political philosophy. As discussed in Chapter Three, in Book Seven of the *Nicomachean Ethics*, Aristotle (like Plato in the *Republic*, who argues that *thumos* is the natural ally of *logos*) states that *thumos* “seems to listen to reason.”

¹³²As J.B. Skemp observes in “The Causes of Decadence in Plato’s Republic:” “the ‘spirited element’ in Leontius conceded victory with disgust to the ‘desiring’ element. He has failed to follow and maintain the authority of the ‘reasoning’ element in himself, as he knows he ought to have done. The communal parallel would be the case where the military caste failed to restrain some popular pressure which the guardians decided ought to be resisted for the benefit of the whole state.” (p.91)

Unlike Plato, however, Aristotle is more explicit about the fact that it does so only to “some extent.” For, according to Aristotle, it mishears reason “like hasty servants, who run off before they have heard everything their master tells them, and fail to do what they were ordered, or like dogs, which bark as soon as there is a knock without waiting to see if the visitor is a friend.” (NE1149a25-31) Furthermore, he goes on to argue, that “In the same way, the heat and swiftness of its nature make anger hear but not listen to an order, before rushing off to take revenge. For reason and imagination indicated that an insult or a slight has been received, and anger, drawing the conclusion as it were, that it must fight against this sort of thing, simple flares up at once.” (NE1149a31-35) In short, although *thumos* for Aristotle remains connected to *logos*, it does so only insofar as *it seems to listen*, and *as though* it reasons. Although it retains from Plato the capacity to align itself with *logos*, it is not necessarily, as it is for Plato, presented as reason’s natural ally. In keeping with view of human nature discussed above, Aristotle seems to think that, more often than not, *thumos* will align itself with and unruly *eros*, thus making it “*more human* to seek revenge;” (NE1126a30-32) and “live under the sway of emotion,” pursuing “pleasures and the means by which they can” be obtained while avoiding “the pains that are opposed to them.” (NE1179b10-20)

For Thucydides, it seems, this is precisely the case. As briefly mentioned in Chapter Two, unlike Hobbes, who understands human beings as soulless automatons, Thucydides understands human beings in terms more aligned with what Plato and Aristotle following him describe as having disordered souls. In other words, although capable of following *logos* and reason, Thucydides recognizes along with Aristotle, that in the vast majority of human beings, their *thumos* is more likely to follow *eros*—what Diodotus, and later Thucydides (as exponents of *logos* in the *History*), define in terms of a delusional hope, desire, and belief in fortune. In fact, according Pangle, while *thumos* frequently reveals itself

through anger or courage, it can also reveal itself through hope. As he puts it: "The passion which responds as anger or courage to immediate and near opposition also responds as hope to opposition seen in the distance. *Thumos* as hope may even include hope for an afterlife or for divine intervention in this life."¹³³ Because Thucydides, unlike Hobbes, does not reduce the human desire for justice to an otherwise self-interested desire for honor or power, he seems to recognize just this. Thucydides, like Aristotle, therefore seems to explicitly accept what Plato, through the story of Leontius implicitly suggests: that *thumos* is as susceptible to *eros* as it is to *logos*—or that *thumos* is or can be the natural ally of both tyranny and philosophy, justice and injustice alike. He seems to understand human beings and their behavior in terms of having disordered souls. His view of human nature is therefore more tragic than pessimistic.

In short, whereas Thucydides remains open to the possibility of a Platonic or Aristotelian soul—a soul that, when properly ordered (like that of Pericles), can serve the common good—Hobbes's new science of politics remains fundamentally closed to it. By severing *thumos* from *logos* by reducing reason to reckoning, and hence collapsing it into what is an exclusively primordial understanding of the passions and human behavior, Hobbes re-divides the human psyche into two: passion, on the one hand, and reason as reckoning on the other (rationality). What for Aristotle, and to a certain extent, Thucydides, therefore qualifies as serving the common good (the finely tuned art of statecraft as exemplified by both Diodotus and Pericles), for Hobbes qualifies more simply as the vain-glorious activity of honor seeking. Put another way, those actions that for the ancients qualify as expressions of the human concern and capacity for justice, are undermined by Hobbes, for whom such behaviors are merely expressions of the human desire for power: there is no substantive and qualitative difference, for Hobbes, between a Pericles or an

¹³³Thomas Pangle, "The Political Psychology of Religion in Plato's Laws," in *The American Political Science Review* Vol. 70, No. 4 (Dec., 1976): 1064.

Alcibiades. Insofar as Hobbes, then, tries as much as possible to eliminate the influence of *thumos* in politics by first, reducing it to vain-glory so as to second, pit it against the rational the fear of violent death and lead men to reason, Thucydides accepts spiritedness, along with the human condition for what it is. Thucydides, unlike Hobbes, in other words, retains an awareness of and appreciation for spiritedness in political life, not only because he does not share with Hobbes the modern goal of eliminating as much as possible war from human existence, but because as an ancient, and as we have seen he has a different understanding of what it means to be fully human.

Consequently, unlike Hobbes, Thucydides' understanding of human nature does not reduce human beings to primordial existence. In fact, that Thucydides seems to implicitly accept spiritedness as a natural part of the human condition is ultimately what enables him to acknowledge as genuine the human concern for justice. Insofar as *thumos*, in other words, is an intermediary between *eros* and *logos*, reason and desire, it parallels the tension between necessity and justice, primordialism and transcendentalism that, as we saw in Chapter Two characterizes Thucydides' account of human nature. Indeed, because Thucydides recognizes as natural what Hobbes attempts to explain away in terms of delusion or madness—a genuine desire for justice on the part of human beings—his account of human nature, unlike that of Hobbes, ultimately retains a healthy respect for that which connects and in so doing creates a tension between what the primordial and necessity imposes on human beings, on the one hand, and what justice asks of them, on the other: *thumos*.

Alternatively, because Hobbes attempts to eradicate and explain away as much as possible the presence of *thumos* in the human psyche and politics in general, he cannot account for certain aspects of human behavior that, in Thucydides, are presented as natural. Hence, whereas Thucydides recognizes as natural those who, “out of honor” and by “making

some claim to virtue,” visited their friends during the plague, despite endangering their lives and frequently dying as a result, Hobbes recognizes such behavior as “madness”—virtue’s defect. Moreover, whereas Thucydides recognizes as natural those who put revenge above their own self-interest, Hobbes, on account of his reduction of *thumos* to vainglory, again, reduces such behavior to insanity. “To have stronger and more vehement passions for anything than is ordinarily seen in others is that which men call madness,” writes Hobbes. Those Athenians, therefore, who, on account of their concern for honor (something, to be sure, that was not ordinarily seen in others), and who, by making some claim to virtue, decided to risk their personal safety and preservation by visiting their afflicted friends, are neither virtuous nor honorable. They are mad. And the same is true for those who put revenge above self-interest during the civil war at Corcyra. Insofar as they put their pride and concern for honor (like Achilles for his friend, Patroclus) ahead of their concern for self-preservation, they are insane. Whereas for Thucydides, there is a moral dimension to the human condition that exists independent of convention, for Hobbes there is not. In other words, because Hobbes, on account of his modern philosophical project—his desire for peace—explains away the transcendental longings of human beings in terms of either delusion (as he does in Chapter Three of *Leviathan*)¹³⁴ or fear from the ignorance of causes (as he does in Chapter Twelve)¹³⁵ in effect, reducing any behavior that stems from them to vainglory and madness, he necessarily handcuffs himself from allowing into his conception of human nature any genuine concern for the good, for justice, and for the divine, among human beings. Instead, he reduces such concerns always to a wolfish desire for power and

¹³⁴“Because...whatsoever we conceive” write Hobbes “has been perceived first by sense, either all at once or by parts, a man can have no thought representing anything not subject to sense.” (III.12) The idea of transcendence is therefore delusion.

¹³⁵For Hobbes, belief in God derives only from the ignorance of causes: “he that...plunge himself into the pursuit of causes shall at last come to this: that there must be...one first mover...” (XII.12)

honour dressed up sheep's clothing: the use of speech to mask one's primordial motives. He reduces human beings to soulless automata.

Like Aristotle, then, Thucydides if not explicitly than implicitly understands the human condition as one defined in terms of both primordial necessity *and* a longing for justice or the transcendental, while Hobbes's account of human nature in *Leviathan* is defined solely in terms of what the primordial imposes on human beings to the exclusion and regardless of what the transcendental asks of them. Therefore, by rejecting Aristotle's political science, and by extension, the moral and political psychology underlying it—that is, by rejecting Aristotle's interpretation of human nature in an effort to eradicate *thumos* as much as possible from the human psyche and political life—Hobbes, at the same time, also rejects an interpretation of human nature that, although similar, remains fundamentally different from his own: the one found in Thucydides. Simply put, Hobbes's attack on Aristotle's political science and the moral and political psychology underlying it discussed in Chapter Three, is in some ways and at the same time an attack on the very thinker he admired most: Thucydides.

Summary

In this chapter I have endeavored to show how Hobbes's rejection of Aristotle's political science, and by extension, Aristotle's moral and political psychology discussed in Chapter Three, is what ultimately what accounts for the difference between Hobbes's understanding of human nature summarized in Chapter One, and that of Thucydides in Chapter Two. By first, discussing Hobbes's affection for Thucydides and how it is actually and ironically stems his contempt for Aristotle, I then questioned the extent to which this is theoretically possible, given that as an ancient historian, Thucydides nonetheless remains a tradition that Hobbes fundamentally rejects. Next, and in keeping with Chapter Three, I argued that because the *Leviathan* as a work functions as replacement for Aristotle's

Metaphysics, *Ethics*, and *Politics*, it also and in some ways can be read as an attack Thucydides' *History* which, as we have seen, contains arguments about all three that either anticipate or complement those of Aristotle. Finally, and by way of a summary, I returned to the question of human nature and *thumos*, in order to show how Hobbes's dismissal of the idea that man is by nature a political animal, and more specifically, desire to eliminate as much as possible the presence of spiritedness in the human psyche and political life, helps to clarify why Thucydides as opposed to Hobbes, recognizes the human condition in terms a tension between the primordial and transcendent, and not simply in terms of what the primordial imposes on human beings. In so doing, I ultimately argued that whereas Thucydides implicitly accepts war and *thumos* as a natural part of the human condition Hobbes cannot, making his attack on Aristotle also and in some ways an unintended attack on the very thinker he admired most: Thucydides.

Conclusion

The purpose of this thesis has been to explain the difference between Hobbes's account of human nature in the first part of *Leviathan*, and that of Thucydides in his *History*—a difference that, although often overlooked, this thesis is not the first to point out. As stated in the introduction, several scholars, including Johnson and Ahrens Dorf have also written about the fundamental difference between Thucydides' seemingly pessimistic, yet nonetheless more profound and nuanced understanding of human nature, and Hobbes's pessimistic and essentially deterministic interpretation. As Johnson explains:

It is true that both Thucydides and Hobbes make use of psychology to explain individual (and group) motivation. But at the level of his mechanistic psychology, Hobbes asserts a radical individualism and perspectivism that Thucydides does not. It is not that Thucydides' humans are social at the national and international level while Hobbes's are asocial; it is that the type of sociability he assumes differs from Hobbes's...Hobbes's human beings are sociable only insofar as they care what other people think of them. Other than that vanity, they are wholly fearful and mistrustful of their fellows. Each attempts to gain security and power over all others. While the various actors in Thucydides are also concerned about their reputation and glory, some are socially concerned with someone or something apart from themselves as well, whether this is patriotism, concern for family and friends, or genuine religious loyalties.¹³⁶

For Thucydides, therefore, human beings, although selfish and self-interested, frequently see themselves as part of a larger whole. And although passages such as the Plague at Athens and the Civil War at Corcyra tend to prove the former, as we have seen, a closer reading of them nevertheless reveals and reminds us of the latter. Indeed, despite suffering from the effects of plague and with it, lawlessness, many Athenians, we are told, remain concerned about family and friends. Similarly, despite suffering from the effects of civil war, many Corcyreans, we learn, remain more concerned with revenge, or more consumed by a desire for justice than with their own self-preservation. As Ahrens Dorf puts it: "Far from inspiring a general fear of violent death, the civil war inspired an especially powerful admiration for the willingness to suffer death. Human beings came to celebrate the passionate man who dares to defy death and despises calculations of safety and self-interest

¹³⁶Johnson, *Thucydides, Hobbes, and the Interpretation of Realism*, 63.

as a truly courageous and “manly man” and scorned the prudent concern for life and limb as specious cowardice, “unmanly,” and timorous.” War is therefore “a violent teacher not because it teaches a rational fear of violent death but rather because it teaches humans a violent, angry, seemingly selfless but actually self-interested passion for justice.”¹³⁷ Life may be brutish, nasty, and short; it may be simply a matter of doing what is necessary. But living with meaning and purpose requires more than mere necessity, and is thus a matter of transcending one’s animal nature as a moral being with a view to justice and injustice alike—and as we have seen, Diodotus’ understanding of human nature in the Mytilenean Debate and the example of Pericles in his Funeral Oration provides evidence of just that. Whereas for Thucydides, therefore, it is natural for human beings to exhibit an unyielding *eros* for their city and fellow citizens, and an unyielding hope for immortality, for Hobbes, such behavior is always without exception delusional, regardless of how natural Thucydides, without judgment, shows it to be.

As it was also stated in the introduction, however, although this thesis is in basic agreement with the views of both Johnson and Ahrens Dorf, it also offers an altogether different explanation for as to why this difference between Hobbes and Thucydides exists. Chapter One offered an exegetical summary of Hobbes’s account of human nature in *Leviathan* in order to show how that account not only informs but makes possible his larger philosophical project. More specifically, it argued that, due to his primordialism and reductionism, Hobbes puts forward and relies on a pessimistic and deterministic account of human nature that, on the one hand, assumes men are governed and motivated entirely by their passions—that is to say, are by nature selfish, egoistic, and driven by a desire for power after power that, according to Hobbes, “ceaseth only in death”—but that, on the other hand and as a result, also assumes men can be made rational insofar as certain

¹³⁷Ahrens Dorf, “The Fear of Death and the Longing for Immortality: Hobbes and Thucydides on Human Nature and the Problem of Anarchy,” 588.

passions (most notably fear and the fear of violent death) “inclineth them towards peace.” In other words, it argued that Hobbes’s pessimistic and deterministic account of human nature is crafted specifically to support a larger, and paradoxically, optimistic modern philosophical project—to save mankind from the “miserable condition of war.”

Following Chapter One, Chapter Two looked at human nature in Thucydides in order to show how his interpretation, despite being similar, nevertheless differs. Specifically, it argued that, although passages such as the Plague at Athens and Civil War at Corcyra seem to confirm that Hobbes found in Thucydides what he presents as the nature of man and natural condition of mankind in *Leviathan*, Thucydides provides another, implicit teaching on human nature that stands in opposition to that of Hobbes in the Mytilenean Debate—one that argues instead and opposed to Hobbes that the fear of violent death *is not* the most powerful passion in the human psyche and that human beings, despite being governed primarily by passion, are nonetheless open to reason (and not simply as reckoning or rationality). Finally, it turned to Pericles’ Funeral Oration in order to show how for Thucydides, unlike Hobbes, human beings are motivated by both their necessity (self-interest) *and* a genuine concern for justice—that is to say, by primordial passions *and* transcendental longings.

Following Chapter Two, Chapter Three began to account for this fundamental difference by turning to Aristotle and looking at Hobbes’s attack on him—something that, as mentioned in the introduction and noted above, neither Johnson nor Ahrens Dorf have done. First, it discussed why Hobbes held so much contempt for Aristotle, and showed how the *Leviathan* as a work functions, in large part, as a replacement for latter’s *Metaphysics*, *Politics* and *Nicomachean Ethics*. It also and more importantly, however, showed how Hobbes’s account of human nature in *Leviathan* (and as discussed in Chapter One) is not only intended to replace that of Aristotle’s in the *Politics*, but in so doing eradicate as much

as possible from the human psyche and political life something that for Aristotle is a natural part of the human condition, but for Hobbes, makes human beings apolitical and “mad:” (VIII.19) namely, the ancient concept of spiritedness or *thumos*.

Finally, Chapter Four showed how Hobbes’s rejection of Aristotle’s political science, and by extension, understanding of human nature discussed in Chapter Three, ultimately accounts for the difference between Hobbes’s understanding of human nature summarized in Chapter One, and that of Thucydides in Chapter Two. First, it discussed Hobbes’s affection for Thucydides and how that affection actually and ironically stems from his contempt for Aristotle. It also, however, questioned the extent to which this was theoretically possible given that, as an ancient Thucydides in part represents a tradition that Hobbes fundamentally rejects. Next, and in keeping with Chapter Three, it argued that because the *Leviathan* as a work functions, in large part, as a replacement for Aristotle’s *Metaphysics*, *Ethics*, and *Politics*, it also and in some ways can be read as somewhat of an attack on Thucydides’ *History* which, as we saw, contains arguments about all three that either anticipate or complement those of Aristotle and that, as a result, Hobbes rejects. Finally, it returned to the question of human nature and *thumos*, and showed how Hobbes’s dismissal of the idea that man is by nature a political animal, and connected to it, his ambition to eliminate as much as possible spiritedness from political life, helps to clarify what in Chapter Two, we saw was the major difference between Hobbes and Thucydides on the question of human nature—a recognition, albeit implicit, on the part of the latter of man’s necessity or primordial existence, but always in connection to his transcendental longings.

All and all, this thesis essentially argued that, by taking in account Hobbes’s attack on Aristotle and his moral and political psychology, which, as we saw in Chapter Three, entails an implicit restructuring of the Platonic/Aristotelian soul and the reduction of the ancient notion of spiritedness (*thumos*) to vainglory, we can account for the difference

between human nature as understood by Thucydides, on the one hand, and as presented by Hobbes in *Leviathan*, on the other. Indeed, as we have seen, because Hobbes bifurcates the tri-partite Platonic/Aristotelian soul into reason (as reckoning), on the one hand, and passion on the other, and reduces *thumos* to vainglory, in effect, severing it from reason in the classic sense in order to eradicate as much as possible spiritedness from the human psyche and political life, he handcuffs himself from recognizing as genuine certain aspects of the human condition that Thucydides presents as natural—a genuine desire for justice on the part of human beings. Whereas for Thucydides and like Aristotle, therefore, human beings remain fundamentally *political* by nature, for Hobbes they become, in essence, apolitical, egoistic, and driven exclusively by the desire to dominate, hence making his attack on Aristotle's political science and moral and political psychology also somewhat of an attack on the very thinker he admired most: Thucydides.

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