Thomas Hobbes on Commodious Living:
A Critical Examination of “The Safety of the People”

A DISSERTATION

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By

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ABSTRACT

The current literature on Hobbes shows little interest in what can be regarded as central in Hobbes’s theory of the state, namely, the notion of the safety of the people. However, in all of his major political works, Hobbes consistently indicates that the only reason human beings create a political association is to secure their safety. The present dissertation points out the primary importance of the Hobbesian notion of safety, and attempts to offer a proper understanding of it. In Hobbes, mere survival is far from what people pursue in social life, and securing the safety of the people cannot be reduced to securing bare life. The Hobbesian notion of safety can only be adequately understood in light of men’s fundamental aspirations, and Hobbes regards war as mainly what frustrates the fulfillment of these human aspirations. His notion of war is more complex than appears at first sight. It goes beyond acts of fighting and of engaging in a physical conflict to include any social context or political state of affairs characterized by the predominance of a paralyzing fear in people’s lives. This broad and complex notion of war points to a concept of safety that is ample enough to include any war-like situation from which people have to be protected. If the notion of safety refers to protection of people from war, and war refers not only to acts of physical violence, but to any fearful condition of life susceptible to cause a premature, preventable, and unnecessary death, then, to secure the safety of the people entails to free them from all such intolerable conditions of life. There is safety when different causes and fear of war-like situations are removed or significantly reduced to the point that people can pursue what they consider to be their goods and, hence, live a more contented life. In regard to the fragile and uncertain peace of our modern world, the need to
reflect on the notion of safety becomes more urgent, and Hobbes remains undoubtedly one of the most important sources of inspiration.
This dissertation by Jean Robert Itoko Bonenge fulfills the dissertation requirement for the doctoral degree in philosophy approved by Bradley V. Lewis Ph. D., as Director, and by John C. McCarthy Ph. D., and Richard F. Hassing Ph. D., as Readers.

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INTRODUCTION

The abundance of literature on the master principle of civic obedience in the philosophy of Hobbes, along with the dominant picture of his all-powerful sovereign, overshadows the crucial importance and the centrality of the notion of the safety of the people that Hobbes regards as the ultimate end of the office of the sovereign. However, in all of his three major political works, Hobbes consistently indicates that the only reason human beings create a political association or a commonwealth is, in The Elements of Law, for the enjoyment of their “common peace, defence, and benefit;” in De Cive, for “the maintenance of peace, and for common defence;” and more clearly in Leviathan, for “Common Peace and Safetie.” A close reading of his works shows that there is no legitimate political power, or civil society, except that which is established for that purpose. As he clearly puts it in De Cive, “dominions were constituted for peace’s sake, and peace was sought after for safety’s sake.” Thus, in Hobbes’s view, civic obedience and the absolute authority of the sovereign are precisely a means to procure the safety of the people. To put it differently, for Hobbes, the safety of the people is the end that justifies the need for civic obedience and the absolute authority of the sovereign.

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1 Thomas Hobbes, Leviathan, XXX, 1, 231. Throughout the present study, references to Leviathan are given by chapter, followed by paragraph, and the page number of the version edited by Richard Tuck (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990). References to the Dedicatory Epistle and Introduction are given by page number of the aforementioned edition.
2 Thomas Hobbes, Elements of Law, XIX, 8. References to this work will be given by chapter followed by paragraph, from the text edited by J. C. A. Gaskin (New York: Oxford University Press, 1994).
3 Thomas Hobbes, De Cive, V, IX. References to this work will be given by chapter followed by paragraph, from the text edited by Howard Warrender (New York: Clarendon Press: 1982).
4 Leviathan, XVII, 12, 120.
5 De Cive, XIII, 2.
The present study is a critical examination of Hobbes’s idea of the safety of the people, that is, the satisfaction of needs and objective conditions of life that individuals rightfully expect to derive from what Hobbes regards as the choice to live in a political society. In this dissertation, the goal is to come to a good understanding of the primary importance that Hobbes attaches to the notion of the safety of the people in his theory of the state. The importance of this notion can well be seen when one asks one of the basic questions about any text to be interpreted, namely, the question regarding its context. This question is of paramount importance for any textual interpretation. Thus, to see the centrality of the notion of the safety of the people in Hobbes, the question one has to ask is, in what context was Hobbes writing his aforementioned three major political works? According to Bernard Lonergan, the context of a book includes, among other elements, the question that concerned the author, and the problem he was trying to solve. In this regard, the problem about which Hobbes was very concerned, and to which he was attempting to provide a solution was “the miseries, and horrible calamities, that accompany a Civill Warre.” In other words, the general context of the three aforementioned books is that of civil war, and the main question was how to prevent it and promote peace and unity in the commonwealth or, simply put, how to ensure the safety of the people. According to Arihiro Fukuda, this was a pressing question of Hobbes’s time, and all of these three major political works can be read as his attempt to provide a solution to the question.

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7 Leviathan, XVIII, 20, 128.
Before going further, it is important to indicate briefly from the start how some key concepts, namely, war, people, and safety should be understood. With regard to war as the general context of Hobbes’s works, it is worth mentioning that, in his effort to provide an answer to the question regarding the safety of the people, Hobbes does not limit himself to considering the threat of civil war only, but extends his views to the threat of war as a general condition of life that he calls the state of nature, which is characterized by “continuall feare, and danger of violent death.” He argues that civil association is established mainly for the purpose of getting people “out from that miserable condition of Warre.” Considering this broad view of the notion of war, Hobbes’s notion of the safety of the people will be interpreted in light of the idea of protecting people not only from the threat of civil war as such, but also from fear and horror of violent death occasioned by any war-like situation. Approaching war in this perspective would be much more in line with the Hobbesian notion of the state of nature, which constitutes the premise of Hobbes’s argument in his theory of the state.

Speaking of the duty of the sovereign to procure the safety of the people, Hobbes explains, “By the people in this place we understand, not one civil person, namely the city itself which governs, but the multitude of subjects which are governed.” In other words, the concept of people here refers to all members of the civil association, which Hobbes regards as covenanting parties for the creation of the political association. For Hobbes, the people of any given political association represent a multitude of individuals who covenant with one another to

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9 As it will become clear in the second chapter of the present study, “A Conceptual Elucidation of Hobbes’s Idea of War and Peace,” in Hobbes, the notion of war is used in both a wide and a narrow sense.
10 *Leviathan*, XIII, 9, 89.
11 Ibid., XVII, 1, 117.
12 *De Cive*, XIII, 3.
create a commonwealth, and they do it for “Feare of Death; [and out of] Desire of such things as are necessary to commodious living; and a hope by their Industry to obtain them.” Thus, in the present study, the Hobbesian man is approached from the perspective of an individual who chooses to join social and political life with the expectation to enjoy protection from unnecessary violent death and to satisfy his desire for things necessary to a commodious life.

In his explication of the concept of safety, Hobbes maintains, in *The Elements of Law*, that it “must be understood, not the mere preservation of their lives, but generally their benefit and good.” He expresses the same idea, in *De Cive*, by maintaining that safety “must be understood, not the sole preservation of life in what condition soever, but in order to its happiness;” and in *Leviathan*, that it “is not meant a bare preservation, but also all other Contentments of life.” This explication indicates clearly that his concept of safety goes beyond the mere notion of protecting people from physical harm to embrace the idea of creating conditions favorable to the promotion of the welfare of the people. Thus, *safety* in a Hobbesian sense requires not only that people not live under the miserable conditions of physical violence; it also requires that they be liberated from conditions and social structures of poverty. This interpretation is in accord with what Hobbes says in the very beginning of the second part of *Leviathan*, where he takes a great deal of care to indicate clearly the very reason human beings create a sovereign power: it “is the foresight of their own preservation, and of a more contented

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13 *Leviathan*, XIII, 14, 90.
14 *Elements of Law*, XXVIII, 1.
15 *De Cive*, XIII, IV.
16 *Leviathan*, XXX, 1, 231.
life thereby.” This understanding of the notion of safety, which includes as its essential components both protection from physical harm and the creation of conditions that allow people to enjoy “all other contentments of life,” will be the main focal point of the present study.

To capture the idea of the safety of the people as the main duty or the ultimate end of the office of the sovereign, Hobbes uses the dictum salus populi suprema lex (the safety of the people is the supreme law). However, it is worth noting that he uses this dictum in this traditional formulation only in the Elements of Law and in De Cive. In the Elements of Law, he maintains, “1. the law over them that have sovereign power; 2. their duty; 3. their profit: are one and the same thing contained in this sentence, Salus populi suprema lex;” and in De Cive, he states, “all the duties of the rulers are contained in this one sentence, the safety of the people is the supreme law.” The corresponding passage in Leviathan does not mention the phrase suprema lex (is the supreme law). In Leviathan, Hobbes indicates simply that “[t]he Office of the Soveraign . . . consisteth in the end, for which he was trusted with the Soveraign Power, namely the procuration of the safety of the people.” The context and time in which Hobbes was writing Leviathan can explain the omission of the phrase suprema lex. The political climate in which Leviathan was written is commonly referred to as that of the English War between King and Parliament, and most of the commentators believe that Hobbes was still loyal to the crown when he wrote Leviathan. According to Richard Tuck, apart from the Review and Conclusion, much of

Leviathan must have been written when the outcome of the English civil wars was uncertain to

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17 Leviathan, XVII, 1, 117.
18 Elements of Law, XXVIII, 1.
19 De Cive, XIII, 2.
20 It is worth noting the formulation of the topic of the present study, “A critical examination of the safety of the people,” and not the dictum as such.
21 Leviathan, XXX, 1, 231.
Hobbes, who was “still attending the court of the exiled king Charles II.”  

Thus, it is legitimate to believe that Hobbes, out of his allegiance to the crown and as a defender of the king’s absolute power and authority, may have willfully omitted the phrase *suprema lex*, because it suggests the idea of limiting the sovereign power by subjecting it to a certain human law that would be supreme. Nevertheless, this omission of *suprema lex* does not affect in any way the centrality of the notion of safety in *Leviathan*, because Hobbes still presents safety as the main benefit individuals expect to gain in creating a civil association. In the above passage from *Leviathan*, the sovereign’s task of providing *the safety of the people* is not described as the *supreme law*, but much more, it is referred to as the very end, or the only reason, for which the sovereign power has been instituted. In other words, the sovereign has no other *raison d’être* than to ensure the safety of the people.

In relation to the use of the dictum *the safety of the people is the supreme law* to capture in what consists the duty or the office of the sovereign, it is important to mention that Hobbes is neither the first nor the only thinker who speaks of this precept. This dictum can be traced back as early as to Cicero’s work *De Legibus* (*On Laws*): *salus populi suprema lex esto* (*De Legibus*, III, 8). The big question here is whether Hobbes’s notion of *the safety of the people* should be regarded simply as an endorsement of a traditional philosophical view or an original philosophical standpoint. My hope is that the present examination will provide an answer to this question. It suffices to mention here that Hobbes’s notion of *the safety of the people* is part of a long tradition of political thought, and the originality of his view lies mainly in his understanding of the concept of people and the chief reason for the creation of the political association. His

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concept of people is certainly much larger and inclusive than that of ciceronian Roman society, wherein a large segment of the population, namely, the women, children, and slaves, were not regarded as full members of the political society. With regard to the chief reason for creating a civil association, as already indicated here above, for Hobbes, the main reason for creating a civil association is to end the state of war and to enable individuals to satisfy their desire for things necessary to a commodious life. As it will be shown in the present study, understanding the notion of the safety of the people in light of the Hobbesian concept of war involves the recognition of a variety of threats from which people have to be protected.

It has been indicated above that the present study is intended to be a critical examination of Hobbes’s notion of the safety of the people. It would be useful to indicate briefly what should be understood by critical examination as a methodological approach to be used in this dissertation. Etymologically, the word critic, from Greek kritikos, means able to discern or to judge. In light of this etymological meaning, the adjective critical basically conveys the idea of a discerning judgment. When used to describe a methodological approach, particularly in a textual interpretation, a discerning judgment should not be taken to mean a mere subjective approach in which the interpreter has simply to tell his or her own opinion. Rather, a discerning judgment should imply an approach in which the interpreter is engaged in a real dialog with the text. So understood, a critical examination, as a methodological approach, engages in a dialectical thinking in which the interpreter questions the text under investigation, with the purpose of finding the most plausible answers. There are many questions that one can ask the

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23 The American Heritage College Dictionary.

24 It is important to note that the idea of questioning the text frames very well with the etymological meaning of applying a discerning judgment.
author’s text, but in the present study, the question is twofold: what is Hobbes’s understanding of the notion of the safety of the people, and what plausible implications of this notion can one find in Hobbes’s theory of the state.

In using this methodological approach as so described, what type of comments may one expect to find in the present study? To answer this question, it is worth mentioning first that, in this dissertation, the guiding line of interpretation will be the idea that Hobbes’s main purpose was to offer his contribution to the challenge of civil peace and political stability. He wanted to offer the picture of a state in which the ruler is able to fulfill the task for which he has “so much Power and Strength conferred on him,”\(^{25}\) while the people enjoy the benefit of creating such an authority, which is mainly the enjoyment of their “Common Peace and Safetie.” Whether he succeeded or not is a debatable question, depending on what particular aspect of his thought is considered, but this question is beyond the present study.\(^{26}\) What is important and needs to be mentioned in relation to this guiding line is that, in the present study, any theme or concept of Hobbes’s thought will be interpreted in light of this main purpose of Hobbes. It is also appropriate to note that, in my reading, I will look at Hobbes’s work as a whole, in the sense that his claims and statements will not be read in isolation but in light of what he says in other works. Thus, as a result of the methodological approach that is to be used, one will find in the present study not only comments that are supported by textual evidences, but also comments derived from what is implicitly asserted by Hobbes and is in accordance with the purpose of his work taken as a whole.

\(^{25}\) *Leviathan*, XVII, 12, 120.

\(^{26}\) What is important and relevant to the present study is not so much whether or not Hobbes succeeds in his argumentation, but the place and the implication of the notion of the safety of the people in his theory of the state.
In short, by *critical examination* should be understood a thorough examination of Hobbes’s notion of the *safety of the people*; but an examination that goes further than what we find explicitly formulated in Hobbes’s writings. In other words, this study will not limit itself to what Hobbes says explicitly in the immediate context of the *safety of the people*, but it will also consider the implication of what he says and what is echoed elsewhere in his writings. In this examination, a particular focus will be on the benefits that Hobbes enjoins every sovereign to secure for his citizens, namely, providing them protection from war, securing their enjoyment of domestic peace, promoting living conditions favorable for their welfare, and enhancing and guaranteeing the exercise of their liberty.27 The provision of these benefits constitutes what Hobbes regards as the chief end of the office of the sovereign and the precondition for civic obedience. As for my primary sources, I will mainly focus on Hobbes’s three major political works, namely, *The Elements of Law* (1640), *De Cive* (1642; English version, 1651), and *Leviathan* (1651). Other textual evidence from other works of Hobbes will be used to support the reading of these three main texts.

This dissertation will be divided into four chapters. The first, “The Question of Human Nature,” will focus on Hobbes’s conception of human nature. This chapter intends to show that, for Hobbes, the desire for self-preservation fundamentally determines the nature of the human being. This desire is such that one could not possibly lack it and be a human being, and it is basically the passion that inclines human beings to seek safety by creating civil association. Hence, the main argument of this chapter will be that, in its primary sense and at its very first level, the Hobbesian concept of safety entails the assurance of survival and protection

27 *De Cive*, XIII, 6.
from threats against bodily integrity. In the second chapter, “The Hobbesian Concepts of War and Peace,” I will undertake a conceptual elucidation of Hobbes’s idea of war and peace. A particular attention will be given to Hobbes’s definition of the concept of war in order to understand better his notion of peace, and I will argue that the safety of the people, that is, protection from war and the securing of conditions for the enjoyment of “all other Contentments of life,”28 requires peace as its precondition. Chapter Three, “The Hobbesian Art of Governing,” will offer an analysis of Hobbes’s treatment of the art of ruling if the safety of the people is to be the supreme law or the ultimate end of the civil association. The main argument of this chapter will be that, if correctly interpreted, the exercise of the unlimited authority in the Hobbesian state is oriented to securing the safety of the citizen in Hobbes’s sense. Chapter Four, “The Hobbesian Four Benefits,” will offer an extensive examination of the fourfold enjoyment of benefits that Hobbes’s enjoins every sovereign to secure for his citizens. The provision of these benefits will be addressed in light of the two essential functions of the sovereign, namely, the protective and the welfare function. The main argument of this chapter will be that there is no safety when the sovereign fails to secure for his people the benefits which are attached to his essential functions. The present study will end with a reflection in which I will point out the concern for the safety of the citizens as one of the key topics in political thinking, and hence, argue that Hobbes’s adoption of the traditional claim that the safety of the people is the supreme law should not be dismissed as a mere rhetorical statement. This claim should be, rather, viewed as a normative principle in light of which not only any other Hobbesian theme should be interpreted, but also any political thinking should be assessed.

28 *Leviathan*, XXX, 1, 231.
The interest of this study derives from the fact that, as Richard Tuck put it, “of all the great philosophers, Hobbes has arguably been the most neglected by posterity.”\textsuperscript{29} This remark is echoed in the current literature by the lack of interest in one of Hobbes’s central ideas, \textit{the safety of the people}. Although Hobbes takes a great deal of care to make sure that his readers understand him well when he uses the word safety,\textsuperscript{30} the quasi-nonexistence of a detailed study of this concept suggests that commentators believe that they clearly understand it, and that there is no need of further clarification. For example, Gregory Kavka and Howard Warrender,\textsuperscript{31} in their major studies on Hobbes’s political theory, do not devote much space to this topic. In his \textit{Morality in the Philosophy of Thomas Hobbes}, S. A. Lloyd approaches this subject but in a very sketchy way, devoting less than ten pages to it.\textsuperscript{32} In \textit{The Empire of Security and the Safety of the People}, edited by William Bain, and \textit{International Political Theory After Hobbes: Analysis, Interpretation and Orientation}, edited by Raia Prokhovnik and Gabriella Slomp, Hobbes’s concept of safety is mainly approached only in the context of international relations.

This lack of interest in one of Hobbes’s central themes is a major lacuna that justifies the present study. The present dissertation will not be a mere enlargement of the aforementioned brief accounts, but an extensive and critical examination of Hobbes’s view of the benefits of living in a civil society. If I succeed in offering an adequate reading of Hobbes’s understanding


\textsuperscript{30} It is remarkable that, in all of his three major political works, he consistently shows the need to explain what he understands by safety.


of the **safety of the people**, the present study would have added a crucial piece in the understanding of the total picture of Hobbes’ complexly structured political philosophy.
Chapter 1 - THE QUESTION OF HUMAN NATURE

Introduction

The object of this chapter is not to present an interpretation of Hobbes’s conception of human nature as an addition to the countless secondary studies that exist in the literature, but to single out the most fundamental desires and wants that Hobbes ascribes to human nature, and which lie at the origin of civil association. In Hobbes’s thought, the origin of civil association lies in the need to satisfy the most fundamental desires, the “deepest wants,”\(^1\) in human beings. Civil association, as opposed to a state of nature, is established in order to best satisfy the most fundamental human desires. Therefore, as a step toward elucidating his concept of safety, it is necessary to point out these desires and wants, and consider their implication in relation to the notion of safety and commodious life. Hobbes’s analysis of human nature leads him to the conclusion that “[t]he Passions that incline men to Peace, are Feare of Death; Desire of such things as are necessary to commodious living; and a Hope by their Industry to obtain them.”\(^2\) In this regard, every commonwealth should be structured in a way that eases people’s fear of violent death, and secures the conditions that offer the prospects of a more contented life. My argument in this chapter is that, for Hobbes, the dominant end of human nature is not simply to live, but to live well, and his notion of safety must be understood in light of this ultimate end. This argument will be developed in two steps. First, I will argue that the Hobbesian notion of the safety of the people is, at bottom, to be understood as the elimination of any type of insecurity that poses serious threats to physical integrity and bodily well-being of the people. In other words, securing the safety of the people means first and foremost assuring effective physical

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\(^2\) *Leviathan*, XIII, 14, 90.
protection that renders unnecessary the type of struggle Hobbes describes in the state of nature, where individuals have to preserve their lives by means of nothing but “what their own strength, and their own invention shall furnish them withal.”

Second, I will also argue that, though Hobbes considers self-preservation as the basic natural drive of human beings, he does not advocate for mere longevity but for a more contented life. Since he does not deny the possibility for human beings to opt for death in situations where life is not worth living, a life in which an individual enjoys “all other Contentments of life” is, in his view, safer than that which is deprived of such a possibility. Taking these two arguments together, I contend that Hobbes’s notion of “the safety of the people” means not only protecting people’s bodily integrity, but also securing the conditions in which people have good reasons to hope to obtain things necessary to a more contented life.

1. A Methodological Note

Before developing the argument of this chapter, it is useful to mention briefly the crucial methodological importance that Hobbes accords to a good understanding of human nature prior to approaching any aspect of his theory of the state. Most of the commentators agree that his theory of human nature plays a foundational role in his political argument, and serves as a guiding reference for a good understanding of how the commonwealth should be structured and how political power should be exercised. In Hobbes’s view, the relationship between human nature and the commonwealth is a causal relationship. A commonwealth is a structure of life that is established and organized as a response to human passions (desires). Therefore, one cannot “come to the causes and necessity of constituting commonwealths, and . . . get the knowledge of what is natural right, and what are civil duties . . ., what are the rights of commonwealth, and all

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3 Leviathan, XIII, 9, 89.
other knowledge appertaining to civil philosophy,” if one does not first attain “the knowledge of
the passions and perturbations of the mind.”⁴ In the preface to De Cive, Hobbes maintains that
“every thing is best understood by its constitutive causes . . . so to make a more curious search
into the right of States, and duties of Subjects, it is necessary . . . that wee rightly understand
what the quality of human nature is.”⁵

Hobbes expresses the same idea of causal relationship between human nature and the
commonwealth in Leviathan when he says, “seeing the business of a Common-Wealth is this, to
preserve the people in Peace at home, and defend them against forraign Invasion, . . . it requires
great knowledge of the disposition of Man-kind.”⁶ He continues in the “Review and Conclusion”
to Leviathan by maintaining that the principles on which his theory of the state is grounded “are
true and proper” because they are grounded “upon the known naturall inclinations of Mankind.”⁷

One gets a genuine knowledge of the commonwealth, as a whole or in its various aspects, only
by getting a prior genuine knowledge of the human nature.⁸ Hence, adequacy in reading most of
Hobbes’s political statements, views, and arguments, requires a prior good understanding of his
conception of human nature. A good understanding of his notion of the safety of the people and
his idea of commodious life must also be dictated by a prior knowledge of his theory of human
nature.

According to Hobbes, a theory of human nature is needed to provide the necessary
psychological premise for a “true and perspicuous explication of the elements of laws, natural

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⁴ Elements of Philosophy in English Works of Thomas Hobbes, ed. By Sir William Molesworth (London: John
Bohn, 1839), I, 73-74.
⁶ Leviathan, XXV, 13, 180.
⁷ Ibid., “Review and Conclusion,” 13, 489.
⁸ It is worth mentioning that I am here indicating simply the structure and logic of Hobbes’s thinking when it comes
to deriving political views and arguments. According to Hobbes, a good political philosophy must be deduced from
natural philosophy via human conception, which itself is grounded on natural philosophy. Whether or not he
succeeds in deriving his theory of the state from his conception of human nature is a contentious subject among
commentators, which I do not intend to address because it is beyond the scope of the present study.
and politic.” Unlike Aristotle for whom the state comes to being by necessity as the final stage of a natural development of the first association of human beings, namely, the household, or the family, Hobbes regards the state essentially as a man-made product, an artifact brought to existence to serve specific needs grounded in human nature. In pointing out some aspects of human nature, such as the psychological mechanism of appetite and aversion, and subsequent related passions, which he regards as crucial in structuring political association, Hobbes’s intention seems to indicate the proper end of a commonwealth and how it should be structured and governed. When Plato and Aristotle seek to identify the cardinal virtues that are desirable for the city, and assign to the ruler the task of making the citizens virtuous, Hobbes focuses on identifying powerful desires in human nature, and assigns to the ruler the task of governing in a way that meets these desires.

A close look in the literature on Hobbes’s theory of human nature reveals that his conception of human nature is more complex than it may look at first view. The countless secondary studies and disagreements among commentators on various elements of this theory testify to this complexity. In this regard, it is worth presenting a brief overview of how Hobbes’s conception of human nature is presented in the literature.

2. An Overview of Hobbes’s Conception of Human Nature in the Literature

Given the immensity of studies on Hobbes’s conception of human nature, the present overview will mainly consist in a short review of how Hobbes’s theory of human motivation is presented by the two major contemporary lines of interpretation, in which fall most commentators of Hobbes’s philosophy. On the one hand, there is what is commonly termed as

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9 Elements of Law, I, 1.
10 There is almost no major work on Hobbes which does not contain, if not a chapter, at least some pages related to some aspects of his conception of human nature.
the traditional line of interpretation and, on the other hand, the more recent line which departs from the previous view. This overview will be limited to the works of a few commentators who share common assumptions in their reading of Hobbes and, in this regard, can be regarded as the most representatives of these two lines of interpretation. The underlying question that guides this overview is, why do human beings choose to live in a commonwealth?

2. 1. Outline of the Traditional Line of Interpretation

In the Hobbesian literature, one can find what is generally labeled as the traditional or standard line of interpretation, which is the established and most commonly accepted reading of major themes of Hobbes’s philosophy. Among many other commentators, J. W. N. Watkins, David Gauthier, David Johnston, and Jean Hampton, can be taken as the most representatives of this line of interpretation.

The starting point of the traditional line of interpretation is Hobbes’s mechanistic of his conception of human nature. According to this approach, Hobbes is interpreted as holding the view that a mechanistic account of human nature provides an accurate explanation of materialism, which is seen as providing the necessary framework for a good understanding

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human behavior, desire, and motivation. By mechanistic materialism should be understood the view that the universe consists of nothing more than matter in motion. Thus to say that Hobbes treats the human nature from a purely mechanistic materialist perspective amounts to saying that he conceives of human nature simply in terms of matter in motion. One of Hobbes’s statements that are often taken as providing the general framework for his materialistic conception of human nature is found in the introduction of *Leviathan*:

> For seeing life is but a motion of Limbs, the beginning whereof is in some principall part within; why may we not say, that all Automata (Engines that move themselves by springs and wheeles 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 Wheeles, giving motion to the whole body, such as was intended by the Artificer?16

This passage is usually taken to mean that, in Hobbes’s view, a human being is nothing more than a mere living machine of a sort, with a certain physiological structure. His nature can be reduced merely to body and motion, and his psychological state to merely a physical state, regulated by the principle of aversion-desire dictated by external stimuli. Human conduct is nothing more than a physiological process generated mechanically according to this law of aversion-desire. According to Jean Hampton’s interpretation, Hobbesian man is biologically programmed in his conduct to pursue what is pleasurable and to avoid what is harmful. Every psychological activity is nothing but a function of an individual’s desire or aversion, and his management of them. The pursuit of the object of appetite and the avoidance of the object of aversion are basic to human physiological makeup. In this perspective, to understand desires, aversions, or any motive and need that a human being may have, one has simply to understand the functioning of that physiological structure. Even human voluntary action is also interpreted

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15 See, for example, Jean Hampton’s interpretation in *Hobbes and the Social Contract Tradition*, 11-14.
16 *Leviathan*, Introduction, 1, 9.
within this mechanistic framework. To act voluntarily, such as “to go, to speak, to move any of our limbes . . . and the like Voluntary motions,” is nothing but to respond in a determined fashion to external objects by which one is attracted or repelled. Such a reading leads Jean Hampton to maintain that Hobbes believed that the analysis of physical structure of human being provides not only a good understanding of “how the parts of the human engine work but also what fundamental desires and motivations each human being possesses intrinsically, in virtue of the way one’s body functions.”

Also a feature of this mechanistic interpretation of Hobbes’s theory of human nature is the view that human beings are, according to Hobbes, psychologically egoistic by nature. Their physiological makeup makes them always pursue what is in their selfish interest. The following passages are the most used in support of this characterization of Hobbes’s theory of human nature. From the Elements of Law, there are passages such as, “Every man, for his own part, calleth that which pleaseth, and is delightful to himself, GOOD; and that EVIL which depleaseth him . . . [There is no] such thing as άγαϑόν άπλώζ, that is to say, simply good;”

“[a]nd forasmuch as necessity of nature maketh men to will and desire bonum sibi, that which is good for themselves, and to avoid that which is hurtful . . . it is not against reason that a man doth all he can to preserve his own body and limbs, both from death and pain.” From De Cive, there are claims such as, “every man is desirous of what is good for him, and shuns what is evill”, “every man, by naturall necessity, endeavours to defend his Body, and the things which he judgeth necessary towards the protection of his Body,” “each one not by Right onely, but

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17 Leviathan, VI, I, 38.
19 The Elements of Law, VII, 3.
20 Ibid., XIV, 6.
21 De Cive, I, 7.
22 Ibid., II, 3.
even by *natural necessity* is suppos’d, with all his main might, to intend the procurement of those things which are necessary to his own preservation.”23 Well-known statements are found in *Leviathan*, where Hobbes holds, “of the voluntary acts of every man, the object is some *Good to himself*;”24 “all the voluntary actions of men tend to the benefit of themselves;”25 “no man giveth, but with the intention of Good to himself; because . . . of all Voluntary Acts, the Object is to every man his own Good;”26 “every man by nature seeketh his own benefit, and promotion.”27

Some of Hobbes’s readers regard these passages as support for the view that the pursuit of the object of appetite and the avoidance of the object of aversion are so basic to human nature that it is a necessary psychological truth that, in every act, human beings are irremediably moved by what satisfies their selfish desires. Any human voluntary action, whether it is from appetite or from aversion, is always and solely motivated by the agent’s hope to promote some personal benefit, and in this regard, it is always egoistic. In his book *Morals by Agreement*, David Gauthier argues that Hobbesian man is moved to act in accordance with the laws of nature only to the extent that they are recommended by self-interest of the agent. In the Epilogue of his work, *The Rhetoric of Leviathan*, David Johnston maintains that the concept of man expressed in Hobbes’s political philosophy implies that human being “is a fundamentally egoistic being whose actions are designed to promote his own self-interest, which each individual defines in his own way.”28 He goes on to maintain, “Hobbes’s new view of man as a rational egoist was not merely a representation of reality as he saw it. On the contrary, it was a carefully constructed model of man as Hobbes believed he would have to be in order to live in a peaceful and lasting

23 *De Cive*, III, 9.
24 *Leviathan*, XIV, 8, 93.
25 Ibid., XV, 4, 102.
26 Ibid., XV, 16, 105.
27 Ibid., XIX, 9, 133.
political community.”²⁹ According to this line of interpretation, in his theory of the state, Hobbes is overwhelmingly concerned with how to prevent self-centered individuals, whose behavior is essentially motivated by the pursuit of selfish interests, from causing sedition and rebellion. Hence, the solution that he proposed was simply to create a sovereign endowed with absolute power to curb human conflicting nature.

Corollary to psychological egoism is the view that the whole Hobbesian system is grounded on individual self-preservation. In the traditional line of interpretation, the concept of self-preservation is regarded as so important and central to Hobbes’s theory of the state that it leads some commentators, like Jean Hampton, to maintain that its implication renders “the entire Hobbesian justification for absolute sovereignty invalid.”³⁰ The debate surrounding the notion of self-preservation in Hobbes’s philosophy concerns mainly whether or not Hobbes regards self-preservation as the overriding desire in human motivation. Traditionally, Hobbes is interpreted as holding the view that human beings care first and foremost about the preservation of their lives, and as a result of this, fear of bodily harm and violent death is their overriding passion. For example, David Gauthier maintains that there is no account of obligation in Hobbes’s theory of human motivation, and acting for reasons other than self-interest is not a possibility in his conception of human nature.³¹ He goes on to explain that the reason why, for Hobbes, human beings are necessarily selfish is that every “man seeks, and seeks only, to preserve and strengthen himself. A concern for continued well-being is both the necessary and sufficient

³⁰ Jean Hampton, *Hobbes and the Social Contract Tradition*, 197. According to Jean Hampton, if Hobbes’s view on the human right to self-preservation is taken seriously, then, his argument on the necessity of establishing an absolute sovereign loses all of its strength. Her argument goes as follow: according to Hobbes, in entering the commonwealth, human beings carry their right to self-preservation. The implication of this carrying the right of self-preservation into the commonwealth is that subjects themselves are the ones who assess, determine, and decide whether obeying the sovereign’s command leads to their preservation or not. If this is the case, then, the Hobbesian sovereign cannot be the ultimate decider in every issue that concern civil peace for which individuals have established a commonwealth.

³¹ David Gauthier, *The Logic of Leviathan*, 98.
ground of human action.” In the same line of thought, J. W. N Watkins argues that Hobbes’s goal was “to reduce morality to rational self-interest,” and that he regards self-preservation as an “end dictated by a man’s biological-cum-psychological make-up” which “overrides the rest.” He goes on to maintain that two fundamental principles follow from Hobbes’s analysis of human nature: first, no altruistic moral consideration can motivate human action because “all motivation is essentially egocentric . . . Secondly, . . . death . . . [is] the most violent aversion of all.” David Johnston also maintains that “Hobbes’s argument is that the fear of death . . . is such a powerful motive that it is capable of causing men to curb their natural appetites, vanity, and contentiousness in order to subject themselves in obedience to a common sovereign.” In short, Hobbes is interpreted as arguing that all human actions are ultimately guided by the most powerful of all motives, namely, self-preservation, or fear of death.

2. 2. Outline of the New Approach

One can also find in the literature a line of interpretation of Hobbes’s philosophy that is developed by commentators who challenge the established reading of Hobbes’s theory of human nature and motivation. The following can be taken as the prominent representatives of this line of interpretation: F. S. McNeilly, Bernard Gert, and S. A. Lloyd. For these commentators, reducing Hobbes’s theory of human nature to merely psychological egoism is a

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32 David Gauthier, The Logic of Leviathan, 7.
33 J. W. N. Watkins, Hobbes’s System of Ideas, 84.
34 Ibid., 83.
“sophomoric view”\textsuperscript{38} that is “too oversimplified to be plausible,”\textsuperscript{39} and mostly “too silly to be worth bothering about.”\textsuperscript{40} This group of commentators puts forward a number of arguments challenging the accuracy of the traditional line of reading Hobbes’s theory of human nature. Their arguments rest broadly on the following grounds.

First, they all reject the idea according to which mechanistic materialism is the appropriate guiding frame in reading Hobbes’s moral and political theory. For McNeilly, “mechanistic materialism is merely one of Hobbes’s battle-cries, but it is not among the troops whom he deploys when actual fighting begins.”\textsuperscript{41} He goes on to say that “the best thing that the reader of \textit{Leviathan} can do with Hobbes’s mechanistic materialism is to dismiss it from his mind as quickly as Hobbes dismisses it from his argument.”\textsuperscript{42} In the same line of thought, Bernard Gert argues, “Although Hobbes sincerely held a materialist view, . . . [he] never uses his materialism to support any specific claims about how human beings behave.”\textsuperscript{43} His views on human nature do not derive from his metaphysical materialism but are based on “his humanistic readings and his own observations of the behavior of the people.”\textsuperscript{44} A. S. Lloyd also maintains that “Hobbes offers his materialistic reductionism as an educated conjecture . . . rather than as a foundation from which he builds up his specific conception of human nature.”\textsuperscript{45} As textual evidence to support the rejection of mechanistic materialism as the appropriate guiding frame in reading Hobbes’s conception of human nature, Lloyd indicates Hobbes’s strong belief expressed in both \textit{De Cive} and \textit{Leviathan} that “the Principles of naturall Science . . . are so farre from

\textsuperscript{39} S. A. Lloyd, \textit{Morality in the Philosophy of Thomas Hobbes}, 57.
\textsuperscript{40} F. S., McNeilly, \textit{Anatomy of Leviathan}, 97.
\textsuperscript{41} Ibid., 103.
\textsuperscript{42} F. S., McNeilly, \textit{Anatomy of Leviathan}, 106.
\textsuperscript{44} Ibid., 7.
\textsuperscript{45} S. A. Lloyd, \textit{Morality in the Philosophy of Thomas Hobbes}, 59.
teaching us any thing of Gods nature, as they cannot teach us our own nature, nor the nature of the smallest creature living."\textsuperscript{46}

According to this group of interpreters, in Hobbes’s view, the appropriate guiding methodological frame to construct a science of human nature is introspection. Bernard Gert, for example, maintains, “Hobbes regards introspection as the appropriate method for arriving at analyses of the passions, and observation of people’s actions is the appropriate method for discovering the objects of the passions.”\textsuperscript{47} S. A. Lloyd argues in the same line of thought by maintaining that Hobbes wanted his political conclusions “to be not doubted, and not contestable,” and to achieve this goal he based his argument on \textit{indubitable introspectables}, which are nonanalytical propositions “that each man can assure himself of by direct introspection.”\textsuperscript{48}

According to Lloyd, Hobbes used these nonanalytical propositions as “premises that the reader will see as undoubtedly true in his or her own case.”\textsuperscript{49} McNeilly explains that, to reach the truth about human passions, the use of these “propositions by appeal to introspective experience is not to be regarded as just a special case of justification by appeal to experience, for then the propositions could not be necessary and universal . . . [W]hat Hobbes has in mind is that introspection experience gives us insight into the nature of the mind.”\textsuperscript{50} The following passages are often used in support of introspection as the methodological frame to understand Hobbes’s analysis of human passions. From \textit{De Corpore}, where Hobbes maintains, “the causes of the motions of the mind are known, not only by ratiocination, but also by experience of every man

\textsuperscript{46} \textit{Leviathan}, XXXI, 33, 252; \textit{De Cive}, XV, 15.
\textsuperscript{47} Bernard Gert, \textit{Hobbes, Prince of Peace}, 34.
\textsuperscript{48} S. A. Lloyd, \textit{Morality in the Philosophy of Thomas Hobbes}, 262.
\textsuperscript{49} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{50} F. S. McNeilly, \textit{Anatomy of Leviathan}, 72.
that take the pains to observe those motions within himself.” From *Leviathan*, the passage where Hobbes claims that because of

> 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, &c, and upon what grounds; he shall thereby read and know, what are the thoughts, and Passions of all other men upon the like occasions.

The second ground of the argument of this group of commentators follows from their rejection of mechanistic materialism as the guiding frame. They all reject the view that Hobbes held psychological egoism. According to McNeilly, although there are still some statements expressing an egoistic view of human nature in *Leviathan*, Hobbes abandoned this egoistic view that he held in the *Elements of Law*, and that this view no longer plays a central role in Hobbes’s argument. Bernard Gert contends that “no one reading Hobbes’s published works carefully and without preconceptions would ever conclude that he argues for psychological egoism.” S. A. Lloyd argues that attributing to Hobbes such “an impoverished psychological theory” leads irremediably to “a distortion of his moral theory that then forms a false foundation for his political arguments . . . [whose] result bears little resemblance to Hobbes’s authentic view.”

This group of commentators considers that there is no clear textual evidence that Hobbes endorsed psychological egoism in his theory of human motivation. They point out some of Hobbes’s statements and remarks that directly conflict with psychological egoism, and which suggest that Hobbes has not only a complex but also a far more plausible view of human nature.

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51 *De Corpore*, I, VI, 7.
52 *Leviathan*, Introduction, 10.
For instance, his definition of certain passions, such as benevolence as “desire of good to another,” and love as a passion that must be “understood in two ways; . . . it is called one kind of love when we wish ourselves well, and another when we wish well to others.” They argue that Hobbes would not describe these passions in terms of a man seeking the good of others if he considered psychological egoism as an essential feature of human nature. The above references that are taken to support psychological egoism in the traditional reading show simply that, for Hobbes, human beings are inclined to act for their own benefit. However, to act for one’s own benefit does not necessarily mean to act egoistically, because I can seek my benefit by acting for the good of someone that I want to see happy, like in the case of a parent acting for the good of his child. In addition, these commentators consider that many other remarks that Hobbes makes about human nature are as important as the above references. There is no apparent reason that can justify giving crucial importance to some statements over others in order to attribute psychological egoism to Hobbes.

Bernard Gert argues that “If Hobbes believes in psychological egoism, he should hold that human nature is responsible for the faults of civil society, but what he actually holds is that when societies fail, ‘the fault is not in men as they are the matter, but as they are the makers and orderers of them.’ (Leviathan, XXIX, 1).” In other words, the most important cause of social and political conflicts in Hobbes’s view is not to be found in human nature but in false moral views; hence the importance that he accords to civic education. Without rejecting the importance of the sovereign’s binding power in Hobbes’s worldview, this group of commentators emphasizes the importance of civic education and Hobbes’s idea of the state as an educational

50 Leviathan, VI, 22, 41.
58 Bernard Gert, Hobbes, 40.
institution for civil peace, social harmony, and political stability. They argues that, in his theory of the state, Hobbes’s main effort consists in developing a system of political education whose goal is to shape the opinion of the citizens in a way that produces consent for the purpose of maintaining peace. One of his strongest beliefs is that civic education has the virtue of producing sufficient agreement between political authority and the body of citizens. Hence, people are to be taught civic principles and a proper understanding of their civic and moral duties. The emphasis on the necessity of power in the commonwealth should be interpreted not so much for the purpose of curbing a supposedly human conflicting nature, but mostly as a guarantee for the performance of peaceable actions. If Hobbes conceived human beings as biologically programmed to promote their egoistic interests, he would not have advocated for the creation and maintenance of a civil association as a genuine “peaceable, sociable, and comfortable” frame of life.

The third ground concerns the claim that Hobbes regards self-preservation as the most powerful driving force in human motivation. Although most of the commentators of this group acknowledge that there are remarks in Hobbes’s writings, especially in his earlier works, that seem to support this view, they all argue that a close look of Hobbes’s political works shows that self-preservation is not the sole most important motive of human action. The text of Leviathan shows that Hobbes offers several powerful ends that motivate human beings, and not simply the preservation of one’s life. According to Lloyd, what ultimately motivates Hobbesian men is not

60 Leviathan., XV, 40, 111.
so much fear of corporeal death, but transcendent interests.\textsuperscript{61} In her books, \textit{Ideals As Interests in Hobbes’s Leviathan} and \textit{Morality in the Philosophy of Thomas Hobbes}, she argues that the fact that Hobbes devotes a significant portion of each of his political works to religion is an indication of the important role that he accords not simply to fear of bodily death, but to transcendent religious interests. A close reading of \textit{Leviathan} shows that the concern for eternal salvation or punishment is the overriding motivational force in Hobbesian men, who clearly can disregard the sovereign’s threats of corporeal punishment and death for what they believe to be their religious duty. One of the passages Lloyd uses to support her interpretation is where Hobbes maintains,

\begin{quote}
It is manifest enough, that when a man receiveth two contrary Commands, and knows that one of them is Gods, he ought to obey that, and not the other, though it be the command even of his lawfull Soveraign . . .,” and “if the [sovereign’s] command be such, as cannot be obeyed, without being damned to Eternall Death, then it were madness to obey it, and the Counsell of our Saviour takes place, (Mat. 10.28) \textit{Fear not those that kill the body, but cannot kill the soule}.\textsuperscript{62}
\end{quote}

To point out the inadequacy of the traditional line of interpretation, commentators of the new approach argue that number of textual evidences show that Hobbes clearly believes that human beings are quite different in their psychological characteristics. He acknowledges, for example, that “the inclinations of men are diverse, according to their diverse constitutions, customs, opinions.”\textsuperscript{63} In \textit{De Homine}, he indicates that “men’s inclination toward certain things, arise from a six-fold source: namely from the constitution of the body, from experience, from

\textsuperscript{61} See A. S. Lloyd, \textit{Ideals As Interests in Hobbes’s Leviathan}. By transcendent interests, Lloyd means “interests for the sake of which . . . [people] are willing to sacrifice their lives, if necessary.” These transcendent interests are various in nature: “interests in securing the good of our children, in furthering the realization of substantive moral ideals such as liberty or justice or human rights, in defending one’s country . . ., in defending our honor or reputation.” (A. S. Lloyd, \textit{Morality in the Philosophy of Thomas Hobbes}, Preface, x.).

\textsuperscript{62} \textit{Leviathan}., XLIII, 1-2, 43.

\textsuperscript{63} \textit{De Cive}, III, 31.
habit, from the goods of fortune, from the opinion one hath of oneself, and from authorities. When these things change, dispositions change also.”  

In other words, Hobbes believes that human beings act in a wide variety of ways, and that variety of motives, education, opinion, and even the constitution of the body etc. play a determining role in human behavior.

Commentators of this group often argue that it is a simplistic view to maintain that Hobbes believes that self-preservation is the most basic and compelling desire for every human being. While he repeatedly maintains that most human beings regard death, especially violent death, as *summum malum* and seek to avoid it at all cost, Hobbes maintains also with equal force of conviction that there are circumstances in life under which death can be desired and even sought as a good. The following is the most well known and used passage in support of this argument:

> Insofar as it is within their capacities, it is necessary to desire life, health, and further, in so far as it can be done, security of future time. On the other hand, though death is the greatest of all evils (especially when accompanied by torture), the pains of life can be so great that, unless their quick end is foreseen, they may lead men to number death among the goods.

Thus, in Hobbes’s view, human actions are ultimately motivated not by the desire of self-preservation, but mostly by the desire of procuring some good to the agent; good that is not necessarily egoistic and which, in some circumstances, includes death.

### 3. A Brief Assessment

From the above outlines, it clearly appears that the Hobbesian literature offers two readings of Hobbes’s conception of human nature. The first, from the traditional reading, for

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62 *De Homine*, XIII, 1. See also *Leviathan*, VIII, 14, 53.
63 Ibid., XI, 6.
which materialism is the decisive premise of Hobbes’s system, depicts the Hobbesian men as egoists by nature, opposed to one another, and guided in their actions by the desire to preserve their lives. The second reading, which emphasizes the importance, for Hobbes, of an introspective access to the principles of human nature, portrays the Hobbesian men as agents with a variety of possible motives, but guided ultimately by their pursuit of goods (not necessarily egoistic ones), for the sake of which they can even willingly sacrifice their lives by choosing death.

Pointing out these two lines of reading Hobbes’s theory of human motivation is of great importance. It indicates the reason that leads Hobbesian men to want to live in a political association. The literature seems to indicate two different directions one may face when it comes to understanding Hobbes’s notion of the safety of the people. If, on the one hand, Hobbes is seen as arguing that human beings in their very nature are unsocial, egoistic, and violent toward one another, then, creating or submitting to an absolute sovereign is the only rational way to get out of the horrible state of nature. In this perspective, no other consideration motivates human beings to choose to live in a political association than the preservation of their physical life. The power to coerce, credibly threaten, and inflict punishment is regarded as necessary means to curb human nature and make it fit the political life. Securing the safety of the people, therefore, should be understood simply in terms of defending people from dangers that threaten their physical integrity.

If, on the other hand, Hobbes is interpreted as ascribing the origin of conflict in a commonwealth not to human nature as such but to differing opinions about human nature and human good, then, civic education becomes key for maintaining lasting conditions of peace. The desire to pursue and fulfill ones’ idea of good becomes the fundamental motive for choosing to
live in a civil association. In this perspective, Hobbes’s theory of the state would not be seen as primarily a justification for absolute sovereignty, but as an advocacy for a “well ordered society” in which each individual has good reason to hope to obtain things “necessary to commodious living.”66 The sovereign’s duty to secure safety, therefore, would include not only providing protection from bodily danger and creating conditions favorable to a more contented life, but also the fashioning of people’s conduct through civic education in such a way that they meet the demands of peace in their socio-political life.

A close look at the two approaches shows that they are not contradictory but complementary. There is very little disagreement among Hobbes’s commentators on the importance that Hobbes accords to the human drive to good and aversion to evil. We desire what is good and have aversion to what is evil. Besides, no one of Hobbes’s readers questions Hobbes’s belief that self-preservation is a widespread desire for every human being. Disagreement lies on whether or not Hobbes regards the human drive to good as dictated solely by egoistic motives, and whether or not self-preservation is a desire that overrides every human desire absolutely.


4.1. The “greatest of all goods” vs. The “Chiefest of all Evils”

Given the importance of the human drive to good, especially the desire for self-preservation in human psychology, it is worth examining Hobbes’s texts before considering the political implication of this human desire, especially in relation to the notion of safety. In presenting his account of human nature as the premise to his political argument, Hobbes offers a picture of human being in his fundamental characteristics, leaving aside diverse variations

66 Leviathan, XIII, 14, 90.
between individuals, which he considers as depending on the constitution of the body, personal experience, habit etc. In so proceeding, he is indicating that civil association is created as a response to the most fundamental and deepest desires in human beings.

According to Aristotle, for example, to understand the true nature of the human being, we need to look at what he calls the *ergon* of man, that is, the proper activity of the human being that makes him a human being rather than anything else. This *ergon* consists in the activity of reason.

A close reading of Hobbes’s writings shows that he also acknowledges reason as one of the essential components of human nature, though he seems to use the word reason in different senses than Aristotle. For example, in the opening chapter of the *Elements of Law* on human nature, he maintains, “Man’s nature is the sum of his natural faculties and powers, as the faculties of nutrition, motion, generation, sense, reason, &. For these powers we do unanimously call natural, and are contained in the definition of man, under these words, animal and rational.” Here, Hobbes is clearly considering the human nature in Aristotelian sense by including reason as an essential component. However, for him, to determine the true nature of the human being, we need to discover what force really determines the human being in whatever he undertakes. To determine such a force, we have to consider human beings as if they “now sprang out of the earth, and suddenly, like mushrooms, come to full maturity, without all kind of engagement to each other.” In so proceeding, his analysis leads him to consider *passion-desire*
as one of the most essential features of the human being. For Hobbes, passions and desires are motions, and a person who is not passion-driven and desire-forming is motionless, that is, a dead person. In his view, passion-desire is coextensive, or identical, with life itself. Before attaching any qualification, human beings are first and foremost passion-driven and desire-forming creatures. He maintains that while human beings can be said to be free to act or not to act, they “cannot, however, be free to desire.” Even reason is reduced to a mere instrument in the service of passion. In Hobbes, the very rationality of reason, as faculty of mind, is defined through the capacity of passion to guide the imagination, through deliberation, and identify the means for reaching the desired goal. As natural faculty, the primary goal of reason is to help an individual to preserve his life. Reason teaches every man to do “all he can to preserve his own body and limbs, both from death and pain.” He expresses the same view in the Epistle Dedicatory of De Cive, when he maintains that reason “teaches every man to fly a contra-natural dissolution, as the greatest mischief that can arrive to nature.” Thus, in Hobbes’s view, reason is not simply the faculty of reasoning, but also the faculty whose primary object is to enable the individual to strive for his preservation.

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73 De Homine, XI, 2.
74 It is worth mentioning here that I do not intend to discuss the place of reason in Hobbes’s conception of human nature, which would require an analysis that goes beyond the present study. It suffices to indicate that by attributing to Hobbes the view that human beings are passion driven creatures, I am not denying Hobbes’s acknowledgement that we are also reasoning creatures. It would be inaccurate to attribute to him the view that human beings, in their actions, are determined solely by passions, or act on instincts like animals. Hobbes acknowledges that, in addition to passions, a human being has also reason, which can persuade him to act contrary to natural inclination. The very possibility of creating a civil association by agreeing on articles of peace that reason suggests (Lev., XIII, 14, 90) is a clear indication that Hobbesian men are capable of acting on their reason. Besides, a thorough analysis of Hobbes’s notion of voluntary act must point to the importance of reason as faculty of judgment. For Hobbes, “a Voluntary Act is that, which proceedeth from the Will, and no other” and the “Will . . . is the last Appetite in Deliberating” (Lev., VI, 53, 44-45). Thus, for Hobbes, a voluntary act presupposes deliberation, which involves reason as faculty of judgment. In saying that, for Hobbes, we are passion-desire creatures, I am not really at odds with his view either, because he does hold that most people tend to act more on their emotions than on their reason. However, my main goal here is simply to highlight the importance of human desire for self-preservation as pointed out in the literature of Hobbes in order to indicate its implication with regard to the notion of safety.
75 Elements of Law, XIV, 6.
76 De Cive, Epistle dedicatory.
For Hobbes, then, life is first and foremost a constant endeavor to fulfill one’s desires, whose primary and most fundamental is the desire to live. Every reader of Hobbes’s account of human nature will agree that, for Hobbes, it is in the nature of the human being to desire good, and to shun evil; and “the greatest of all goods for each is his own preservation,”77 and “the chiefest of natural evils, . . . is death.”78 Hobbes often speaks in an absolute way, making no exception that, considered with respect to dispositions we have from nature, every human being is by nature inclined to desire good, and the preservation of one’s life is counted as the greatest of all human goods.79 This is often overlooked by commentators who read self-preservation only in terms of natural impulse, and read Hobbes as claiming simply that human beings in their actions are essentially moved by the natural impulse to self-preservation. This interpretation is partly true, but a close analysis of Hobbes’s texts shows that he regards self-preservation as the primary good that a human being can seek. In other words, what Hobbes’s texts say is that, as good, self-preservation has priority over all other human goods. The best way to put it is that, for Hobbes, striving for good is the strongest human impulse, and the most prominent and basic good in human psychology is self-preservation; it is in this sense that Hobbes’s use of the expression “the greatest of all goods” to characterize self-preservation should be taken. In this regard, in Hobbes’s view, life is “the greatest of all goods” not simply because human beings desire to live, but mostly because it makes possible the pursuit and fulfillment of all other goods.

There are a number of textual evidences corroborating the interpretation according to which self-preservation is the most prominent and basic good of all human strivings. It suffices

77 De Homine, XI, 6.
78 De Cive, I, 7. It is important to mention that the term evil here should be understood under the appetite-aversion mechanism of Hobbes’s theory of human psychology, and not in a moral sense. In other words, evil is not used here as opposed to what is wrong, but to what is appetitive or desirable.
79 I am not speaking here about the summum bonum in the sense of a universally agreed upon objective good; Hobbes is clear that there is no such thing (see Lev., XI, 1, 70).
to mention his striking remark that every human being “shuns . . . Death . . . by a certain impulsion of nature, no less than that whereby a Stone moves downward.” In *Philosophical Rudiments*, Hobbes emphasizes this view by maintaining that, confronted by death threat, a sound and normal human reaction is “fight or flight.” The same idea is also expressed in *Leviathan* when, speaking of the difference between a family and a commonwealth, he remarks that in time of danger, every rational being will do whatever it takes “to save his own life, either by flight, or by submission to the enemy, as he shall think best.” In the same line of thought, he holds that if a starving man took “food by force, or stealth” in defense of his life, he has to be excused. He goes on to say, “when a man is destitute of food, or other thing necessary for his life, and cannot preserve himselfe any other way, but by some fact against the Law . . . he is totally excused,” “because no Law can oblige a man to abandon his own preservation.” For Hobbes, in a normal situation, a human being can hardly commit suicide unless he is driven “by some inward Torment or Apprehension somewhat worse than Death.” All these considerations regarding self-preservation lead Hobbes to maintain that if someone, either by words or other signs, seems to deprive himself of means of preserving his life, he must not “be understood as if he meant it” “because he cannot be understood to ayme thereby, at any Good to himselfe.”

Hobbes’s acknowledgement of the individual’s inalienable right to resist anyone who threatens his life, including the sovereign, can be regarded also as an important evidence that supports the interpretation according to which he regards striving for self-preservation as one of the primary and most basic aspects of human nature. He maintains, “Whensoever a man

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80 *De Cive*, I, 7.
81 *Philosophical Rudiments*, III, 18.
82 *Leviathan*, XX, 15, 142.
83 Ibid., XXVII, 26, 208.
84 Ibid.
85 Ibid., XXVII, 25, 208.
86 *A Dialogue Between the Philosopher and a Student of the Common Laws*, 85.
87 *Leviathan*, XIV, 8, 93.
Transferreth his Right, or Renouceth it; it is either in consideration of some Right reciprocally transferred to himselfe; or for some other good he hopeth thereby.”

Therefore, “[a] covenant not to defend my selfe from force, by force, is always voyd . . . For man by nature chooseth the lesser evill, which is danger of death in resisting; rather than the greater, which is certain and present death in not resisting. And this is granted to be true by all men.”

In entering a civil association, a Hobbesian man has to give up most of his natural rights, except the right to preserve his life “because he cannot be understood to aim thereby at any Good to himself.”

The reason that human beings enter civil association and institute a sovereign is to better preserve themselves; and in this respect, their right to self-preservation cannot be given up in whatsoever condition or circumstance. In Hobbes’s view, self-preservation is so basic that it cannot be given up even in return for duties that provide protection: “If the Soveraign command a man . . . to kill, wound, or mayme himselfe; or not to resist those that assault him; or to abstain from the use of food, ayre, medicine, or any other thing, without which he cannot live; yet hath that man the Liberty to disobey.”

For Hobbes, any threat against one’s life is sufficient reason for the individual to wage war. Even a criminal, who is lawfully condemned has the right and obligation to fight for the preservation of his own life; that is why “they lead Criminals to Execution, and Prison, with armed men, notwithstanding that such Criminal have consented to the Law, by which they are condemned.”

In short, the desire to preserve one’s life is such that one could not possibly lack it and be a human being. Unlike other human desires, the desire for self-preservation is not a

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88 Leviathan, XIV, 8, 93.
89 Ibid., XIV, 29, 98.
90 Ibid., XIV, 8, 93.
91 Ibid., XXI, 12, 151.
92 Ibid., XIV, 29, 98.
contingent or a transitory desire. It is one of the basic human desires that remain constant in all human beings, and is somehow the ultimate goal of all human striving. Hobbes’s theory of the state can legitimately be regarded as a theory on ways and means to enhance and secure individuals’ success in his striving for life. If self-preservation cannot be seen as the overriding desire in Hobbes’s theory of human nature, as some commentators contend, it is nevertheless one of the main reasons that Hobbes places at the foundation of civil association. The choice to live in a commonwealth is motivated by the need to secure the means of avoiding unnecessary and premature death. Hence, the notion of safety must be understood primarily in reference to this basic human desire to pursue and attain this “greatest of all goods.”

4. 2. Life As Motion and Human Desire for Power

In Hobbes, the desire of self-preservation is connected to his conception of life as a kind of motion, and this conception is key to understanding his view of the human drive to self-preservation. In Hobbes, the concept of safety is also well understood in reference to the idea of life as motion. Hence, to determine what his concept of safety involves, it is first necessary to understand his conception of life. In the opening chapters of *Leviathan*, he defines the human being as motion and maintains that human “Life itselfe is but Motion.” In the *Elements of Law*, he stresses this idea of life as motion by portraying human life as a race.

Hobbes’s concept of motion indicates the proper way in which both the human body and mind function. In relation to the body, it emphasizes the salient aspect of human being as a living being; and in relation to human mind, it underlines the fact that a human being “can never

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93 *Leviathan*, VI, 58, 46.
94 *Elements of Law*, IX, 21.
be without Desire, nor without Feare, no more than without Sense.”

Thus to be a human being is to be in motion. In Hobbes’s view, being alive is a precondition of any other good that a human being may need, and desiring is the most prominent aspect of a living human being.

Many commentators agree that Hobbes’s entire philosophy is founded on the concept of motion. His theory of human nature is grounded on the belief that all, in the physical and human universe, is motion. In his view, motion is the natural condition of all bodies of which the universe consists, but life is motion par excellence. It is worth mentioning that the concept of motion, in relation to Hobbes’s conception of human nature, is a vast topic that goes far beyond the object of the present study. It suffices to indicate briefly that Hobbes distinguishes between two types of motion: vital or biological motion, in which the faculty of reason plays no part, and the voluntary motion, which presupposes deliberation. In his analysis of biological motion, Hobbes is very brief and show less interest in this aspect. His focal point seems to be clearly the voluntary type of motion, from which arise all our passions and desires, of which the unceasing satisfaction explains our continual pursuit of felicity.

The key idea in Hobbes’s notion of motion is a perpetual continuation of movement, the concept of rest being its opposite. Unlike Aristotle for whom all motion aims at rest as its fulfillment or completion, Hobbes considers perpetual movement as the fundamental feature of motion, for which there is no terminus ad

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95 Leviathan, VI, 58, 46.
97 “the felicity of this life, consisteth not in the repose of mind satisfied . . . [but in] a continuall progresse of the desire, from one object to another; the attaining of the former, being still the way to the later.” (Leviathan, XI, 1, 70).
As Spragens describes it, in Hobbes, “[t]he basic characteristic of motion . . . is not to grow, or to develop, or reach fulfillment, but to persist, to continue ad infinitum.”

The concept of motion presents the Hobbesian man in his very dynamic nature, in the sense that, as mentioned above, one cannot be motionless and still be regarded as a human being. Life is motion and its opposite, death, is regarded as rest. A human being must always be conceived in his ongoing vital movements through the continual succession of appetites, desires, aversions, fears, hope etc. Motion is, thus, one of the most essential features that characterize a human being as a living human being.

If self-preservation is attached to the idea of life as motion, this latter must be understood in reference to the concept of power, which plays also a special role in Hobbes’s theory of human nature. In chapter IX of the Elements of Law and chapter X of Leviathan, Hobbes analyses different faculties of the mind and body which constitute the essential features in the fabric of the human nature (glory or pride, humility, shame, courage, anger, revengefulness, repentance, hope, trust, pity, indignation, emulation, laughter, weeping, lust, love, charity, admiration, curiosity, magnanimity, and pusillanimity.), and describes most of these passions in relation to power. In Hobbes’s view, the desire for power is so basic that any human desire gets its content in its relation to the desire for power.

One cannot analyze Hobbes’s conception of human nature without noting the following statement, which is commonly seen as a very provocative one: “in the first place, I put for a generall inclination of all mankind, a perpetuall and restlesse desire of Power after power,

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98 The difference between Hobbes and Aristotle with regard to the concept of motion is that the Aristotelian model is teleological, “rest” being the ultimate goal, while the Hobbesian counterpart is infinite movement, “restlessness” being the essential feature.
that ceaseth only in Death.”

To understand what Hobbes means in this quotation, it is important first to make two necessary observations. The first observation concerns the word “power” as used by Hobbes. According to Foisneau, in Hobbes, the word *power* conveys two distinct meanings which, in Latin, are well expressed by two different words, namely *potestas* and *potentia*. As *potestas*, the word power is used by Hobbes in a political sense to refer to authority, entitlement to act or, in Hobbes’s own word, “the right to command.” As *potentia*, it is used in a physical or causal sense to mean human force or capacity to act or to do something.

The second remark concerns how Hobbes’s claim should be understood. Hobbes’s claim that human beings have a perpetual and restless desire of power should not be taken as a claim regarding an internal impulse inherent to human nature. In Hobbes, what motivates human beings ceaselessly to pursue the accumulation of power is not a particular feature of human nature, but the relative character of power itself. In other words, in the state of nature, an individual’s power is measured relative to the power of another individual; and since individuals, as Hobbes conceives of them, are competitors, any advantage in power a competitor has over another is a reason for the latter to seek more power. This interpretation accords with what Hobbes indicates as the reason of this ceaseless quest: it is “because he [man] cannot assure the power and means to live well, which he hath present, without the acquisition of more.” Thus in this well known statement, Hobbes is talking about *potentia*, that is, the individual’s ability to secure necessary resources for achieving one’s goal, or for continuing to satisfy one’s desires. This *potentia* is ceaselessly sought because of its relativity.

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100 *Leviathan*, XI, 2, 70.
102 *De Cive*, V, 11.
103 *Leviathan*, XI, 2, 70.
As many commentators point out, the central issue in Hobbes’s analysis of human desire for power is clearly the effectiveness of means one has to use in order to attain one’s goal. At the beginning of chapter X of *Leviathan*, Hobbes declares: “The POWER of a Man, (to take it Universally,) is his present means to obtain some future apparent Good.” Thus the idea underlying Hobbes’s notion of power is that of the efficacy of the means available to the individual to obtain whatever happens to appear as good for him. One may consider, for example, these remarks of Hobbes from the *Elements of Law*, “There can be no greater argument to a man of his own power, than to find himself able, not only to accomplish his own desires, but also to assist other men in theirs;” “All conception of future is conception of power able to produce something: whosoever therefore expecteth pleasure to come, must conceive some power in himself by which the same may be attained.” For Hobbes, power is that through which a human being can get or hope to get what he wants and needs for his survival and felicity. Understood in terms of necessary means for life, or in terms of that without which one cannot remain in existence, power becomes the determining principle in such a way as human life itself is seen as a ceaseless quest for power. He explains, “the cause of this, is not alwayes that a man hopes for a more intensive delight, than he has already attained to; or that he cannot be content with a moderate power: but because he cannot assure the power and means to live well, which he hath present, without the acquisition of more.”

As mentioned above, Hobbes’s concept of power is well understood in connection with the concept of motion. Just as motion tends to persist in movement so does a human being strive to persist in life; and to persist in life, an individual needs power. The connection between

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104 *Leviathan*, X, 1, 62.
105 *Elements of Law*, IX, 17.
106 Ibid., VIII, 3.
107 *Leviathan*, XI, 2, 70.
the concepts of motion and power seems to provide the answer to the question of how to keep the motion going. This connection is clearly expressed in the Elements of Philosophy, where Hobbes indicates a relationship of cause and effect between the two: motion is actual power, and power is future motion. Life as motion needs and yields power, and power secures life by keeping its motion going on. In other words, human life is motion, and as such it generates power in order to keep the human being in existence. In light of the causal relationship between motion and power, it is legitimate to maintain that, for Hobbes, the human being endeavors to keep himself in existence by prolonging his motion through the unceasing search for power. Concerning the search for power after power, it is important to mention that it is not for the purpose of securing physical life or bodily integrity only, but also for ensuring the enjoyment of the “felicity of this life.” Properly speaking, this human desire to acquire more and more power is nothing but a driving force of human life, and whose aim is the securing of goods for the preservation of life, but precisely a “more contented life.”

For the sake of completeness, it is worth mentioning that Hobbes distinguishes two types of power. On the one hand, there is natural power, which refers to the faculties of body and mind and, on the other hand, instrumental power, which includes riches, friends, reputation, good luck. The second type suggests that power is not only the central element in all human conduct, but also an element that indicates the social value of a man. He maintains,

The Value, or Worth of a man, is as of all other things, his Price; that is to say, so much as would be given for the use of his Power: and therefore is not absolute; but a thing dependent on the need and judgment of another . . . And as in other things, so in men, not the seller, but the buyer determines the Price. For let a man (as most men

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108 Elements of Philosophy, in English Works, I, 131.

109 Leviathan, X, 1-2, 62. See also VIII, 15, 53.
do,) rate themselves at the highest Value they can; yet their true Value is no more than it is esteemed by others.\textsuperscript{110}

In other words, the social value of a man is relative to his power, but this must be considered in both directions subjectively and objectively. Subjectively speaking, an individual values himself in reference to the efficacy of the means he believes to have for attaining what is good for him. Objectively, an individual is socially valued by others based on the efficacy of the means at his disposal.

5. The Political Implication: Safety for Self-preservation

The political implication of the human desire for self-preservation can be formulated in the following terms. The ruler of the Hobbesian state should always understand that citizens are first and foremost individuals who naturally endeavor to preserve their lives, and they choose to live in a civil association in order to enhance their chance of avoiding unnecessary death. In this respect, safety, “which men desire should last all the time of their life,”\textsuperscript{111} and which Hobbes regards as “the supreme law”\textsuperscript{112} or the ultimate end of the state,\textsuperscript{113} requires that the ruler of the state confines all his efforts and attention first and foremost to solving problems related to human desire for self-preservation. This interpretation is in accord with Hobbes’s insistence that if the state fails to secure the life of its members, the obligation to submit to its authority ends, and everyone regains his natural right to secure his own life. As he puts it,

\begin{quotation}
The Obligation of Subjects to the Soveraign, is understood to last as long, and no longer, than the power lasteth, by which he is able to protect them. For the right men
\end{quotation}

\textsuperscript{110} Leviathan, X, 16, 63.
\textsuperscript{111} Ibid., XVII, 5, 119.
\textsuperscript{112} De Cive, XIII, 2.
\textsuperscript{113} Leviathan, XXX, 1, 231.
have by nature to protect themselves when none else can protect them, can by no Covenant be relinquished . . . The end of Obedience is Protection; which, wheresoever a man seeth it, either in his own, or in another sword, Nature applyeth his obedience to it, and his endeavour to maintaine it.\textsuperscript{114}

In other words, civic obedience ceases the moment the ruler becomes incapable of securing the safety, that is, incapable of solving problems related to the desire for self-preservation of his subjects. If human beings, “who naturally love liberty,\textsuperscript{115}” chose to enter a civil association and submit themselves to the authority of the sovereign, it is for the purpose of securing their lives. Hence, only a commonwealth that is able to provide effective life-protection to its members has a claim on civic obedience.

Using the concept of self-preservation as an analytical tool for a good understanding of the Hobbesian concept of safety, it is worth considering two important questions. The first question one may ask is whether, for Hobbes, human beings are concerned only with their physical preservation, that is, their mere longevity. The second can be formulated in the following terms: if human beings can see death as good in some circumstances of life, then, in civil society, what sort of life does Hobbes regard as worse than death? In other words, in what condition of life does Hobbes believe that self-preservation is not worth being sought? Or, in what condition of life is the desire for self-preservation so frustrated that life becomes wearisome? The following sections will consist in an effort to answer these questions, with the aim of reaching a better understanding of the Hobbesian concept of safety.

\textsuperscript{114} Leviathan, XXI, 21, 153.
\textsuperscript{115} Ibid., XVII, 1, 117.
5. 1. The Idea of Safety in Leo Strauss’ Interpretation of Hobbes

In this section, I discuss Hobbes’s concept of safety which one may derive from Leo Strauss’s interpretation of Hobbes. According to Strauss, Hobbes’s moral and political philosophy rests on two basic ideas. The first is that the fundamental moral fact for a human being is not some original duty but a set of natural rights, whose primary and fundamental is the right to self-preservation. In Hobbes, the concept of natural right is regarded as one of the foundations of the political order, whose main end is to enable each person to pursue what is conducive to his self-preservation. According to Strauss, the Hobbesian state is a state that is essentially characterized by the primacy of individual rights over duties. If there is any primary natural obligation for the individual, it is the obligation to preserve one’s life. The second basic idea follows from the first, and consists in the primacy of individual’s right to security.

According to Strauss, the duty of the Hobbesian state is not to make people virtuous but to create and promote conditions of life that best preserve those natural rights related to self-preservation in the person of each individual.

To better understand Strauss’s interpretation, it is important to look at his argument in *The Political Philosophy of Hobbes*. In this work, Strauss develops an argument that can be termed as, in his own words, “the antithesis from which Hobbes’s political philosophy starts.” According to this argument, Hobbes’s political philosophy rests on “two most certain postulates of human nature”: the postulate of “natural appetite” and that of “natural reason.” From the first postulate, Hobbes conceives of a human being like any other animal, endowed with sense appetite, but the difference between a human being and all other animals is “that in the case of

117 Ibid., 18.
118 Ibid., 8.
man appetite has reason at its service.” Strauss goes on to argue that, for Hobbes, the specific difference between man and all other animals lies in the fact that the human appetite “is nothing other than a striving after precedence over others and recognition of this precedence by others.” Thus, according to Strauss’s interpretation of Hobbes, all human passions are but “modifications of . . . the striving after precedence and recognition of that precedence,” which is often designated by Hobbes in terms of vanity. He goes on to explain that, “Hobbes puts vanity more and more into the background in favor of innocent competition, innocent striving after power, innocent animal appetite,” in order to avoid the reproach that (since he regards vanity as the natural appetite of human nature) he is claiming that human nature is evil by nature.

The second postulate, according to Strauss, “is reduced to the principle of self-preservation . . . [because] the preservation of life is the condition sine qua non for the satisfaction of any appetite.” This postulate, Strauss argues, led Hobbes to regard self-preservation as the “primary good,” and “violent death at the hand of other men” not only as the greatest evil, but also as “the only absolute standard by reference to which man may coherently order his life.” In Hobbes’s view, self-preservation, or the human fear of violent death, is “the root of all right and therewith of all morality.”

From these two postulates, Strauss concludes that the need to establish the commonwealth arises,

when the two opponents are both seized with fear for their lives, overcome their vanity and shame of confessing their fear, and recognize as their real enemy not the

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120 Ibid., 11.
121 Ibid., 12.
122 Ibid., 14.
123 Ibid., 15.
124 Ibid., 16.
125 Ibid., 18.
rival, but ‘that terrible enemy of nature, death,’ who, as their common enemy, forces them to mutual understanding, trust, and union, and thus procures them the possibility of completing the founding of the State for the purpose of providing safeguards for the longest possible term, against the common enemy.126

In short, according to Strauss, Hobbes regards vanity as the root of all evils that leads to “war of all against all,” and “fear of violent death at the hand of other men” as the origin of the state. Left to themselves, human beings will inevitably destroy each other because of pride, ambition, and vanity. Hence, the Hobbesian state “has no other raison d’être except” keeping human pride, ambition, and vanity down.127 In this regard, by securing the safety of the people should be understood protecting them from threats of violent death, threats raised as a result of human pride, ambition, and vanity. In other words, the primary duty of the sovereign is to create conditions of life in which citizens, in their pride, ambitions, and vanity, do not physically harm one another.

5. 2. Safety From An Insecure Condition of Violence

Strauss reduction of safety to the elimination of fear of physical violence is in accord with Hobbes’s overall argument in favor of the creation of civil association. Without questioning the pertinence of this idea, it is worth exploring further the Hobbesian idea of fear of violent death and its implication for the concept of safety. On the basis of the analysis of Hobbes’s theory of human nature, and borrowing a picture from Gabriella Slomp using astronomic language to describe the international sphere,128 one can describe Hobbesian man as a planet in a constant motion, whose rotation axis is the desire for self-preservation, and the spin energy or the

127 Ibid., 13.
rotation force being the desire for power. The state being a frame populated by like planets, the primary task of the sovereign is not to impede the planets’ motion, but to assure that individual planets keep themselves in a harmless motion, without any danger of collision with one another. For, any direct collision between planets results in a brutal extinction of some of them. To put it in different terms, the primary task of the sovereign is to provide security to individual members as each pursues and strives to fulfill his desires. This interpretation and picture is in accord with what Hobbes himself says regarding laws. He maintains that, in civil association, “law is a fetter,” but it is enacted “not to bind the People from all Voluntary actions; but to direct and keep them in such a motion, as not to hurt themselves by their own impetuous desires, rashnesse, or indiscretion; as Hedges are set, not to stop Travelers, but to keep them in the way.” In other words, for Hobbes, civil association is a frame which enables people safely to satisfy their desires, as long as the satisfaction of these desires does not entail rendering others motionless.

As this picture suggests, the concept of safety must include the idea of securing freedom from physical violence, whose worst form Hobbes calls “Warre . . . of every man, against every man.” Most of the statements of Hobbes regarding self-preservation contain clearly a reference to the individual’s physical integrity, such as “to preserve his own body and limbs, both from death and pain;” or “to fly a contra-natural dissolution [of the body], as the greatest mischief that can arrive to nature.” In Leviathan, he indicates, “Of things held in propriety, those that are dearest to a man are his own life, & limbs;” anything else is counted as secondary. In De Cive, Hobbes speaks of “the preservation of life and limb.” In this regard,

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129 De Cive, XIV, 3.
130 Leviathan, XXX, 21, 239-240.
131 Ibid., XIII, 8, 88. The concept of war will be treated extensively in the next chapter of the present study.
132 Elements of Law, XIV, 6.
133 De Cive, Epistle dedicatory.
134 Leviathan, XXX, 12, 235-236.
135 De Cive, I, 9.
the notion of safety must consist first and foremost in protecting people from physical harm and unnecessary death due to violence against one another. The assurance of being protected from physical violence in the hands of others is the primary constituent of Hobbes’s notion of safety. The commonwealth is instituted primarily to end the prevalence of any type of physical violence that threatens people’s bodily integrity. Hobbes would agree with this interpretation because it fits his statement that an individual accounts “himself in the estate of security, when he can foresee no violence to be done unto him, from which the doer may not be deterred by the power of that sovereign, to whom they have every one subjected themselves.” He expresses the same view in *De Cive* by maintaining that “it is necessary to Peace, that a man be so farre forth protected against the violence of others, that he may live securely, that is, that he may have no just cause to fear others, so long as he doth them no injury.”

In his theory of the state, Hobbes’s premise is clearly that subjects fear one another more than they fear the absolute power of the sovereign. He maintains, “the original of great and lasting societies consisted not in mutual good will men had toward each other, but in the mutual fear they had of each other.” In *Leviathan*, he points out that even living in the commonwealth where security is provided, human beings display behaviors that clearly indicate that they distrust one another by taking so many measures against theft and attack. As he puts it,

Let him [who would question the truthfulness of this premise] consider with himself, when taking a journey, he armes himself, and seeks to go well accompanied; when going to sleep, he lockes his dores; when even in his house he locks his chests; and this when he knows there bee Laws, and publike Officers, armed, to revenge all injuries shall be done him; what opinion he has of his fellow subjects, when he rides

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136 *Elements of Law*, XX, 5.
137 *De Cive*, VI, 3.
138 Ibid., I, 2.
armed; of his fellow Citizens, when he lockes his dores; and of his children, and servants, when he locks his chests.\textsuperscript{139}

This quotation indicates clearly that, for Hobbes, there is no safety in civil association as long as fear of one another persists. Hence, the sovereign’s duty to secure the safety of the people amounts primarily to substituting effective protection for ineffectual struggle for survival of the state of nature, where individuals strive to preserve themselves by means of nothing but “what their own strength, and their own invention shall furnish them withall.”\textsuperscript{140} In Hobbes’s view, conditions of fear of violence against one another reduce human life to merely a struggle for survival, and the hope of obtaining things “necessary to commodious living”\textsuperscript{141} to a mere impractical and idealistic fiction. Thus securing safety means primarily removing every reason of fear of physical violence; violence that would prevent people from living a normal life, living longer, and dying by natural death. In its primary sense and at its very first level, the Hobbesian concept of safety means protection from any threat against bodily integrity. This concept includes the idea of enhancing individuals’ “right to governe their owne bodies; enjoy aire, water, motion, waies to go from place to place; and all things else, without which a man cannot live, or not live well.”\textsuperscript{142} Safety means defending citizens from the injuries of one another by making offensive aggression unprofitable, and defensive aggression unnecessary.

\textsuperscript{139} Leviathan, XIII, 10, 89.
\textsuperscript{140} Ibid., XIII, 9, 89.
\textsuperscript{141} Ibid., XIII, 14, 90.
\textsuperscript{142} Ibid., XV, 22, 107.
5. 3. Safety for a Better Life

Strauss’s analysis, as described above, is also in accord with one of Hobbes’s view that vanity is one of the causes of conflict in the state of nature. His two basic postulates and the interpretation that follows shed some light in the understanding of the Hobbesian concept of safety. Hobbes does indicate that Leviathan has been granted such a great power in order to provide protection to the children of pride that they do not hurt one another. However, it is hard to see why Strauss seems to disregard Hobbes’s famous statement that “the passions that incline men to Peace, are Feare of Death; Desire of such things as are necessary to commodious living; and a Hope by their Industry to obtain them.” Hobbes not only does not mention vanity but also does not mention fear as the only motive that leads human being to establish a commonwealth. Notwithstanding the importance of fear in Hobbes’s theory of the state, it is nevertheless worth noting also that in Hobbes’s list as it appears in chapter XI of Leviathan, entitled “Of the Difference of Manners,” the first motive that inclines men to civil association is not fear of death but “desire of Ease, and sensuall Delight,” and the hope of protection for the products of one’s industry. Even in the passage quoted above, Hobbes mentions only briefly fear of death as motive for the creation of the commonwealth, with no particular emphasis as the primary motive for establishing a civil association. In most places fear of death is always mentioned along with “desire for ease,” or “desire of things necessary to commodious living.” Contrary to Strauss’s interpretation, one may legitimately see in this way of listing motives, as presented by Hobbes himself, a clear suggestion that the provision of basic security from danger of physical death is little if people do not have social conditions that allow them to live an

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143 Leviathan, XIII, 5, 88.
144 Ibid., XXVIII, 27, 220.
145 Ibid., XIII, 14, 90.
146 Ibid., XI, 4, 70.
enjoyable life. This is the line of interpretation that I espouse and which underlies the present study.

To see if the Hobbesian concept of safety goes beyond mere protection from danger of physical death, the most important question to ask is, are Hobbesian men concerned only with their physical preservation, that is, with their mere longevity? If the answer to this question is positive, it would be Hobbes’s view that a rudimentary comfort of life is enough for the people to stay alive. In other words, the duty of the Hobbesian sovereign would amount simply to creating conditions in which every individual can save his life and enjoy the basic things necessary for survival. In this case, the Hobbesian state would be no more than “a city of pigs”147 that Plato describes in his Republic: a city organized solely to provide basics for mere physical survival, such as food, shelter, clothes, etc. To answer the above question, it can be said that the Hobbesian notion of safety includes certainly the idea of promoting living conditions that offer to the people the best opportunity to live a long life. Hobbes advocates for the creation of a state which makes possible “living out the time, which Nature ordinarily alloweth men to live.”148 However, it is also clear in Hobbes that men do not seek simply to live longer but to live well in a commonwealth that is able to furnish them “abundantly, not only with the good things belonging to life, but also with those which advance to delectation.”149 When Hobbes speaks of living well, he simply refers to a life that is delightful and comfortable to an individual. Hobbes does not provide a precise account of what he means by living well, unlike Aristotle for whom the best life always entails the exercise of moral and intellectual virtues, plus the enjoyment of external material good. However, it will become clear in the following chapter what he understands by a more contented life. A close reading of Hobbes’s texts shows that he

147 Plato, Republic, II, 372d.
148 Leviathan, XIV, 4, 91.
149 De Cive, XIII, 4.
understands a delightful and comfortable life to be one that is free of paralyzing fear caused by any war-like situation, a life in which comfort and enjoymets are greater than fears and annoyances of life, a life that one conceives and perceives as good for himself, and a life of continual progress in one’s undertakings and in the satisfaction of one’s desires.

Another important question one may ask is whether, for Hobbes, it is ever rationally or morally justifiable for a human being to choose death over the preservation of life. Does Hobbes require, in other words, that the individual strive to preserve his life at any and all cost? Before answering this question, it is worth mentioning first that Leo Strauss is correct in maintaining that Hobbes regards the preservation of life as the primary good, that is, a precondition for the attainment of other human goods, and death as “the primary as well as the greatest and supreme evil [because it is] not only the negation of the primary good, but is therewith the negation of all goods.” However, he fails to emphasize that mere survival, or “bare Preservation,” is not the ultimate value for Hobbesian man. Hobbes acknowledges that human beings have values and desires that can override the desire for bodily preservation, and which can make individuals not only disregard the threat of death, but also even willingly to embrace death as a good.

Hobbes appears to allow for the possibility that an individual risk his life by disobeying his lawful sovereign for fear of God and of eternal punishment, or for the sake of securing his eternal salvation. Speaking of the action a citizen can refrain from doing even when commanded by the sovereign, he maintains, “It is manifest enough, that when a man receiveth two contrary Commands, and knows that one of them is God’s, he ought to obey that,

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151 Leviathan, XXX, 1, 231.
152 De Cive, XVII, 25, 27; XVIII, 14.
and not the other, though it be the command even of his lawfull Soveraign (whether a Monarch or a soveraign Assembly) or the command of his Father.”

It is appropriate to mention also his discussion of suicide in case of insanity. In *A Dialogue Between a Philosopher and a Student of the Common Laws of England*, he maintains,

I conceive not how any Man can bear *Animum felleum*, or so much Malice towards himself, as to hurt himself voluntarily, much less to kill himself; for naturally, and necessarily the Intention of every man aimeth at somewhat, which is good to himself, and tendeth to his preservation: And therefore, methinks, if he kill himself, it is to be presumed that he is not *compos mentis*; but by some inward Torment or Apprehension of somewhat worse than Death, Distracted.

However, these two cases are not really relevant to the present point. The case of mental illness is beside the point at issue because the agent is not *compos mentis*, that is, not of sound mind.

With regard to salvation, the question one may ask is whether, for Hobbes, we can actually know a command to be from God. To respond to this question, it is necessary to mention Hobbes’s rejection of the distinction between, on the one hand, civil authority and, on the other hand, spiritual authority. According to him, “a Church such a one as is capable to Command, to Judge, Absolve, Condemn, or do any other act, is the same thing with a Civil Common-wealth . . . Temporall and Spiritual Government, are but two words brought into the world, to make men see double, and mistake their Lawfull Soveraign.” In other words, for Hobbes, the conflict between the sovereign’s command and God’s command is nothing but an illusion. The only person whose command we have to take as the manifestation of God’s command “is (in every Common-wealth) the Supreme Pastor, that is to say, the Civill Soveraign.”

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153 *Leviathan*, XLIII, 1, 403; see also *Elements of Law*, XXV, 5.
154 *Dialogue Between a Philosopher and a Student*, 85.
155 *Leviathan*, XXXIX, 5, 321-322.
156 Ibid., XLIII, 6, 405.
Hobbesian state, the case of an individual choosing to die for matters of salvation cannot even arise because God, through the Scriptures, commands obedience to the civil sovereign who embodies both temporal and spiritual authority. Another circumstance where a Hobbesian man can choose death over life concerns honor, but a more detailed discussion on the importance of honor in Hobbes will be held below.

The most relevant passage for the present discussion is found in *De Homine* where, speaking of appetite and aversion, Hobbes maintains that, under some circumstances, particularly when there is no hope of relief from an excruciating pain, a human being can regard death as a good to pursue. As he puts it: “though death is the greatest of all evils (especially when accompanied by torture), the pain of life can be so great that, unless their quick end is foreseen, they may lead men to number death among the goods.”\(^{157}\) It is appropriate to indicate here that the implications of this claim of Hobbes marks a crucial divergence from the Christian belief in the sanctity of all life. Although he does not explicitly draw such an implication, all the ingredients are there for the justification of suicide and euthanasia, which is against Christian teaching. Given Hobbes’s opposition to some aspects of the Christian teaching, one may believe that he is here tacitly justifying suicide and euthanasia. Nevertheless, it is legitimate to maintain that this last case suggests clearly that, though Hobbes acknowledges that human beings are driven by the desire to preserve their lives, this should not be taken in a narrow sense to mean that human beings are concerned only with mere physical survival. The case suggests also that human beings are concerned with more than *bare preservation*. Hence, the notion of safety must go beyond mere protection against threat of physical violence.

\(^{157}\) *De Homine*, 11, 6.
For Hobbes, the question is not simply to free people from the threat of violent death or war in the literal sense, but also to preserve life “as not to be weary of it.”¹⁵⁸ The phrase “as not to be weary of it” matters in understanding the Hobbesian concept of safety and needs to be understood adequately. Hobbes uses this phrase when speaking of the reason for transferring one’s right to another person, and he indicates that “it is either in consideration of some Right reciprocally transferred to himself; or for some other good he hopeth for thereby.”¹⁵⁹ Thus, Hobbes’s idea of *not to be weary of one’s life* refers to a undesirable social and political environment that frustrates people’s hopes to enjoy the benefit of political life. By the social and political environment I mean living conditions that the sovereign, in virtue of his power, can create or help to improve. Thus, the idea of *preserving life as not to be weary of it* suggests that, for Hobbes, the notion of procuring safety is much broader than mere preservation of people’s physical life and limbs. This phrase broadens the scope of the concept of safety to include not only protection from physical violence but also liberation from miserable social conditions that hinder people’s ability to pursue their good. People experience safety when living in a social environment that not only enables them to satisfy their basic material needs such as shelter, food, “open air, water, and all other things necessary for life,”¹⁶⁰ but also allows them to enjoy the fruit of their labors,¹⁶¹ to govern their own bodies, to have a family, to move from place to place, and to enjoy all things “without which a man cannot live, or not live well.”¹⁶² Safety entails, as Hobbes puts it, both the preservation of life “in order to its happiness”¹⁶³ and the possibility of enjoying “all other Contentments of life.”¹⁶⁴ Hobbes’s theory of the state concerns the quality of

¹⁵⁸ *Leviathan*, XIV, 8, 93.
¹⁵⁹ Ibid.
¹⁶⁰ *De Cive*, III, 14.
¹⁶¹ *Leviathan*, XIII, 3, 87.
¹⁶² Ibid., XV, 22, 107.
¹⁶³ *De Cive*, XIII, IV.
¹⁶⁴ Ibid., XXX, 1, 231.
life\textsuperscript{165} that people expect to enjoy when they choose to join civil association. He consistently holds the view that human beings “freely assemble themselves, and institute a government, that they might, as much as their human condition would afford, live delightfully;”\textsuperscript{166} that they may live their lives in such a way “as not to be weary of it;”\textsuperscript{167} that they may enjoy felicity, which consists in a “[c]ontinuall successe in obtaining those things which a man from time to time desireth.”\textsuperscript{168} As mentioned above, a sound social order furnishes its citizens “abundantly, not only with the good things belonging to life, but also with those which advance to delectation.”\textsuperscript{169} In short, for Hobbes, human beings choose to live in a civil association not simply for the sake of mere longevity, but mostly for the attainment and enjoyment of a “contented life.” In this regard, the Hobbesian concept of safety cannot consist simply in defending people against physical attack and preserving their lives in the most literal sense. To this concept must also be attached the idea of securing conditions of life in which individuals can rightfully hope to enjoy a good life. The sovereign’s duty is to secure the safety of the people “in such sort, as that by their owne industrie, and by the fruities of the Earth, they may nourish themselves and live contentedly.”\textsuperscript{170} The Hobbesian concept of safety encompasses the idea of both protecting people for their physical survival and securing the means for a better quality of their lives, creating or promoting social conditions in which life is worth living.

\textsuperscript{165} The phrase \textit{quality of life} is used here and throughout the present study to refer to citizens’ lives as they are impacted by their social and political environment, whose creation and maintenance justify the necessity of creating a sovereign. In other words, the term \textit{quality of life} should be understood here in reference to, and in contrast with, Hobbes’s famous description of the human life in the state of nature as “solitary, poore, nasty, brutish, and short” (\textit{Leviathan}, XIII, 9, 89).

\textsuperscript{166} \textit{De Cive}, XIII, 4.

\textsuperscript{167} \textit{Leviathan}, XIV, 8, 93.

\textsuperscript{168} Ibid., VI, 58, 46.

\textsuperscript{169} \textit{De Cive}, XIII, 4.

\textsuperscript{170} \textit{Leviathan}, XVII, 13, 120.
5. 4. Safety From Material Poverty

In human existence, lack of resources to satisfy basic needs of life constitutes the primary kind of misery that makes life wearisome. No wonder why part of Hobbes’s theory of the causes of war concerns the social condition of poverty. In De Corpore, speaking of war as the greatest evil in human existence, Hobbes exclaims, “who is there that thinks not poverty and loss of life to be great evils?” In his view, just as the need to preserve one’s life from violent death leads to war, so does grinding poverty lead to insecurity. Hence, his notion of safety includes the social condition of poverty. For Hobbes, material and social conditions in which individuals find themselves constitute significant causal factors that shape and determine people’s behavior. One of the points that he makes in his analysis of human psychology is that there are social conditions which serve as direct causal factors of individuals’ offensive behavior against government. In most cases of sedition and civil war a direct connection exists with the want of resources to satisfy human basic needs. Social conditions marked by grievance and poverty give rise to social stress, which leads to conflict situation, such as social unrest or war. In such a condition, people cannot act in accordance with the laws that organize and sustain the civil association. The want of basic needs for life lessens people’s willingness to conform with the law, and incites some to seek to change the existing social order. Although Hobbes can hardly be seen as an advocate of rebellion, his line of reasoning leads clearly to the conclusion that it is rightful to break an oppressive social and political order with the aim of rectifying an unjust situation in which living itself is unbearable.

171 De Corpore, I, 7.
172 This view is in accord with those who present poverty as a fertile recruiting ground in most of civil wars in the Third World, and also in modern terrorism; see, for example, the argument developed by Amartya Sen in his paper “Global Inequality and Persistent Conflicts,” in War and Peace in The 20th Century and Beyond, edited by G. Lundestad and O. Njolstad (Oslo: Norwegian Nobel Institute, 2001). According to him, the condition of poverty can easily lead people to engage in war or in terrorism, if they (war and terrorism) are perceived as path to change the situation into a much better condition of life.
Hobbes considers material poverty not only as one of the significant causal factors that lead to political instability and war, but also as one of the “causes impairing happiness.”\textsuperscript{173} According to him, people who socially face poverty as part of their lives are inclined to rebellion because poverty threatens every individual’s life and undermines honor and prestige. He maintains, “There is nothing more that afflicts the mind of man than poverty, or the want of those things which are necessary for the preservation of life, and honour.”\textsuperscript{174} He goes on to say, this “grief of mind arising from want . . . dispose the Subjects to Sedition.”\textsuperscript{175} Hobbes regards living in the condition of poverty characterized by scarcity of basic resources as living in the insecure state of nature where two individuals, if they “desire the same thing, which nevertheless they cannot both enjoy, . . . become enemies; and in the way to their End, (which is principally their owne conservation, and sometimes their delectation only) endeavour to destroy, or subdue one another.”\textsuperscript{176} Hence, to secure the safety of the people implies to provide them “abundantly, not only with the good things belonging to life, but also with those which advance to delectation.”\textsuperscript{177}

Hobbes holds that if individuals perceive the conditions in which they find themselves as not conducive to procuring things necessary for their self-preservation and for enjoying a contented life, they absolve themselves of their civic obligations. Consequently, they disturb the social peace in their effort to change the social condition that they perceive as obstacle to their felicity. In other words, when people are so poor to the point that they are “destitute of food, or other thing necessary for . . . life, and cannot preserve . . . [themselves] any other way, but by some fact against the Law,”\textsuperscript{178} they feel compelled to destabilize the existing

\textsuperscript{174} \textit{De Cive}, XII, 9.
\textsuperscript{175} Ibid., XIII, 10.
\textsuperscript{176} \textit{Leviathan}, XIII, 3, 87.
\textsuperscript{177} \textit{De Cive}, XIII, 4.
\textsuperscript{178} \textit{Leviathan}, XXVII, 26, 208.
political order. Hobbes writes, “needy men, and hardy, not contented with their present condition … are inclined to continue the causes of warre; and stirre up trouble and sedition: for there is no… such hope to mend an ill game, as by causing a new shuffle.”179 In the *Elements of Law*,180 he lists discontent, hope, and pretence (equivalent to pride and vanity in Strauss’s analysis) as causes of war. He explains discontent in terms of one being unhappy because of the circumstance one is in, and he goes on to say, “for as long as man thinketh himself well, and that the present government standeth not in his way to hinder his proceeding from well to better, it is impossible for him to desire the change thereof.”181 If securing the safety of the people amounts to preventing every reason of war, the sovereign has the duty to create conditions of life such that discontentment and unhappiness are not part of people’s daily life.

5. 5. Honor and Safety from Moral Grievance

The idea of honorable and dishonorable plays an important role in Hobbes’s theory of the state. In addition to fear of death and desire of things necessary for commodious living, Hobbes indicates that human beings choose to live in a civil association for honor. He lists the search for honor as one of the two primary reasons for which human beings choose to live in a commonwealth. He maintains, we seek society not for mere love of one another, “but that we may receive some Honour or profit from it; these we desire Primarily, that Secondarily.”182 Besides, he indicates that one of the major goals that human beings pursue in civil association is to fulfill their “desire of praise” and of “fame after death . . . because men have a present delight .

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179 *Leviathan*, XI, 4, 71. One may regard this remark of Hobbes not as a normative claim but as merely an empirical claim about human psychology, in the sense that a human being will react in a particular way whenever he is under certain particular conditions. It is very important, however, to understand that one of the major principles of Hobbes’s political philosophy is that its normative principles are not derived from any science, but are provided by experience (see *De Corpore*, VI, 7; and *Leviathan*, Introduction).

180 *Elements of Law*, XXVII, 1-3.

181 Ibid., XXVII, 1.

182 *De Cive*, I, 2.
from the foresight of . . . the benefit that may redound thereby to their posterity: which though they now see not, yet they imagine; and any thing that is pleasure in the sense, the same also is pleasure in the imagination.”

Hobbes maintains categorically that “All men naturally strive for Honour, and Preferment.”

As the champion of civic obedience, he goes as far as to maintain that a sovereign’s command which causes dishonor or other nonphysical pains are not to be obeyed; and the example that he chooses to illustrate this case shows how much importance he accords to live an honorable life. He maintains that if someone is commanded by law “to execute a Parent, whether he be innocent, or guilty, and commanded by Law . . . [he] will rather die than live infamous and hated of all the world.”

In *Leviathan*, one can find Hobbes’s remarkable explicit recommendation to the sovereign in relation to honor, respect, and dignity in the society:

considering what value men are naturally apt to set upon themselves; what respect they look for from others . . . ; It is necessary that there be Laws of Honnour, and a publique rate of the worth of such men as have deserved, or are able to deserve well of the Common-wealth; and that there be force in the hands of some or other, to put those Lawes in execution.

This passage indicates clearly that Hobbes views the desire for honor, respect, and dignity as so grounded in human nature that it requires laws to be protected, and even the use of force if necessary, to assure its satisfaction. The frustration of this need is sufficient reason for war, and thus, the endangerment of civil peace and of the safety of the people. Hobbes strongly believes

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183 *Leviathan*, XI, 6, 71.
184 *De Cive*, XII, 10.
185 Ibid., VI, 13.
186 *Leviathan*, XVIII, 15, 126.
that a civil association can be broken down if people have no hope of receiving honor and
dignity, and of being protected from mental distress due to dishonor.¹⁸⁷

Most commentators approach Hobbes’s notion of honor only in a negative sense, to
point it out as an irregular passion that leads to rebellion and war. Many interpreters read
Hobbes’s concept of honor mainly in connection with, or as synonym of, pride and vain-glory. In
this perspective, Hobbes is often interpreted as denouncing the human obsession with honor and
reputation as one of the major causes of war. However, this is not the only way Hobbes uses the
concept of honor. There are passages where he presents honor as a strong and positive
motivational force, namely in warfare. Remarkably, Hobbes regards honor as the only limitation
on the brutality of the condition of war. In the Element of Law, speaking of the right to do
whatever one judges necessary for self-preservation in the state of nature, he maintains, “though
there be in war no law, the breach whereof is injury, yet there are those laws, the breach whereof
is dishonor. In one word, therefore, the only law of actions in war is honour.”¹⁸⁸ He makes a
similar remark in Leviathan when he speaks of the state of nature as a condition where there is
no power erected for security. He maintains that in such a condition, people have to observe no
laws “but the Lawes of Honour; that is, to abstain from cruelty, leaving to men their lives, and
instruments of husbandry.”¹⁸⁹ In other words, in the condition of war, though we have the right
to do whatever is necessary for our preservation and well-being, we are still able to restrain
ourselves from unnecessary cruel actions that can be characterized as dishonorable. To put it
differently, only the sense of honor restrains the individual in the state of nature from harming
for the sake of harming. Seen from the point of view of motivation, these two passages should

¹⁸⁷ It is worth mentioning that Aristotle also regards fear of dishonor as one of the most destabilizing factors of a
state (see Politics, V, 2, 1302a, 30-35).
¹⁸⁸ Elements of Law, XIX, 2.
¹⁸⁹ Leviathan, XVII, 2, 118.
call for a new approach to Hobbes’s notion of honor. In these passages, the sense of honor appears to be a source of motivation similar to the motivation from duty. To hold the view according to which, in a lawless condition of life, one should act honorably and not abuse others in the pursuit of one’s objectives is not a trivial view to discount.

In *Leviathan*, Hobbes characterizes the office of the sovereign as “an office of so great honour,” and when speaking of the rights of the sovereign, he uses the following different terms and expressions to mean honor: “respect from others,” “a publique rate of the worth” that a man deserves well of the commonwealth, “Order of place and dignity each man shall hold.” All these expressions along with the aforementioned references regarding the law of honor can be taken as showing that Hobbes uses the term honor also in a more positive and deeper sense; one would say, he uses it in an aristocratic sense to refer to a sense of dignity.

One can also find in Hobbes the view according to which human desire for honor is so strong that it can override the desire for self-preservation. Beside physical pain, Hobbes counts the moral pain due to dishonor, scorn, shame, humiliation, or bad reputation, as one of the things that can make life wearisome and lead people to see death as preferable to life. He is very consistent that suffering these mental and psychological distresses is so painful that one would choose death rather than suffer them. In formulating the natural law that prohibits contempt and scorn in all of his three major political works, Hobbes indicates that a human being can risk his life to revenge an insult or an act prejudicial to his honor. In the *Elements of Law*, he maintains,

> because all signs which we shew to one another of hatred and contempt, provoke in the highest degree to quarrel and battle (inasmuch as life itself, in the condition of enduring scorn, is not esteemed worth the enjoying, much lesse peace), it must

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190 *Leviathan*, XIX, 9, 132.
191 Ibid., XVIII, 15, 126.
necessarily be implied as a law of nature, *That no man reproach, revile, deride, or any otherwise declare his hatred, contempt, or disesteem of any other.*

He holds the same view in *De Cive* by saying,

> because all signs of hatred and contempt provoke most of all to brawling and fighting, insomuch as most men would rather lose their lives (that I say not, their peace) than suffer slander; it follow . . . that it is prescribed by the law of nature, *that no man, either by deeds or words, countenance or laughter, do declare himself to hate or scorn another.*

In a passage previously quoted from *De Cive*, he also indicates that, for human beings, living *infamous* is repugnant and worse than death. In *Leviathan*, Hobbes clearly indicates that human beings care so much about reputation, whether of themselves or “their Kindred, their Friends, their Nation, their Profession, or their Name” that they do not hesitate to attack each other in order to preserve it.

Hobbes distinguishes two types of human desire for reputation. On the one hand, there is a desire for reputation that stems from pride and vainglory. This type of reputation is usually sought by people who take “pleasure in contemplating their own power in the acts of conquest.” On the other hand, there is a desire for reputation that stems from the human desire for a contented life. Hobbes calls this type of reputation “power,” and lists it along with riches, friends, and good luck, as instrumental power. In Hobbes’s view, every human being values this type of reputation because it is an effective means for the fulfillment of one’s goal. The pain caused by the damage of this type of reputation is sufficient reason for which a human being can

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192 *Elements of Law*, XVI, 11.
193 *De Cive*, III, 12; see also *Leviathan*, XV, 20, 107.
194 Ibid., VI, 13.
195 *Leviathan*, XIII, 7, 88.
196 Ibid., XIII, 4, 88.
197 Ibid., X, 1-7, 62-63.
put his life at risk by waging war. For, damaging one’s reputation in this latter sense entails damaging one’s ability or power through which one can obtain the assurance for the fulfillment of future desires. As indicated above, self-preservation must be understood in connection with the concept of power, which refers to the means an individual needs in order to stay in motion. Hobbes lists reputation along with riches and friends as one of the powers people need in order to assure their felicity. In *Leviathan*, he maintains that “[r]eputation of power is Power, because it draweth with it the adhaerence of those that need protection.”\(^{198}\)

All the above considerations indicate clearly that, in the Hobbesian state, mere survival is certainly not the ultimate value. Throughout his writings, Hobbes consistently holds the view that human beings would forget or reject the value of self-preservation if they suffer intense humiliation, or when their honor or reputation is at stake. In this regard, the sovereign is burdened with the responsibility of promoting conditions of life that enables people to have a sense of honor and preserve good reputation for themselves, their family and friends, their profession and name. In Hobbes’s view, sufferings from moral burdens of life, such as dishonor, shame, infamy, and scorn, are as harmful and unbearable as physical pains and can make death preferable to life. For a Hobbesian man, to experience the burdensomeness of the emotions due to these moral sufferings can be worse than death. Conditions of life that undermine people’s prestige and dignity, or people’s feeling of honor, conditions of life which take away every reason to be proud of oneself, are as painful as corporeal torture, and even worse than death; and “unless their quick end is forseen, they may lead men to number death among the goods.”\(^{199}\)

The inclusion of dishonor, shame, and scorn as a source of conflict and sufficient reason to regard death as good is a clear indication that the Hobbesian concept of safety includes

\(^{198}\) *Leviathan*, X, 5, 62.  
\(^{199}\) *De Homine*, XI, 6.
as its essential component the creation and promotion of conditions of life in which people can
live decently and with dignity. What Hobbes clearly says in his analysis of honor is that the
safety of the people will be threatened if, in a civil association, no place is left for the fulfillment
of human desire for honor. Since honor is regarded as one of the individual’s powers in social
life, to be dishonored is to be disempowered and, hence, to be at risk of becoming motionless.
Hence, to secure the safety of the people is also to promote conditions for them to live an
honorable and dignified life. In other words, securing the safety of the people involves not only
protecting them from threats against their physical integrity, but also securing conditions for the
quality of life “as not to be weary of it.”

6. Conclusion

Hobbesian men are not simply averse to violent death and desirers of life at any costs. They pursue goods, among which the greatest is self-preservation, and concern themselves with
their well-being, reputation and dignity. For Hobbes, a commonwealth is established for the
purpose of securing the satisfaction of the most fundamental human desire, which is the desire to
live, but precisely to live an enjoyable or a more contented life. Human beings create a
commonwealth not solely for their physical preservation but also for the purpose of being able to
enjoy “a more contented life thereby.” The Hobbesian notion of safety involves primarily the
idea of protection of physical integrity. Hobbes’s emphasis on the necessity of preserving one’s
own body and limbs from death and pain indicates clearly that the notion of safety must consist
first and foremost in protecting people from physical harm and unnecessary death due to
violence. In this regard, a safe condition of life is the one that allows people to live out “the time,

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200 Leviathan, XVII, 1, 117.
which nature ordinarily alloweth men to live." However, his remarks concerning material poverty, dishonor, shame, infamy, scorn and other circumstances which make life wearisome and lead people to prefer death to life, give also a clear indication that the safety of people includes the idea of securing conditions of life in which people do not experience those emotions as part of their daily life.

Thus, to the question whether, for Hobbes, it is rationally justifiable for a human being to choose death over the preservation of his life - setting aside the case of mental illness and matters of salvation- Hobbes does hold that in situations of excruciating pain, and of moral pain due to dishonor, a human being can prefer death over the preservation of his life. A close examination of his texts shows also that there are other situations that can be regarded as his plausible answer, namely, (1) miserable conditions of fear that reduces life to merely a struggle for survival, and (2) the condition of poverty or want of resources to satisfy basic needs of life. The political implication of Hobbes’s view regarding the possibility for a human being to opt for death in circumstances where life becomes wearisome is that the sovereign does not fulfill his duty if all that he does is to secure bare life. His duty to secure the safety of the people amounts to creating and promoting social conditions which spare those who find themselves in miserable circumstances of life through no fault of their own; creating and promoting a social

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201 *Leviathan*, XIV, 4, 91.

202 The expression *bare life* used here is barrowed from Giorgio Agamben, who distinguishes in Greek between *zōē* and *bios*, the first referring to pure natural life common to all beings (animal and human beings) and the latter to a particular way of life proper to an individual or a group. To clarify the distinction between *zōē* and *bios*, Agamben uses the case of the life of a patient, Karen Quinlan, to indicate that the notion of *bare life* refers to the “biological life, which the machines are keeping functional by artificial respiration, pumping blood into the arteries, and regulating the blood temperature.” (Agamben, G., *Homo Sacer: Sovereign Power and Bare Life*, translated by Daniel Heller-Roazen (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1998), 186). In order words, the concept of *bare life* refers to the biological life in its pure nakedness, as distinct to *bios*, which refers to “the form of life that bore the name Karen Quinlan,” (Ibid.), that is, the kind of life that the individual Karen Quinlan lived. In light of this distinction, it can be said that the Hobbesian concept of safety does not consist only in protecting *zōē* understood as mere biological life, but also creating and maintaining a social and political environment for the flourishing of people’s *bios*. 
environment in which people have hope to live decently and enjoy conditions that offer the greatest possible hope to fulfill one’s idea of a good life. In other words, safety in a properly Hobbesian sense requires not only that citizens not live under the miserable conditions of violence; it also requires that they be offered a social environment that presents at least minimum conditions that are necessary for their well-being and flourishing.
Chapter 2 - A CONCEPTUAL ELUCIDATION OF HOBBES’S IDEA OF WAR AND PEACE

Introduction

The first chapter indicated that Hobbes’s concept of safety requires first and foremost a correct understanding of his conception of human nature. The goal of the chapter was to point out what Hobbesian men regard as most precious, and in reference to which the notion of safety should be understood. In Hobbes, the desire for self-preservation fundamentally determines the nature of the human being. This desire should be interpreted in a broad sense to include avoidance not only of physical pain and death but also any type of suffering that makes death preferable to life. In Hobbes’s view, people seek naturally to preserve their lives not only from physical death, but also from mental distress and any other type of suffering that makes life wearisome. Hobbesian men are not only lovers of life but also pursuers of good; and for Hobbes, self-preservation is regarded as the good desired by all men, but mostly as a precondition for any human good. In this regard, securing the safety of the people pertains to not only protecting their physical integrity but also securing living conditions that enable each individual to pursue his good and to live the type of life he seeks to live.

The present chapter is intended to show that Hobbes’s concepts of war and peace are also keys to understanding his notion of the safety of the people. For Hobbes, war and peace are diametrically opposite. They are two distinct alternatives. Peace is to be sought, and war is to be avoided or overcome. While “all men agree on this, that Peace is Good,”¹ they all avert war and “desire (even nature it selfe compelling them) to be free from this misery.”² In this regard, to

¹ *Leviathan*, XV, 40, 110.
² *De Cive*, Preface to the Reader, 34.
secure the safety of the people means fundamentally two things: first, to free people from the misery of war, a condition of life out of which every rational being would choose to escape; and, second, to create and maintain social conditions of peace, which is a precondition for the pursuit of one’s good.

Before undertaking an elucidation of Hobbes’s concepts of peace and war, it is worth mentioning first this remark that he makes in *De Cive*, “in vain doe they worship peace at home, who cannot defend themselves against forrainers.”

This remark suggests that, in Hobbes’s view, the notion of peace and war should be considered at two different levels, domestically and internationally. This chapter is concerned only with peace and war as living conditions within a commonwealth. Hobbes’s views on war at the international level will be discussed under the protective function of the sovereign in the next chapter.

1. HOBBES’S IDEA OF WAR

Speaking of securing the safety of the people, the first question that comes to mind is, “from what threat?” Hobbes’s answer is unambiguously, from the threat of “civil war; or that dissolute condition of masterlesse men, without subjection to Lawes, and a coercive Power.” As mentioned in the introduction of the present study, Hobbes does not limit himself to considering the threat of civil war only; he uses the notion of the state of nature to broaden his notion of war to include any living environment in which life is reduced to a struggle for survival. Thus, avoiding the inconveniences of any war-like situation is clearly the main duty that Hobbes places at the heart of the exercise of the sovereign power. Civil society is created to end or to prevent the inconveniences of any war-like condition of life. In this regard, an elucidation of the

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3 *De Cive*, VI, 7.
4 *Leviathan*, XVIII, 20, 128.
Hobbesian concept of war is an important first step toward a good understanding of Hobbes’s concept of safety. For, in addition to the most fundamental human desires, whose satisfaction constitutes the main reason for securing the safety of the people, it is only in light of the horrors of war that one can, conversely, understand the Hobbesian concept of safety.

It is worth mentioning that a close reading of Hobbes’s three major political works, *The Elements of Law* (1650), *De Cive* (1651), and *Leviathan* (1651) shows that his theory of the state is centered around three major ideas: the horrors of the state of war, the need for a powerful political authority to secure safety from these horrors, and the relationship between safety and civic obedience. These three ideas are intrinsically connected in the sense that one cannot adequately understand one of them without considering how it relates to the others. In each of the aforementioned works, it clearly appears that the starting point of Hobbes’s argument for the necessity of creating a sovereign is the unpleasantness of what he terms *the state of nature*, which he describes as a state or a condition of war. The whole argument is directed to the idea that what ultimately brings individuals to social and political life is their need for safety. In other words, the state of war constitutes a crucial background for a good understanding of the subsequent major themes or concepts in Hobbes’s theory of the state. It has a central importance to Hobbes’s overall argument justifying the need for the creation of civil association. Hence, one gets a correct understanding of Hobbes’s notion of *the safety of the people* only in light of Hobbes’s understanding of the concept of war. By looking at Hobbes’s description of the condition of war, which he describes as a worse, dangerous, and unacceptable living condition, in his own terms, “solitary, poore, nasty, brutish, and short,” one gets a clear understanding of what he means by securing the safety of the people. In this regard, the question that underlies this

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5 This is the English version published in London. The Latin version was published in 1642 in Paris.
6 This is the English version published in London. The Latin version was published in 1668 in Amsterdam.
7 *Leviathan*, XIII, 9, 89.
section is, what does Hobbes mean by war? What condition of life can be described as a condition of war in Hobbesian sense?

For the sake of clarity, this question will be answered step by step. However, it is worth mentioning from the start that the object of this section is not mainly to discuss the causes of war in the state of nature, or to infer from the previous chapter that human nature, as conceived by Hobbes, combined with other factors such as the absence of a political power, leads to an escalation of violence that leads to war. There are already, in the literature, many valuable studies of that type. The object of this section is to clarify what it means for Hobbes to live in a condition of war; the main goal being to point out the unpleasantness of the condition of war, which compels every human being to escape such a condition, and in light of which one should understand the Hobbesian notion of safety. In relation to this goal, a particular emphasis will be put on fear as the dominant emotion that makes life unpleasant in the condition of war. This emphasis is intended to highlight the central claim of this section, which is that to live in the condition of war, in Hobbesian sense, means essentially to find oneself in an unpleasant and unacceptable social and political environment characterized by a permanent fear for one’s life. Hence, when Hobbes speaks of securing the safety of the people, he is speaking of creating and maintaining social and political conditions of life that allow people not to experience the very incommmodity and misery that they hoped to escape by joining the civil association. In other words, the sovereign’s duty to secure the safety of the people amounts to creating conditions that dissipate the type of fear that afflicts individuals who live under a permanent threat against their lives.
1. 1. Plato On War As Hatred of the Enemy

Plato is not a typical thinker when it comes to discussing war. However, in Book V of the Republic, Plato gives a very important insight regarding war, an insight that the philosophical tradition has more or less kept when it comes to reflecting on war. He introduces the topic of war by the following question: “what sort of thing will your soldiers do to the enemies?”

To answer this question, Plato begins by distinguishing two sorts of conflict: polemos and stasis. The first term is translated into English by “war,” the second by faction (in some translations, stasis is rendered as “civil unrest”). He maintains,

it appears to me that just as two different names are used, war and faction, so two things also exist and the names apply to differences in these two. The two things I mean are, on the one hand, what is one’s own and akin, and what is alien, and foreign, on the other. Now the name faction is applied to the hatred of one’s own, war to the hatred of the alien.

This passage indicates that Plato’s notion of war follows from the distinction between peoples: on the one hand, there are Greek people, and on the other hand, the non-Greek or barbarians. Greek people are friends by nature; they “recognize each other as brothers, fathers, and sons and . . . call upon each other using these names.” In relation to the Greek people, barbarians are considered as “enemies by nature,” and stand in a natural and perpetual state of war against Greek cities. In Plato’s view, armed hostility between kin is not considered as war but simply as disorder or discord. Only the armed conflict with barbarians is considered as war. As he puts it, “when Greeks fight with barbarians and barbarians with Greeks, we’ll assert they are at war and are enemies by nature, and this hatred must be called war; while when Greeks do any such

9 Ibid., V, 470b.
10 Ibid., V, 471d.
11 Ibid., V, 470c.
thing to Greeks, we’ll say that they are by nature friends . . . , and this kind of hatred must be called faction.”

For Plato, the difference between war and faction or civil unrest is that the latter is caused by injustice, “it’s injustice that produces factions, hatred, and quarrels among themselves,” when “the origin of war [lies] in those things whose presence in cities most of all produces evils both private and public.” To understand Plato’s explanation of the origin of war, one must go back to Book II of the Republic where he describes the process when a just city seeks to develop into a luxury city. The overall argument indicates that the move from a just city to a luxurious city leads to war for no other reason than the human desire to own more. For Plato, the quest for luxury, that is, the desire to overstep “the boundary of the necessary,” is the main cause of war.

In Plato’s view, the distinction between war and faction or civil unrest lies also in the degree of violence involved. Violence in civil unrest should be moderate because it is a conflict between kin, and whose aim is to correct the opponent only. Individuals engaged in civil unrest are “men who will be reconciled and not always be at war.” However, war in its very essence is a condition marked by high degree of violence, brutality, and cruelty because it is a conflict between enemies, and whose goal is to inflict a maximum severe punishment “with a view to slavery or destruction.”

In short, the most important insights one gets from Plato is that war is an armed conflict between enemies, whose main cause is not merely hatred but mostly human desire to
own more than one needs for one’s security or survival. In Plato, war is clearly described as a devastating and tragic situation in human life because the principal objective is the complete destruction of the opponent. To the initial question, what sort of thing one should do to enemies at war, the answer is, enslavement or, in a worst case scenario, complete destruction. Following Plato, the history of philosophical thought related to war has always identified the highest degree of violence and the human desire to accumulate unnecessary goods, respectively as one of the main features and causes of war. High degree of violence and desire to own more than what one needs for one’s security are also present in Hobbes’s description of war, but in Hobbes fear (not hatred as in Plato) is what triggers and explains this violence and the desire to own more.

1. 2. War As the Greatest Evil

The first step toward an elucidation of the Hobbesian concept of war consists in examining how Hobbes characterizes war. Hobbes consistently describes war not simply as one of the bad and harmful things that can happen to a human life or to a human well-being, but as “the greatest evill that can happen in this life.”

19 Leviathan, XXX, 3, 231.
20 De Corpore, I, 7.
21 De Homine, XI, 1.
and we avert anything that appears hurtful\textsuperscript{22} or susceptible to cause harm.\textsuperscript{23} The term evil refers to whatever is the object of individual’s hate.\textsuperscript{24} Thus to say that war is evil amounts to saying that it is hateful because of the harm that it causes or is susceptible to cause.

According to Hobbes, something is called “unpleasant” when it is regarded as “Evil in [its] effect, and End.”\textsuperscript{25} In \textit{De Corpore}, Hobbes maintains that from war “proceed slaughter, solitude, and the want of all things.”\textsuperscript{26} In the preface of \textit{De Cive}, he characterizes the condition of war as “hatefull condition”\textsuperscript{27} of life, and as such, it is a condition from which all men, as long as they are rational, would desire to be freed.\textsuperscript{28} The well known characterization of life in the condition of war is found in \textit{Leviathan}, “the life of man [is], solitary, poore, nasty, brutish, and short.”\textsuperscript{29}

The term evil used in relation to war is not to be taken as opposed to what is morally good, but as opposed to what is appetitive. Thus, to say that war is evil, and hence, a hateful condition of life, is to say that it is essentially unpleasant, that is, it is evil in its effect and end. It is the greatest evil because it causes or brings with it the most serious pain, suffering, or misfortune that can happen to a human being. As he clearly maintains when he speaks of civil war, “the estate of Man can never be without some incommodity or other; . . . [but] the greatest, that . . . can possibly happen to the people in generall, is scarce sensible, in respect of the miseries, and horrible calamities, that accompany a Civill Warre.”\textsuperscript{30} In Hobbes’s view, as in

\textsuperscript{22} \textit{Leviathan}, VI, 7, 39.
\textsuperscript{23} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{24} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{25} Ibid., VI, 8, 40.
\textsuperscript{26} \textit{De Corpore}, I, 7.
\textsuperscript{27} \textit{De Cive}, Preface to the Reader, 34.
\textsuperscript{28} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{29} \textit{Leviathan}, XIII, 9, 89.
\textsuperscript{30} Ibid., XVIII, 20, 128.
Plato’s, the end of every war is “to destroy, or [to] subdue one another.” In addition to the description of life in the condition of war as mentioned above, Hobbes indicates also that the effect of war is also the deprivation of any means for a contented life. The best and well known characterization of this deprivation is presented in this well-know passage of *Leviathan*,

> 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.

Thus, for Hobbes, war is the greatest evil because of the deprivation of the conditions and basic necessities for a contented life that it causes, and mostly because in such a condition life is not worth living. As indicated in the previous chapter, for Hobbes, human life is a constant endeavor to fulfill one’s desires, whose primary and most fundamental is the desire to live, but to live contentedly. Civil society is instituted in order to make possible the fulfillment of this desire that most defines human beings. Chaos and high degree of violence, characteristics of war, frustrate this fundamental desire of human nature and render uncertain the prospect of fulfilling it. Though Hobbes rejects the idea of the existence of any *summum bonum* in human life, he regards felicity as the chief objective for every human being. However, in war, no one has reasonable hope to achieve such an objective. In Hobbes’s view, the unpleasantness of war as evil lies mainly in the hindrance that it causes to the realization of individuals’ felicity, and in the constant threat that it poses to the assurance for the preservation of one’s life.

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31 *Leviathan*, XIII, 3, 87.
32 Ibid., XIII, 9, 89.
1.3. Hobbes’s Concept of War: A Terminological Consideration.

The second step in this conceptual elucidation consists in examining how Hobbes uses the term war. Most commentators would start their analysis of Hobbes’s concept of war by looking at his description of the state of nature. The core element of the state of nature is that it is a condition of war of all against all. Although the concepts of the state of nature, civil war, and of war in general are often used indistinctively, they are not really synonymous and interchangeable. A close reading shows that the emphasis that Hobbes puts on each of these concepts makes them slightly different one from another.

It should be noted first that, as in Plato, all these three concepts refer to a condition of enmity. However, in Hobbes, to characterize a state of war as a condition of enmity, there is no need of distinguishing between a kin and a foreigner. For, in Hobbes’s view, an enemy is simply anyone who poses threats to civil peace, and hence, to the preservation of individuals’ lives. What one can find in Hobbes is the use of the term faction. Hobbes characterizes faction as a union of subjects bound by mutual contracts, under the obedience to some authority other than the sovereign, and without the sovereign’s authorization. In his view, a faction is like “a city in a city.” Such a league of subjects, united for the purpose of “maintaining Peace and Justice” within a commonwealth, is unlawful, unnecessary, and therefore, “dangerous to the Publique” and “contrary to the safety of the people.” In this regard, it is against the law of nature for the sovereign to permit factions. He goes on to maintain that “those princes who permit factions, do as much as if they received an enemy within their walls: which is contrary to the subjects’ safety,

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34 De Cive, XIII, 13.
35 Ibid.
36 Leviathan, XXII, 29, 164.
37 Ibid.
38 Ibid., XXII, 32, 164.
and therefore also against the law of nature.”39 In other words, for Hobbes, a faction within the commonwealth is as dangerous as an enemy from without because both endanger the safety of the people.

In Hobbes, the state of nature, civil war, or simply war refer simply to a “dissolute condition of masterlesse men, without subjection to Lawes, and a coercive Power.”40 To put it simply, the three concepts refer primarily to a situation without a common political authority. In Hobbes’s view, people living in that condition are in “continual fear and danger of violent death.”41 Hence, all these concepts are used by Hobbes to describe an unpleasant condition in which life is reduced to a struggle for survival.

However, it should be noted that there are some differences between the three concepts, namely, state of nature, civil war, and war in general. On the one hand, the state of nature is a hypothetical condition of life, or as Francois Tricaud describes it, a “conceptual artifact”42 whose function is to point out features of human nature that Hobbes regards as genuinely essential and natural. Hobbes speaks of the state of nature as a condition preceding the generation of the great leviathan,43 the commonwealth; and most importantly, he regards the state of nature as populated by men who “sprang out of the earth, and suddenly, like mushrooms, come to full maturity, without all kind of [previous] engagement to each other.”44 As Ewin puts it, “in the Hobbesian natural condition, we have man the mere animal.”45 On the other hand, civil war refers to a historical instance of the state of nature, with the difference that it can be a condition of enmity between either individuals, opposite armies, or factions. Hobbes refers to

39 De Cive, XIII, 13.
40 Leviathan, XVIII, 20, 128.
41 Ibid., XIII, 9, 89.
43 Leviathan, XVII, 13, 120.
44 De Cive, VIII, 1.
civil war as a condition following from the “death” of the commonwealth; and individuals living in the condition of civil war are “men that have formerly lived under a peaceful government.”

Hobbes also uses the term “war” as a generic term, especially in his well known definition formulated, almost in similar terms, in all of his three major political works, \textit{Elements of Law}, \textit{De Cive}, and \textit{Leviathan}. What is particular in the three versions of the definition of war in these works is that Hobbes is not specific regarding the parties that are engaged in a hostile confrontation; he does not indicate whether the confrontation is between individuals, armies, or factions. Although he seems to regard the use of or recourse to force as element of war, he does not include actual fighting as essential component of war. His emphasis is, rather, on the notion of time, and on the known intention to fight. This seems to indicate that, in his view, war refers first and foremost to a period of time within any context of life in which there is no assurance that violent hostility is avoidable; a fearful condition of life in which reasons to engage in a violent and hostile confrontation prevail over the assurance of peace.

\textbf{1.4. Hobbes and the Causes of War}

Although the main object of this section is not to discuss the cause of war in Hobbes, examining the causes of war constitutes a third necessary step in a conceptual elucidation. This step is of great political importance because the causes of war constitute the principal object in reference to which the safety of the people should be measured. If war is the threat from which the sovereign has to protect his people, it is necessary to determine what factors lead to war and how the notion of safety should be understood in reference to those causes. In other words, if

\begin{itemize}
\item \textit{Leviathan}, XIII, 11, 90.
\item \textit{Elements of Law}, XIV, 11.
\item \textit{De Cive}, I, 12.
\item \textit{Leviathan}, XIII, 8, 88-89.
\end{itemize}
safety is to be understood in terms of protection from miseries and calamities of war, then, it can
be said that people are safe when the potential causes of war are significantly reduced or
eliminated.

There is no agreement among commentators with regard to the chief cause of war in
Hobbes, whether in the state of nature or civil war. Hobbes himself indicates a variety of
motives. To name just a few, diverse passions among men; desire for precedence and superiority;
appetite for the same thing that cannot be divided and enjoyed by many; different appetites and
aversions leading them to have conflicting opinions on what is good and evil. He strongly
believes also that the major cause of war lies in the minds of human beings, especially in the
false opinions concerning what is just and unjust, the rights of the sovereign and the duties of the
subject. This led him to make this well-known statement, “the Actions of men proceed from their
Opinions; and in the wel governing of Opinions, consisteth the well-governing of mens Actions,
in order to their Peace, and Concord.” All the above motives, among many others, lead men to
war in the Hobbesian state and the state of nature. In the Elements of Law, Hobbes indicates
three major motives “that dispose men to sedition”: discontent, pretence of right, and hope of
success. In Leviathan, he lists what he regards as the three major reasons that lead inevitably to
war by maintaining, “in the nature of man, we find three principle causes of quarrel: first,
competition; secondly, diffidence; thirdly glory. The first, maketh men invade for Gain; the
second, for Safety; and the third, for Reputation.” Thus, Hobbes does not indicate what factor
can be definitely regarded as the chief cause of war. This lack of clarity with regard to the main
cause of war is also reflected in the literature.

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50 Leviathan, XVIII, 9, 124.
51 Elements, XXVII, 1.
52 Leviathan, XIII, 6-7, 88.
According to David Gauthier, scarce resources and fear for self-preservation are sufficient determining factors to transform the Hobbesian state into a state of war. He suggests that fear is dependent on scarce natural resources, while competition is derivative, that is, a product of fear. To support his interpretation, Gauthier uses the following textual evidence: “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, endeavour to destroy or subdue one another.”53 In Gauthier’s view, this quotation suggests that war is principally the result of fear for self-preservation in the context of scarcity of resources. Where there are plenty of resources, Hobbesian men would refrain from hostility.54 In other words, Hobbes’s concept of war refers essentially to a condition of hostility due to scarcity of resources for individuals’ livelihoods. In Gauthier’s line of interpretation, individuals account themselves in the state of safety when they have no reason to fight one another for scarcity of resources; when there is no suspicion of any kind of violent behavior now and in the future for reasons of scarcity of resources.

There are commentators who reject Gauthier’s line of interpretation. According to Gabriella Slomp, for example, “fear for self-preservation” (along with the concern for scarce resources) is never mentioned by Hobbes as possible causes of human discord.55 On the contrary, “Hobbes suggests that if the sole concern of men were their survival, they would pull their strengths together and would cooperate like bees and ants and live peacefully.”56 Commenting on Hobbes’s explanation why “certain living creatures (as bees and ants) live

53 *Leviathan*, XIII, 3, 87.
54 David Gauthier, *The Logic of Leviathan*, 18.
56 Ibid.
sociably one with another . . . [whereas] mankind cannot do the same.” Slomp maintains that, in Hobbes, desire for glory appears to be the original source of war. According to her, “the behaviour of glory-seekers is . . . the original source of conflict both in the state of nature and in the political state.” She goes on to argue that even in Behemoth, Hobbes singles out ambition as the prime mover of rebellion by pointing out the role played by those he regards as the chief leaders of conflict in English war, namely, ambitious ministers and ambitious gentlemen. This interpretation is in accord with what Hobbes indicates in the Correspondence, where he points to “disputes for precedence” as “the causes of civil wars.” In Slomp’s view, human desire of glory is the reason why the Hobbesian sovereign must be nothing less than absolute, with the task “of Rewarding with riches, or honour; and of Punishing with corporall, or pecuniary punishment, or with ignominy.” In this line of interpretation, civil peace, and hence, the safety of the people is secured mainly by restraining the “ambitious from causing war in political society.”

In the same line of thought, Gregory Kavka argues that the main reason for the inevitability of war in Hobbes is the presence of the people that Hobbes calls “the wicked,” and Kavka calls “dominators,” that is, people who desire to control and dominate others. Since we cannot distinguish them from other people, and for fear of becoming their victim, “there is a necessity of suspecting” and attacking preemptively anybody with whom we enter into contact. Thus, contrary to what Gauthier suggests, even if there are plenty of resources for everyone’s livelihood, the mere presence of “some, that taking pleasure in contemplating their own power in

57 Leviathan XVII, 6, 119.
60 The Correspondence, vol. I, 120.
61 Leviathan, XVIII, 14, 126.
63 De Cive, Preface to the Reader, 33.
64 Ibid.
the acts of conquest, which they pursue farther than their security requireth, “there will be war of all against all for fear of becoming the victim of an unsuspected wicked person.

The analysis undertaken by David Gauthier, Gregory Kavka, and Gabriella Slomp can broadly be regarded as addressing some of the key elements one may find in the literature when it comes to determining the chief cause of war in Hobbes. Scarcity of resources, desire of ambition of the glory-seekers, and the presence of the dominators are all causes of war and can be supported with textual evidences in Hobbes. Without questioning the pertinence of their interpretation, it is appropriate to mention that they do not go to the most fundamental cause of war rooted in human nature, namely, fear. Before examining the crucial role of fear in the Hobbesian concept of war, it is important to analyze first Hobbes’s definition of war, which is central to the understanding of his notion of the safety of the people.

1. 5. Hobbes’s Definition of War

The examination of Hobbes’s definition of war constitutes a fourth necessary step in this conceptual elucidation. Hobbes uses generically the term war to refer to any context of life marked by hostility and in which reasons to engage in a violent confrontation prevail over the assurance of peace. Since this definition of war has been the object of close considerations by many commentators, my approach in this section will rely on some commentators’ analysis to highlight some essential elements of Hobbes’s conception of war. Given the similarity of the formulation of the definition of war in his three aforementioned works, I will limit this examination to the Leviathan’s version, where Hobbes maintains,

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65 Leviathan, XIII, 4, 88.
Warre, consisteth not in Battell onely, or the act of fighting, but in a tract of time, wherein the Will to contend by Battell is sufficiently known: and therefore the notion of Time, is to be considered in the nature of Warre; as it is in the nature of Weather. For as the nature of Foule weather, lyeth not in a showre or two of rain; but in an inclination thereto of many dayes 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. 66

From this definition, it clearly appears that the concept of war has a specific and technical sense in Hobbes. Gregory Kavka points out three major aspects that characterize the Hobbesian concept of war: war “is a relational concept;” it requires “a known willingness to fight, under appropriate or opportune conditions;” and it is “a disposition to fight unless there are assurances to the contrary.” 67 In Kavka’s view, the relational element is crucial for war to be caused, because for war to break out, individuals must be in a context that makes them relate to one another. A solitary individual cannot be said to be in a condition of war because he does not interact with any other individual. Hence, the Hobbesian concept of war refers primarily to the nature of a relational attitude that individuals display in their contact with one another.

Kavka’s interpretation points out some important aspects, but the well known aspect of Hobbes’s conception of war lies in the view that war is primarily a known disposition of the parties to engage in a violent and hostile confrontation. There is war, in Hobbes’s view, not only when there is actual fighting but also during the entire period of time when each party knows that the intention to fight is irreversibly a part of the other party’s plan. In Hobbes’s view, the quality of interpersonal relationship between citizens is of great importance for civil peace. It is his well known view that members of a civil society are individuals who have consented to enter into a relationship created by a covenant. In this regard, citizens of a commonwealth stand in a special

66 Leviathan, XIII. 8, 88-89.
relationship with one another because “civil societies are not mere meetings, but bonds.” The covenant makes them so closely related to one another that an evident hostile attitude that inexorably leads to physical violence against one another transforms their situation into a war zone. It has been noted in the previous chapter that there is no safety as long as reasons for fear of one another persist. In other words, a permanent and persistent hostile relationship between individuals, with no assurance to the contrary, is exactly what Hobbes regards as a state of war, which calls for the necessity of a sovereign.

Thus, it can be said that Hobbes’s concept of war refers essentially to any social context or political state of affairs in which people, in their interrelationship, display a state of mind such as hostile intentions are so evident that the relationship will inexorably end up in a violent conflict; the probability the fighting is going to break out is significantly high. Hence, when Hobbes speaks of securing the safety of the people, what he has in view is to create conditions of less conflicting relationships between individual members of the commonwealth; a living environment in which the probability to engage in violence is significantly low. The primary duty of the sovereign is, then, to end the prevalence of this hostile attitude between citizens, and to eliminate or to reduce significantly the probability for citizens to engage in violence against one another.

In the above definition, there is also a reference to the temporal aspect of war, where Hobbes clearly indicates that “the notion of Time, is to be considered in the nature of Warre.” Commenting on this element, Samantha Frost holds a view similar to Kavka’s relational element by maintaining that, in Hobbes’s view, war is what happens in a period of time “in which the quality or tenor of our interactions with one another is such that we anticipate hostile confrontation and find ourselves oriented accordingly in our desires, imaginations, and

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68 De Cive, I, 2, note.
In Samantha Frost’s view, the idea of time is of crucial importance, because in claiming that the “notion of time is to be considered in the nature of war,” Hobbes seems to be indicating that the concept of war refers to a situation of hostility that happens, not simply as an isolated incident of violence in a particular moment, but as a conflicting situation that endures over a period of time.

Hobbes’s likening the notion of war with “foule weather” is also intended to indicate the importance of the temporal aspect, but particularly to point out the entire period of time-consuming preparation that is involved in the concept of war. Individuals’ hostile disposition toward each other is manifest not through an occasional fight, but through a permanent effort and time-consuming preparation to fight. To paraphrase Hobbes’s definition in this particular aspect, it can be said that one lives in a condition of war when, for whatever reason, one has to spend not only effort and resources, but all of his time in preparation to engage in a hostile confrontation. In this sense, any condition of life in which people’s situation is such as they cannot engage in any activity other than getting ready to fight, is a condition of war.

1. 6. War And the Fear Factor

In this section, I would like to add to the analysis undertaken by Gauthier, Kavka, and Slomp, by considering the principal cause of war, namely, fear. In these two last sections, I intend to point out its relevance in the understanding of the Hobbesian concept of war, and hence, of his notion of safety. Before going further, it is useful to mention that fear is one of the much examined concepts in Hobbes’s political philosophy. It is regarded not only as what leads to peace, but also as the main cause of war. As Blits puts it, in Hobbes, fear is both “the principal

cause of war and the principal means to peace." In this section, fear is mainly approached as the inconvenience or factor that leads to war and, hence, necessitates the creation of the sovereign. To be precise, it is about the fear that not only calls for the creation of the sovereign, but also the one that the sovereign has the power to eliminate or to reduce to a reasonable level.

The main argument of this section is that the sovereign is created for the purpose of liberating people from the fear of the horrors of war and of violent death occasioned by war. In so arguing, my goal is to indicate that, in Hobbes’s view, the notions of safe and unsafe must be measured in reference to how much fear one experiences for one’s life when living in civil society. One of the great teachings one can get from Hobbes is that it is impossible for people to flourish in the environment of fear. Safety, which includes the well-being of the people, is ensured when people have no reasonable fear for their lives in the state. In other words, the Hobbesian concept of safety means also freedom from fear for one’s life in relation to social living conditions of the citizen.

1. 6. 1. Safety As Freedom From Fear

Thomas Hobbes is notorious for the view that human beings seek to live in civil society for “mutual fear one of another.” Leo Strauss points out fear of violent death (along with honor) as the principle from which “Hobbes’s political philosophy comes into being.” In the above examination of Hobbes’s definition of war, it has been indicated that Hobbes does not regard actual fighting as the defining element of war. However, he strongly regards “continuall feare, and danger of violent death” as the most defining characteristics of life in the condition

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71 Elements of Law, XIV, 3; see also De Cive, I, 2.
73 Leviathan, XIII, 9, 89.
of war. In Hobbes’s view, diffidence (fear) appears to be one of the main motives to raise war for safety reason. Most of the factors that he regards as causes of war, including those pointed out by Gauthier, Kavka, and Slomp, would not lead to conflict if the element of fear were not added to them. Even the key element in Hobbes’s definition of war, such as the known disposition to fight, has its full force to lead to a violent confrontation only in the assumption that parties are assailed by fear of one another. Thus, in the presence of whatever factor that might lead to war, fear seems to be what really triggers the conflict. It is the principal element that really explains the unpleasantness of the condition of war. As mentioned above, in Hobbes’s view, individuals live in a condition of war whenever they find themselves in a condition of continual fear and danger of violent death. In other words, war is primarily a condition marked by an unacceptable level of hostile insecurity that makes fear the dominant emotion of life.

As many commentators have pointed out, the passion of fear constitutes the central thread in all Hobbes’s major political works and plays a crucial role in his theory of the state. What is fear? In Leviathan, Hobbes presents fear as a species of “aversion, with opinion of Hurt from the object.” In other words, when we avert ourselves from something because we believe that it is harmful, the internal emotion that assails us is fear. As suggested in the previous chapter, it should be noted that fear here cannot be reduced to fear of physical death only. It is more accurate to interpret the Hobbesian concept of fear as including not only physical violence but also any condition that makes life wearisome, such as poverty, moral pain of humiliation, and many other inconveniences of life. It is only in this inclusive sense of fear that one can interpret the concept of safety in terms of protection not only from danger of bodily harm, but also from any danger of a social and political nature, physical and non-physical, that threaten individual’s
life or make one’s life wearisome to the point that death becomes preferable. The Hobbesian notion of safety is about securing people in their lives, bodies, and possessions all together from the threat of any war-like situation. Hobbes is consistent that the sovereign is created for “nothing else but the security of mans person, in his life, and in the means of so preserving life, as not to be weary of it.” Thus the sovereign’s duty to secure the safety of the people amounts to creating conditions that dissipate or lessen reasons of fear of dangers that threaten the individual’s life, body, and possessions.

One may ask, if the inevitability of violent hostility is one of the essential aspects of war, how does fear lead to it? The answer to this question lies in what one may call the logic of fear, which is the logic that underlies what Hobbes calls “anticipation.” There is a state of war in the Hobbesian sense whenever everyone has good reason to fear everyone for his life. When everyone fears everyone else, because each is regarded as a potential threat to the other, and because each is a potential threat, each is simply a threat. Everyone is both a potential threat to, and a potential victim of, everyone else because, with regard to the ability to kill, even “the weakest has strength enough to kill the strongest.” In such a condition of life, the logic will be to anticipate, to go on the offensive in order to secure one’s own good. Individuals have no other choice but to attack preemptively, if they are to avoid being killed themselves.

It is also important to mention the nature of fear that is involved in the condition of war. To borrow Blits’s words, in Hobbes, “Fear both incites and inhibits.” The fear that is experienced in a condition of war is a paralyzing fear, which takes away every incentive to work. According to Hobbes, in a condition of war, individuals cannot engage themselves in any

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76 *Leviathan*, XIV, 8, 93.
77 Ibid., XIII, 4, 87-88.
78 Ibid., XIII.1, 87.
productive activity, “because the fruit thereof is uncertain.”

The situation is such as when you “plant, sow, build, or possess a convenient Seat, others . . . [are] expected to come . . . to dispossesse, and deprive [you] . . . , not only of the fruit of . . . [your] labour, but also . . . [your] life, or liberty.”

In such a state of affairs, life is reduced merely to a struggle for survival. As Richard Tuck puts it, in Hobbes, fear for one’s life and “the constant exercise of our own judgment about what is dangerous is a nerve-wracking and wearing business, which leaves . . . little time for anything else.”

In other words, in a condition of war the type of fear that assails individuals is an all-consuming fear, in which individuals have no time to experience anything but bare life itself. Hence, in reference to this, safety entails freedom from a paralyzing fear that hinders the pursuit of a more contented life.

1. 6. 2. The Question of Religious Fear

Part of Hobbes’s work, particularly where he speaks of religion, is often regarded by many of his readers as an attack on Christianity. Leo Strauss, like many other commentators, believes that one of his intentions in writing Leviathan was to lessen the influence of religion and, particularly, to undermine belief in Christianity, which he regarded as dangerous to civil peace. There are also commentators who believe that Hobbes’s effort was, rather, to show that his moral and political theories were supported by the scriptures and Christianity. What is undeniable is that any reader of Hobbes can notice at least the polemical tone in which he speaks of some of Christian religious beliefs that he considers as dangerous to the commonwealth.

However, this subsection does not concern directly Hobbes’s criticism of Christianity. The focus

80 Leviathan, XIII, 9, 89.
81 Ibid., XIII, 3, 87.
is simply on the role that fears of religious origin can play in relation to the question of the safety of the people.

Most commentators would agree that Hobbes’s fear of religion is very evident in his work. He clearly numbers religious controversies and conflicts among the main causes of English civil war of his time. He knows that most people are influenced by their religious beliefs and, in all of his three major political works, he regards fears of religious origin, such as “fear of eternal death,”84 “fear of damnation,”85 “Feare of power invisible,”86 as important potential threats to the question of safety and civil peace in the commonwealth. Hobbes believes that such fears can be used by “crafty ambitious persons”87 to undermine the authority of the civil sovereign, to justify a rebellion, and hence, to endanger civil peace. He maintains, “no man can serve two masters; nor is he less, but rather more a master, whom we believe we are to obey for fear of damnation, than he whom we obey for fear of temporal death.”88 Through fear of offending God and of eternal damnation, people can easily transgress the law of the commonwealth and introduce rebellion.89 He asks, “what can be more pernicious to any state, than that men should, by the apprehension of everlasting torments, be deterred from obeying their princes . . . ?”90 This question clearly shows how Hobbes, a champion of civic obedience, takes seriously not only the threat of religious fears but also the sovereign’s duty to regulate doctrines in order to counter this threat. In this regard, when it comes to ensuring the safety of the people, he strongly recommends the civil sovereign to take into consideration religion and

84 Elements of Law, XXV, 5.
85 De Cive, VI, 11.
86 Leviathan, VI, 35, 42.
87 Ibid., II, 8, 19.
88 De Cive, VI, 11.
89 Leviathan, XXXI, 1, 245.
90 De Cive, XII, 5.
the fears that it inspires. The big question here is how to protect people from the threat of religious fears.

Before answering this question, it is useful to make three important remarks. First, for Hobbes, religious impulse or, in his own words, “the seed of Religion,”91 is so rooted in the human nature that it cannot be eliminated. Second, it is worth distinguishing in Hobbes, on the one hand, a genuine fear of God that stems from the belief in God who is “the King of all the Earth”92 and, on the other hand, a superstitious fear generated by false religious ideas and erroneous doctrines, which Hobbes regards as “the work of the Schooles”93 developed by “crafty ambitious persons [to] abuse the simple people.”94 Third, for Hobbes, religion and superstition are both “Feare of power invisible;”95 they differ only in the fact that the term religion is used when that fear is “publiquely allowed,” and superstition when “not allowed;”96 but he acknowledges that there is true religion “when the power imagined, is truly such as we imagine.”97 Besides, according to Hobbes, the belief in God as such is in the realm of conscience, which is beyond the range of the sovereign’s power. He explicitly regards as an error “to extend the power of the law . . . to the very Thoughts, and Consciences of men.”98 He categorically maintains, “there ought to be no power over the consciences of men;”99 and if a sovereign attempts to forbid his people to believe in God, “such a forbidding is of no effect;

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91 *Leviathan*, XII, 1, 75.
92 Ibid., XII, 22, 83.
93 Ibid., II, 9, 19.
94 Ibid., II, 8, 19.
95 Ibid., VI, 35, 42.
96 Ibid.
97 Ibid.
98 Ibid., XLVI, 37, 471.
99 Ibid., XLVII, 20, 480.
because . . . Faith is a Gift of God, which Man can neither give, nor take away by promise of rewards, or menaces of torture.”

From the above remarks, it can be maintained that, in Hobbes’s view, fear that stems from true religion cannot be eliminated by the sovereign because it is grounded in human nature. Hence, the task of the sovereign is not to end religious fears that stem from the belief in the true God, but to manage them in such a way that they become compatible with civil peace. However, what Hobbes really regards as the most serious threat to civil peace, and that the sovereign should prevent or eliminate for the sake of the safety of the people, is what he calls superstitious fears. According to him, “crafty ambitious persons,” with their false religious doctrines, exploit superstitious fears by making people believe “that either by right they may not obey the laws of the city . . . or that it is lawful to resist him, or that a less punishment remains for him that denies, than him that yield obedience.” Hobbes remarks, “If this superstitious fear . . . were taken away . . . and many other things depending thereon . . . men would be much more fitted than they are for civill Obedience.” In other words, superstitious fears stirred up by “crafty ambitious persons” are one of the causes of disobedience in the commonwealth, and as such, they are undoubtedly a cause of war and a factor that threatens seriously the safety of the people. This strong conviction of Hobbes leads him to assign to the civil sovereign the task to be the “chief Pastor.” In his view, for the sake of civil peace and the safety of the people, the civil sovereign should be the only legitimate person in the commonwealth who has the power to regulate religious doctrines and to teach the Church. He maintains,

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100 Leviathan, XLII, 11, 343.
101 De Cive, VI, 11.
102 Leviathan, VIII, 8, 19.
103 Ibid., XXXIX, 5, 322.
104 Ibid., XLII, 67, 372.
it is annexed to the sovereignty, to be Judge of what Opinions and Doctrines are averse, and what conducing to Peace . . . For the Actions of men proceed from their Opinions; and in the well governing of Opinions, consisteth the well governing of the mens Actions, in order to their Peace, and Concorde . . . It belongeth therefore to him that hath the Soveraign Power, to be Judge, or constitute all Judges of Opinions and Doctrines, as a thing necessary to Peace; thereby to prevent Discorde and Civil Warre.  

As chief pastor, the sovereign has the duty to regulate religious doctrines because they shape opinions of the people and influence the way most of them behave. For Hobbes, the regulation of doctrines by the sovereign prevents the development of false and erroneous religious doctrines, which generate superstitious fears in the people who, as a result, will not hesitate to disobey their sovereign. In his view, erroneous doctrines can provide pretext to the people to disobey or even to fight against their civil sovereign, and the only way to prevent this to happen is to govern well people’s opinions and to regulate doctrines in the commonwealth.

In short, to secure the safety of the people in face of the threat of superstitious fears, it is crucial that the sovereign have control of all doctrines in the commonwealth and judges “what opinions and doctrines are enemies unto peace, and also that he forbid them to be taught.”  

One may ask, since Hobbes maintains that “there ought to be no power over the consciences of men,” how does the sovereign govern people’s opinions? According to Hobbes, it is through civic and religious education that the sovereign can manage religious fears and debunk false religious ideas and superstitious fears. Thus, the institution of a proper civic and religious education in the commonwealth is essential for maintaining civil peace and, hence, securing the safety of the people.

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105 *Leviathan*, XVII, 9, 124-125.
106 *De Cive*, VI, 11.
107 *Leviathan*, XLVII, 20, 480.
1. 7. War and the Future Time

To regard fear as the principal element that makes war hateful and unpleasant in Hobbes merits further investigation. In the *Element of Law*, Hobbes indicates that the object of aversion can be a present displeasure or a “displeasure expected.” In other words, human beings avoid not only things that hurt them in the present, but also things that will harm them in the future. Hobbes expresses a similar view when he maintains in *Leviathan* that we have aversion “for things, not onely which we know have hurt us; but also that we do not know whether they will hurt us, or not.” Hence, as species of aversion, fear can be directed toward a present fact or toward something expected in the future. In other words, in Hobbes’s view, the object of human fear can be not only what is objectively present, but also what is expected in the future. This is an important point in relation to Hobbes’s conception of war. As fearful condition of life, Hobbes’s concept of war must be interpreted also in relation to the future. For Hobbes, war is a calamity which human beings avert not only for the present but also for the future. In war, fear is not directed only toward threats against life in the present, but also toward threats against life in the future. For Hobbesian men, war is experienced as deprivation of any possibility of planning for the future.

In *De Homine*, Hobbes indicates that the primary common goals grounded in human nature, and whose achievement makes life a more contented one are “life, health, and insofar as it can be done, security of future time.” In a neglected passage of *Leviathan*, when speaking of religion as originating from fear, Hobbes offers a crucial observation of his view of the human being. He portrays the human being as a creature “who continually endeavoureth to secure

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108 *Elements of Law*, I, 7, 2.
109 *Leviathan*, VI, 4, 39.
110 *De Homine*, XI, 6.
himself against the evil he fears, and procure the good he desireth.”

Unlike beasts, the human being is endowed with the ability to see “the order, consequence, and dependence” of things, the “Antecedence and Consequence;” he is able to look “far before him, in the care of the future,” and as result of this, he is susceptible to be “gnawed on by fear of death, poverty, or other calamity.” In other words, Hobbesian men are individuals who are concerned not only about the immediate and present harm, but also about a possible or an expected pain in the future. As anticipating beings, they are also mostly afflicted by the uncertainty caused by war with regard to “the security of future time.” Hobbes characterizes war as “a hateful condition” because it threatens human life not only in the present but also in the future. The unpleasantness of war lies not only in the actual experience of hostility, but also in the fear that takes away any hope for the realization of one’s objectives in the future. As anticipating beings, Hobbesian men avoid living in a condition in which there is no prospect for a good life in the future, and where the fruit of one’s labor is uncertain.

As mentioned above, in Hobbes, diffidence plays an important role in causing war for reasons of safety. In the Elements of Law, Hobbes regards diffidence as a total absence of hope. As he puts it, “Absolute privation of hope is DISPAIR, a degree whereof is DIFFIDENCE.” Thus, in Hobbes’s view, war refers to any situation in which people live in absolute desperation. In this regard, to protect people from the threat of war is to give them reasons to hope for their security in the future. The Hobbesian notion of the safety of the people involves the creation of social and political conditions that give people reasons to hope and to

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111 Leviathan, XII, 5, 76.
112 Ibid., XII, 4, 76.
113 Ibid., XII, 5, 76.
114 Ibid., XIII, 9, 89.
115 Ibid., XIII, 7, 88.
116 Elements of Law, IX, 8.
fulfill their desires now and in the future. In other words, for the people to be safe, they must see themselves able to anticipate the present by planning the future and having good reasons to hope for a better future. For a Hobbesian man to consider “himself in the estate of security,” it is not sufficient to feel secured in the present only. He must also be able to see himself, in relation to his social and political environment, free from anxiety for the future. It is crucially important to note Hobbes’s indication of hope as one of the motivating factors that lead human beings to opt for a social and political life; he speaks of “a Hope by their Industry to obtain” things necessary for commodious living. Thus, the Hobbesian concept of safety is directly connected with the concept of hope. For a Hobbesian man, war refers to any hopeless condition of life in which there is no prospect for a better future. In Hobbes’s view, to be deprived of any hope to attain things necessary for a commodious life equals to living in a condition of war. If a human being is essentially an anticipating being, the notion of safety must have to do with making anticipation possible. To secure the safety of the people entails, therefore, creating social and political conditions of life that enable individuals to live a good life in the present, and also to anticipate and to hope to achieve their goals in the future.

To conclude this conceptual elucidation of war, it is important to underline the fact that from Plato to Hobbes, war refers to a tragic state of affairs in human existence, involving fear of pain, suffering, and of unnecessary violent death. In Hobbes, the concept of war has both a wide and a narrow sense. In a narrow sense, the concept of war refers to an armed conflict between armies or factions, as in a civil war. In a wide sense war refers to any intolerable state of affairs marked by great fear and in which survival is ensured exclusively by violent struggles. It is any condition of life in which recourse to violence appears to be ineluctable because of the

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117 *Elements of Law*, XX, 5.

118 In the following section on Hobbes’s concept of peace, I will make a brief comment on his concept of hope.
unacceptable degree of pain, sufferings, and fear that take away any hope for the realization of one’s objectives. In this sense, war does not necessarily refer to an actual battle or to an occasional act of violence, but to any enduring miserable, fearful, unpleasant, and hateful condition in which (1) life is reduced to a struggle for survival because the unnecessary and violent death is almost certain, and (2) the destruction of any hope of obtaining things necessary to a contented life has assuredly taken place.

A main consideration in Hobbes’s notion of war is that a living environment in which struggle for physical survival is the principal activity, is not only unbearable but also unacceptable for human beings. Therefore, the duty to secure the safety of the people should be understood as a duty to protect them from any warlike condition marked by great misery that reduces people’s life essentially to struggle for survival. In Hobbes’s view, the assurance for the fulfillment of future desires is an important inclination in human nature, and any condition that frustrates this desire is averted as a great evil. Since the human being is an anticipating creature who cares about his future, to secure his safety involves creating social and political conditions that not only assure his security in the present, but also gives him reasons to hope for the security and a more contented life in the future. In this regard, one is safe and lives a contented life in the Hobbesian sense only when one is fear-free and able to plan for his future time.

2. HOBBES’S IDEA OF PEACE

The safety of the people requires that the commonwealth achieves and remains in a state of peace. The big question is, what is peace for Hobbes? Before answering this question, it is important to indicate that the object of this section is not to examine Hobbes’s argument on the necessary requirements for achieving peace in a civil society, or to investigate whether or not
Hobbes offers convincing arguments regarding ways to meet the challenge of civil peace. This section attempts to answer the following question: if the notion of safety requires peace as precondition, what does peace mean for Hobbes? If to be safe requires beforehand to be in a peaceful condition, what is the most defining feature of a social and political environment that can be described as peaceful?

It is also important to indicate from the start that, since the securing of safety is the duty of the sovereign, in this section, the Hobbesian concept of peace is not approached as referring to a state of affairs created by citizens’ mutual cooperation, understanding, or trust, but as describing objective conditions of life made available by the sovereign, whose creation has no reason other than promoting people’s “Common Peace and Safetie.” In other words, peace is not here approached as describing a state of mind, but as referring to objective conditions of life favorable not only to the preservation of life but also to individuals’ pursuit of commodious and a more contented life. When Hobbes maintains, “all men agree on this, that Peace is good,” he is not referring to a state of mind, but to objective conditions that characterize a frame of life. Hence, the underlying and guiding idea in this section is that, in Hobbes, the notion of peace is mainly used to describe a living social and political environment in which we can legitimately have “hope in the attaining of our Ends.” If the condition of war refers to a state of affairs marked by violence and fear for one’s preservation, a peaceful social and political environment is that in which there is no credible expectation of violence or threat against one’s life, and which gives people good reasons to have hope in their lives.

119 Leviathan, XVII, 13, 120.
120 Ibid., XV, 40, 111.
121 Ibid., XIII, 3, 87.
2. 1. In the Literature: Peace As Prudential Norm vs. Peace As Genuine Moral Quality

A close reading of the Hobbesian literature shows that most commentators agree that Hobbes saw his theory of the state as an important contribution to peace. His primary concern was to prevent civil war by proposing a decisive way of achieving peace and stability of the English society of his time. In other words, the main goal of his political philosophy is to indicate means to obtain lasting civil peace. His three major political works, namely, *Elements of Law*, *De Cive*, and *Leviathan*, can be read as Hobbes’s attempt to propose “means for a peaceable, sociable, and comfortable living.” These works show also his strong conviction on the necessity of peace for the preservation of life and the enjoyment of commodious and a more contented life. Furthermore, his analysis of human nature has no objective other than to indicate what is required for the creation and maintenance of social and political conditions of peace. According to Norberto Bobbio, peace is “the fundamental problem” for Hobbes. Perez Zagorin maintains that “[t]he entire purpose of his moral and political philosophy . . . was to teach men the necessity and value of peace, the means to achieve and preserve it . . ., and the relationship between peace, the goods of civilization, and the flourishing of human life.” Thus it is largely accepted that Hobbes places peace at the center of social and political life. In his view, peace must not only be the prominent characteristic of social life but also the defining feature of every civil association, if the safety of the people and a more contented life are the chief goals. Hence, the big problem in the Hobbesian literature is not to know whether or not the

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122 *Leviathan*, XV, 40, 111.
123 It should be noted that Hobbes’s practical recommendations on how to construct a peaceful and flourishing commonwealth may not be interesting for modern society, but his insight that any social and political order must be constructed as a response to human fundamental need (peace, preservation of life, and the enjoyment of a more contented life) seems to be timelessly valid.
concept of peace is central in Hobbes’s moral and political philosophy, but to determine what is Hobbes’s understanding of peace.

In the literature, Hobbes’s concept of peace is often presented as a prudential norm in human conduct. For many commentators, the whole Hobbesian system is grounded on individual’s self-interest. Hobbes’s morality is recommended essentially by a self-interested calculation. Gregory Kavka, for example, maintains that Hobbes’s moral theory is distinctively “the reconstruction of a rule-egoistic moral theory that treats familiar principles of moral conduct as rational guides to the promotion of individual interests in a multiparty environment.” Hobbesian men are not born with qualities that enable them either to live in peace with one another, to commit themselves to keep rules of conduct that promote and foster peace. Human beings, as described by Hobbes, are but selfish calculators who assess, for their own advantage, the dangerous consequences of not working for, and living in, peace. When Hobbes recommends seeking peace and following it as the first fundamental law of nature, he is basically considering prudence as the fundamental motivation, in the sense that it is reasonable for individuals, if they wish to prevent a life-threatening condition, to adhere to the precepts that lead to peaceful conditions of life. George Shelton presents this line of reading in very expressive terms as follows:

When Hobbes says that every man ought to seek peace, he is using the word in a sense which does not require morality but merely prudence. Given the danger of the state of nature, it is only reasonable for a man to wish to escape from it. If he wishes to bring his life-threatening situation to an end, he ought to endeavour peace in the same way that he ought to see a doctor if he is in a great deal of pain.

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According to this line of interpretation, the only reason human beings choose to live in peace is for fear of both punishment and life-threatening consequences of the condition of war. Since the Hobbesian men are but selfish calculators, they keep peace between themselves simply because it is prudentially rational to do so.\textsuperscript{128} In other words, the Hobbesian concept of peace refers essentially to a state of affairs resulting from citizens’ prudent consideration to adhere to a set of rules of conduct for their selfish interest.

In the Hobbesian literature, peace and war are commonly presented as antithetical to one another, in the sense that one is best understood only in light of and in contrast to the other. A close reading of most commentators reveals that the Hobbesian concept of peace is generally understood in light of his concept of war. For commentators who interpret the Hobbesian concept of peace in terms of prudential norm of conduct, Hobbes regards peace as merely the absence of war. In this regard, peace is understood as a state of affairs imposed by the sovereign on individuals who, by their very nature, are unable to commit themselves to its promotion. The underlying idea of this line of interpretation is that, in his theory of the state, Hobbes is taken to argue that the use of force and coercion are the only necessary means to create and maintain peace among self-centered individuals. In other words, the Hobbesian concept of peace refers merely to a condition of life made possible through the use of force capable of compelling everyone to live in harmony with others. Since Hobbes presents “war of all against all” as the natural condition of human beings, his notion of peace is, therefore, nothing but the mere

\textsuperscript{128} One of the most important contributions in reading Hobbes’s natural laws as prudential maxims is J. W. N. Watkins, \textit{Hobbes’s System of Ideas: A Study in the Political Significance of Philosophical Theories} (London: Hutchinson University Library, 1965)
absence, or the non-outbreak, of “war of all against all.” There is peace as long as there is no war.  

For commentators who reject psychological egoism as the distinctive trait of Hobbesian man, however, an interpretation of the Hobbesian concept of peace as mere absence of war and as something imposed on individuals is inadequate and does not fit with Hobbes’s overall view on civil association. According to S. A. Lloyd, the view that peace is something to be imposed on citizens is incoherent within the Hobbesian conceptual framework. Such a view connotes the idea of a “brutally oppressive peace,” and in Hobbes’s view, acts of oppression lead inevitably to rebellion and active warfare. Thus, the notion of peace as something brutally imposed by force is clearly a contradiction in terms within Hobbes’s framework of thought. For commentators who reject the first line of interpretation, the main question for Hobbes is not how to impose peace but how to create and foster a culture of peace. Hobbes’s theory of the state is an attempt to promote an individual’s moral sense through civic education. His overall project is to provide a broad ethical vision in which social interactions are to take place in order to produce a culture of peace. For commentators of this second line of interpretation, just as the concept of war refers to a “known disposition,” so must peace, its antithesis, refers to individuals’ disposition. Since war consists in social relations characterized by evident hostile intentions, peace, its antithesis also refers to a social condition in which

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129 See, for example, Samantha Frost’s argument in Lessons From a Materialist Thinker. Hobbesian Reflections on Ethics and Politics (Stanford, California: Stanford University Press, 2008), 116-132.
131 S. A. Lloyd, Morality in the Philosophy of Thomas Hobbes, 129.
individuals, out of their moral disposition, assure one another that they do not intend to fight each other. Hobbes’s concept of peace should be understood as referring to individuals’ relations characterized by known genuine peaceable dispositions. In this perspective, the Hobbesian peace should be taken to describe a condition of life grounded on genuine citizens’ moral disposition.

Besides, in *Leviathan* particularly, Hobbes does not regard the laws of nature as mere precepts of personal prudence but as genuine moral virtues and their doctrine as “the science of Virtue and Vice,” or the true moral philosophy. In other words, the Hobbesian laws of nature deal with the ethical conduct and character of citizens, and in this regard, they are genuinely “means of peaceable, sociable, and comfortable living.” Their ultimate purpose is to promote genuine peace, and not a mere semblance of peace. The very nature of these laws indicates that, for Hobbes, the notion of peace has nothing to do with a mere outward attitude. It rather refers to something deeper grounded in individuals’ inner disposition. Adherence to them makes the civil society a genuine commonwealth of mutual trust and not simply a mere collection of individuals pursuing their selfish ends. Though Hobbes holds that human beings are not born fit for society, he is nevertheless strongly convinced that “there is in mens aptness to Society;” that is, human beings can be trained, or educated, and develop qualities that create conditions of peace.

According to the second line of interpretation, Hobbesian peace should not be conceived as something external that is imposed on individuals. Rather, peace is described as a state of affairs that flows from moral qualities of the citizens; qualities cultivated through civic education. Hobbes’s call “to seek peace and follow it” should be taken as a call for every member of the civil association to develop “those qualities of mankind,” such as justice, gratitude, modesty, equity, mercy, facility to pardon etc., all “those qualities of man-kind, that

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132 *Leviathan*, XV, 40, 111.
133 Ibid.
134 Ibid., XV, 17, 106
concern their living together in Peace, and Unity.”

In short, like his notion of war, Hobbes’s notion of peace should be understood as having to do with individuals’ disposition and should be regarded as characterizing a specific nature of individuals’ relation with one another. In Hobbes, the underlying idea is that the achievement and maintenance of peace does not depend only upon the enforcement of the sovereign’s command, but requires the cooperation of everyone in the commonwealth. It is for this reason that particular attention is paid to the laws of nature, whose ultimate teaching seems to be that, in civil society, citizens should adopt the peace-oriented precepts of the laws of nature because they create and foster peaceful social and political environment that render possible the attainment of everyone’s good.

In Hobbes, there is what one may characterize as a “imperative of peace” that runs through all his moral and political philosophy. By “imperative of peace” should be understood the view according to which peace is not simply something enjoyable; it is also a value that compels people to adopt a certain type of behavior. In a strictly Hobbesian perspective, to have a genuine desire for peace is to have an imperative to act in such a way that creates and fosters the culture of peace. Paraphrasing Kant, the Hobbesian categorical imperative of peace requires that people act in such a way that the outcome of their actions contributes to creating and fostering the culture of peace.

2. 2. Peace And Safety

In the present conceptual elucidation of the Hobbesian notion of peace, it is worth mentioning first and foremost that, in Hobbes, the concept of safety is inseparably connected with that of peace, to the point that it makes almost no sense, in a strictly Hobbesian frame of

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135 Leviathan, XI, 1, 69.
thinking, to speak of safety without peace or peace without safety. However, though both peace and safety are directly obtained by the creation of the sovereign, the two concepts are not interchangeable or synonymous. Hobbes does not articulate very clearly the distinction between safety and peace, but his use of them in the following quotations indicates clearly that the notion of safety cannot simply be conflated in that of peace: “dominions were constituted for peace’s sake, and peace was sought after for safety’s sake; he who being placed in authority, shall use his power otherwise than to the safety of the people, will act against the reasons of peace,” 137 “to appoint one Man, or Assembly of men, to bear the Person; and every one to owne, and acknowledge himself to be the Author of whatsoever he that so beareth their Person, shall Act, or cause to be Acted, in those things which concerne the Common Peace and Safetie.” 138 The first quotation indicates clearly that, for Hobbes, peace and safety refer to two different notions; and their use in the second quotation confirms this interpretation. In the first quotation, peace is referred to as means conducive to safety. In other words, safety derives from peace, or it presupposes peace. 139 When Hobbes maintains that “dominions were constituted for peace’s sake, and peace was sought after for safety’s sake,” 140 he is clearly indicating that, in instituting the commonwealth, peace is not sought as an end in itself, but as a means conducive to a goal, which is the enjoyment of safety. Understood as absence of threats of war and conflict situations, peace must logically be achieved first for an individual to consider himself in the state of safety. Thus, in Hobbes’s view, peace is an effective means by which safety can be attained. Human beings need peace as a means for the realization of their safety, that is, for “their own

137 De Cive, XIII, 2.
138 Leviathan, XVII, 13, 120.
139 Barry Buzan holds the opposite view. For him, security is “a prior condition of peace than a consequence of it,” in People, States, and Fear. The National Security problem in International Relations (United States of America: The University of North Carolina Press, 1983), 2.
140 De Cive, XIII, 2.
preservation, and . . . a more contented life thereby.”¹⁴¹ Peace has an instrumental value, while safety enjoys the status of an end. In short, it can be said, on the one hand, that the concept of peace refers to a frame, or objective general conditions of life in which citizens can find safety or live contentedly. On the other hand, the concept of safety¹⁴² refers to a life that is characterized by the enjoyment of “the good things” that can be obtained thanks to peaceful framework of life. More precisely, the concept of safety includes both the idea of protection from danger, risk, or injury, and the idea of enjoyment of a more contented life.

2. 3. Hobbes’s Definition of Peace: All Other Time Is Peace

While Hobbes explicates what he means by safety,¹⁴³ he does not give any clear definition of what he means by peace. He extensively indicates rules that reason identifies as necessary for the promotion of peace, but he falls short of providing a clear definition of the concept of peace. To understand why there is no clear definition of peace in Hobbes, it is important to understand what he means by a definition. According to him, definitions are primary propositions used to “raise in the mind of the hearer perfect and clear ideas or conceptions of the things named, as when we define motion to be the leaving of the place, and the acquiring of another continually; for . . . at the hearing of that speech, there will come into the mind of the hearer an idea of motion clearer enough.”¹⁴⁴ A definition of a name is “nothing but the explication of that name by speech;”¹⁴⁵ and if what is to be defined is “the most universal in its kind, then the definition of it is to be made . . . by . . . circumlocution, as the best

¹⁴¹ *Leviathan*, XVII, 1.
¹⁴² The Hobbesian notion of safety will be more examined in chapter four.
¹⁴³ *The Elements of Law*, XXVIII, 1; *De Cive*, XIII, 4; *Leviathan*, XXX, 1, 231.
¹⁴⁴ *De Corpore*, VI, 13.
¹⁴⁵ Ibid., VI, 14.
explicateth the force of that name.”\textsuperscript{146} In other words, for Hobbes, a definition is a description of something in a way that makes certain that when we speak of the thing defined, it is clear to everyone in such a way that there is no misunderstanding at all. He goes on to maintain, a definition “takes away equivocation . . . For it is the nature of a definition that it defines, that is, that it determines the signification of the term defined and cuts it off from every signification other than what is contained in the definition.”\textsuperscript{147} This being said, the only place where Hobbes refers to his understanding of peace is where he provides his definition of war. In all passages of his three major political works where he defines war, he describes peace with similar formulations: in the \textit{Elements of Law}, he maintains, “the time which is not war is PEACE;”\textsuperscript{148} in \textit{De Cive}, “The time remaining is termed Peace;”\textsuperscript{149} and in \textit{Leviathan}, “All other time is PEACE.”\textsuperscript{150} Hobbes clearly wants his readers to understand the concept of war in a very specific way by providing its definition, when he leaves open the understanding of the concept of peace. All that the reader can learn about peace is that it refers to any time other than the time of war. In light of his explication of what a definition should be, his definition of peace should call for a little more explanation like in the case of war. In this regard, an investigation needs to be made in order to understand well what he means by peace when he describes it in terms of any time other than the time of war.

According to some commentators, by describing peace merely in terms of \textit{all other time} when the description of war does not apply, Hobbes regards peace not as something with positive qualities in itself, but simply as absence of war. However, the above analysis of war suggests that its antithesis, peace, must signify more than mere non outbreak of conflict.

\textsuperscript{146} \textit{De Corpore}, VI, 14.  
\textsuperscript{147} Ibid., VI, 15.  
\textsuperscript{148} \textit{Elements of Law}, XIV, 11.  
\textsuperscript{149} \textit{De Cive}, I, 12.  
\textsuperscript{150} \textit{Leviathan}, XIII, 8, 89.
Hobbes’s conception of peace must be more complex than it may look at first sight from the above characterizations. If peace is to be understood in reference to the concept of war, it clearly appears that his phrase “all other time” to describe peace requires further investigation. For, in Hobbes’s view, mere absence of war does not necessarily imply peace. This is clear in his description of states of affairs where the definition of war that he provides clearly does not apply, and yet he refuses to regard these states of affaires as peaceful. The first of these states of affairs concerns the type of relationship that exists between states. He maintains,

[I]n all times, Kings, and Persons of Soveraigne authority, because of their Independency, are in continual jealousies, and in the state and posture of Gladiators; having their weapon pointing, and their eyes fixed on one another; that is, their Forts, Garrisons, and Guns upon the Frontiers of their Kingdomes; and continual Spyes upon their neighbours; which is a posture of War.\textsuperscript{151}

The second state of affairs can be found in chapter XVIII of \textit{Leviathan}, where Hobbes maintains, “those men that are so remissely governed, that they dare take up Armes, to defend, or introduce an Opinion, are still in Warre; and their condition not Peace, but only a Cessation of Armes for feare of one another; and they live as it were, in the procincts of battaile continually.”\textsuperscript{152} These two quotations indicate clearly that, for Hobbes, the idea of non-outbreak of war does not necessarily imply peace. Although there is absence of actual fighting between neighboring kings, they are in “a posture of war,”\textsuperscript{153} and the mere “cessation of armes for feare of one another” does not necessarily mean peace. In Hobbes’s view, any state of affairs characterized by these sorts of hostile relationships is clearly a state of war. Thus, the idea of mere absence or non-

\textsuperscript{151} \textit{Leviathan}, XIII, 12, 90.
\textsuperscript{152} Ibid., XVIII, 9, 125.
\textsuperscript{153} Ibid, XIII, 12, 90.
outbreak of war is not only misleading, but seems also to be of no value for Hobbes, whom Bernard Gert names *prince of peace*.\(^{154}\)

If fear, anxiety for the future, struggle for survival, danger of violent death, hostile relationship are all characteristic features of war, then, peace, which is the antithesis of war, should be richer than what is commonly presented in terms of mere non-outbreak of war.

Speaking of things necessary to peace, Hobbes maintains,

\[\text{[I]t is necessary to Peace, that a man be so farre forth protected against the violence of others, that he may live securely, that is, that he may have no just cause to fear others, so long as he doth them no injury. Indeed, to make men altogether safe from mutuall harms, so as they cannot be hurt, or injuriou\text{\textperiodcentered}s kill’d, is impossible . . . But care may be had there be no just cause of fear.}\(^{155}\)

This quotation indicates that, for Hobbes, peace describes conditions of life in which there is “no just cause of fear.” In other words, the expression “All other time” used to describe peace should be taken to refer to all times when there is “no just cause of fear;” and the phrase “no just cause of fear” should be taken to mean that fear does not and should not enter into considerations of individuals as they plan for their lives and pursue their goals. This quotation indicates also clearly that Hobbes could not conceive of peace under conditions in which citizens, for whatever reason, have to fear for their lives. In Hobbes’s thought, whenever there is “just cause of feare”\(^{156}\) for one’s life, there is sufficient reason to engage in war and relapse in the condition of nature. It has been indicated above that Hobbesian men avert unnecessary violent death, poverty, mental distress, and many other calamities that can make life wearisome. In this regard, peace must refer to conditions in which these causes of fear are not dominating concerns of the people.


\(^{155}\) *De Cive*, VI. 3.

\(^{156}\) *Leviathan*, XIV, 27, 98.
In contrast to war, the Hobbesian peace must be the qualifier of a frame of life within which people can pursue their ends. It must refer to an environment of life in which citizens have reason to hope to attain their ends. In the passage quoted above where Hobbes maintains, “Governments were formed for the sake of peace,” he is actually contending that civil government is the most effective means to create the condition of peace by which life can be preserved. Hence, an adequate side by side reconstruction of the contrast that Hobbes presents between the state of war and civil society as peaceful frame of life can give some indication to better understand what Hobbes has in mind when he describes peace in terms of “all other time.” If the state of nature is a condition of war “of every man, against every man,” civil society is a place where people are united for “mutuall ayd against their enemies abroad.” If the state of nature is a condition of life where “there is no place for Industry; because the fruit thereof is uncertain,” civil society is a frame in which individuals live in such way as “by their owne industrie, and by the fruit of the Earth, they may nourish themselves and live contentedly.” If the state of nature is a condition of life where “The notions of Right and Wrong, Justice and Injustice have no place. Where . . . Force, and Fraud are . . . the two Cardinall virtues,” civil society is a frame within which people live according to the “Law of the Gospell; Whatsoever you require that others should do to you, that do ye to them.” On reading these passages in which Hobbes describes the type of life that civil association is to provide to its members, it is very clear that, in his view, peace as “all other time” involves precisely the absence of any credible expectation of violence or threat against one’s life. The phrase “all other time” refers to

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157 *Leviathan*, XIII, 8, 88.
158 Ibid., XVII, 13, 120-121.
159 Ibid., XIII, 9, 89.
160 Ibid., XVII, 13, 120.
161 Ibid., XIII, 13, 90.
162 Ibid., XIV, 5, 92.
all times favorable to the promotion of a contented life, and during which the probability of war is far away.

The phrase “all other time” can be adequate to describe the notion of peace as absence of war if it is taken to mean that no expectation of violence or threat enters into the considerations of the citizens as they go about their regular business for the achievement of a more contented life. This interpretation is in accord with Hobbes’s explication of “safety” in *Leviathan* where he emphasizes that every citizen should be able to pursue his felicity “without danger,” that is, without fear of threat of any kind. Thus, when Hobbes refers to peace in terms of any time other than the time of war, his very definition of war should make the reader understand that when he speaks of peace, he is not simply referring to the mere negation of a state of war, but to a more resourceful condition of life, a living environment where there is no credible expectation of violence or threat against one’s life.

2. 4. Peace And Hope

As mentioned above, Hobbes places human desire for peace at the very foundation of political society. As prerequisite for the attainment of safety and the enjoyment of a more contented life, the Hobbesian peace refers to a living environment in which natural human impulse to good can actually be fulfilled. In the preceding section, it has been argued that the Hobbesian concept of war refers to any context of life in which there is no hope of planning for the fulfillment of one’s desires; any condition in which the possibility of pursuing one’s desires is uncertain, and where there is not much hope of obtaining things “necessary to commodious living.”\(^\text{163}\) If, in Hobbes’s view, war is regarded as evil because it hinders the realization of individual’s felicity, peace should be regarded as good because it gives people reasonable hope

\(^{163}\) *Leviathan*, XIII, 14, 90.
to pursue their ends and to achieve their felicity. This idea of peace as a good merits further clarification.

It is Hobbes’s general and well-known view that, in this life, there is no objective good that human beings agree upon. In all of his major political works, including *De Homine*, he is consistent that good is relative to person, place, and time. He seems to be consistent in his view according to which “*Good*, and *Evill*, are names that signifie our Appetites, and Aversions; which in different tempers, customs, and doctrines of men, are different.” As he puts it in *Leviathan*, “there is no such *Finis ultimus*, (utmost ayme) nor *Summum Bonum*, (greatest Good) as is spoken of in the Book of the old Morall Philosophers.” In *De Homine*, he maintains similar view that good is relative to person, place, and time. Thus, for Hobbes, each individual’s idea of good is peculiarly his own. There is no idea of good that is indiscriminately applicable to every person all the time in every place and condition.

In *De Homine*, however, Hobbes provides a definition of good as “that which all men desire.” It is legitimate, therefore, to maintain that he would not provide such a definition of good if he did not acknowledge that there exist some things that are good for everyone. Thus, Hobbes’s view that there is nothing that can be regarded as an objective good for everyone should not be taken absolutely. While he does not accept the idea of something objective as good upon which all human beings agree upon universally, by giving such a definition of good in absolute terms (that which all men [without exception] desire), he seems to acknowledge that there are things that are good for everybody without qualification. In the first chapter, it has been noted that, in Hobbes’s view, life is a good pursued by every human being. In addition to life as

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164 *Leviathan*, XV, 40, 110. See similar formulations in *Elements of Law*, VII, 3; *De Cive*, III, 31; *De Homine*, XI, 4.
165 Ibid., XI, 1, 70; see also *The Elements of Law*, VII, 7.
166 *De Homine*, XI, 4.
167 Ibid., II, 4.
the primary human good, Hobbes affirms also clearly that “All men agree on this, that Peace is Good.”¹⁶⁸ In his view, peace as objective conditions of life is a social good that all men, as long as they are rational, desire. Every human being desires to live in peace. Unlike any other good, peace is not the kind of thing whose goodness is relative to person, place, and time. It is not the kind of good that can be praised now and blamed later by the same individual, or be regarded as good by one individual and bad by another at the same time. For Hobbes, peace is not counted among things whose goodness depends on “tempers, customes, and doctrines of men.”¹⁶⁹ Peace is the overriding good that all men agree on.

Since the concept of war is used to describe a hopeless condition of paralyzing fear, its antithesis, peace, describes the social condition of hope; a condition in which the fruit of individuals’ activities is certain, and that individuals have reason to believe that they can realize their ideas of good. If the duty of the sovereign is to secure people “in such sort, as that by their owne industrie, and by the fruites of the Earth, they may nourish themselves and live contentedly,”¹⁷⁰ then, to consider oneself in the condition of security, is to have reasons to pursue and to hope to achieve one’s idea of good. Hence, the sovereign fulfills his duty to secure the safety of the people by promoting conditions of life within which people are empowered to achieve their personal idea of good. He fulfills this duty by creating conditions that give to the people reasons to hope to fulfill their desires now and in the future. The key word here is hope, which Hobbes characterizes as “Appetite with an opinion of attaining.”¹⁷¹ In other words, an individual can be said to have hope when he perceives an object that he wants and has good reasons to believe that he can acquire it. Perception and evaluation of the conditions necessary

¹⁶⁸ *Leviathan*, XV, 40, 111.
¹⁶⁹ Ibid., XV, 40, 110.
¹⁷⁰ Ibid., XVII, 13, 120.
¹⁷¹ Ibid., VI, 14, 41.
for a successful action are what brings hope. In the *Elements of Law*, Hobbes provides a definition of hope by contrasting it with fear: “Hope is expectation of good to come, as fear is the expectation of evil.”¹⁷² In other words, in Hobbes, the notion of hope entails necessarily the expectation of a good, and that of fear the expectation of an evil, in the sense that to say to hope for an evil or to fear a good is a contradiction in terms.

In Hobbes’s thought, the necessary condition to have reasonable hope for a successful action is only the condition of peace. The hope to see the fulfillment of one’s desires is possible only in a peaceful condition, made available by the sovereign. Only a peaceful condition of life opens to the possibility of planning for the achievement of one’s desires. In Hobbes’s view, peace is necessary not simply because it secures individual survival, but also because it gives each individual the opportunity to pursue and the hope to attain felicity. Thus, a condition of peace is a state of affairs in which necessary conditions for “a continuall progresse of the desire”¹⁷³ are available to the individual.

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¹⁷² *Elements of Law*, IX, 8.
¹⁷³ *Leviathan*, XI, 1, 70. Continual progress of desire is Hobbes’s definition of human felicity in *Leviathan*; in the *Elements of Law* VII, 7, he uses the term prospering.
1. A Preliminary Note

Hobbes regards political society as an association in which one individual or an assembly has not only the entire right to rule over all others, but also the duty to rule in a specific way. A close reading of Hobbes’s major political writings shows that one of the questions he is trying to answer is who should possess political power and how this power should be used. This question bears great importance for Hobbes because disagreements and controversies surrounding this question do not remain confined at the level of ideas but may lead very likely to civil war. In his preface to the De Cive, Hobbes refers clearly to such disagreements and controversies as forerunners of the English war. As he puts it, “my Country some few yeares before the civill Warres did rage, was boiling hot with questions concerning the rights of Dominion, and the obedience due from Subjects, the true forerunners of an approaching War.”

Thus, the notions of the safety of the people and of commodious living are intrinsically related to the question of who should rule the commonwealth and how.

According to Hobbes, a commonwealth should be ruled by an absolute sovereign because a commonwealth with divided powers will necessarily lead to war. Civil peace and security can be assured only by the creation of an absolute sovereign. More precisely, civil peace and security require, as their condition of possibility, a political ruler with absolute power in all matters ethical, religious and political. Clearly Hobbes advocates for an absolute sovereign, but the big question to ask is, how to interpret this absolutism? This question will be addressed.

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1 De Cive, Preface to the Reader, 35-36.
2 Leviathan, XVIII, 16, 127.
below, but the main object of this chapter is to explore valuable ways in which political power has to be exercised if the safety and welfare of the people are to be the end or the supreme law.

In his theory of the state, Hobbes’s main intention, as he clearly expressed in the conclusion of the second part of *Leviathan*, is to instruct his readers “both how to govern, and how to obey.” 3 Most commentators believe that Hobbes’s main project is to provide grounds for political authority in the state and, hence, the justification for civic obedience. In this regard, his primary addressee is the people who need to understand the grounds for their duty to the public authority. However, in hoping that readers of his work will “learn thereby how to govern, and how to obey,” Hobbes is clearly indicating that his political discourse is directed to both the political authority and the people.

In his dedicatory epistle to *Leviathan*, Hobbes maintains that his discourse does not concern private individuals but “the Seat of Power;” 4 and in the introduction of the same work, he clearly indicates that his primary addressee is the individual “that is to govern a whole Nation [. . .]” 5 because “things that weaken, or tend to the dissolution of a commonwealth” 6 come sometimes “out of ignorance of what is necessary to the office they [Kings] undertake.” 7 Another passage that supports the idea that his political discourse is primarily directed to the ruler is found in *Leviathan* where he clearly formulates his hope in the following terms, “I recover some hope, that at one time or other, this writing of mine may fall into the hands of a Sovereign, who will consider it himself . . . and by the exercise of entire Sovereignty . . . convert this Truth of

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3 *Leviathan*, XXXI, 41, 254.
4 Ibid., The Epistle Dedicatory, 3.
5 Ibid., Introduction, 11.
6 Ibid., XXIX (the title of the chapter).
7 Ibid., XXIX, 3, 222.
Speculation into the Utility of Practice." He gives hint of this hope at the end of the introduction of *Leviathan*, where he emphatically maintains,

> He that is to govern a whole Nation, must read in himself, not this, or that particular man; but Man-kind: which though it be hard to do, harder than to learn any language, or Science; yet, when I shall have set down my own reading orderly, and perspicuously, the pains left another, will be only to consider, if he also find not the same in himself.

In the same line of thought, it can also be argued that Hobbes analysis of human nature is intended not only to argue that conflict and disorder rise inexorably in the absence of a common power, but also to indicate to the ruler how to govern well a human association, and what is needed to enhance peace and to secure safety. His analysis of human nature is intended to supply the ruler with necessary knowledge for keeping *the race of life* going on without collision. The following passage from *De Cive* supports such a reading: “For were the nature of humane Actions as distinctly knowne, as the nature of *Quantity* in Geometricall Figures, the strength of *Avarice* and *Ambition* . . . would presently faint and languish; And Mankinde would enjoy such an Immortall Peace, that . . .there would hardly be left any pretence for war.”

To put it differently, a good knowledge of human nature by those who are in the position of authority is crucially important for people to live in a lasting condition of peace. Thus, in his theory of the state, Hobbes is not simply preoccupied to instruct people how to be good citizens, but mostly to instruct holders of the political power not only how to make people governable but also how skillfully and excellently to govern them.

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8 *Leviathan*, XXXI, 41, 254.
9 Ibid., Introduction, 11.
10 This refers to Hobbes’s own comparison of human life to a race in the *Elements of Law*, IX, 21.
This chapter focuses on Hobbes’s views of the importance of well governing the state according to its end. The focal point will be Hobbes’s views related to the holder of the political power as the primary addressee. Given the importance that he accords to the question of how to govern a political society, the question guiding this chapter can be formulated as follows: how are the human desires for self-preservation and contented life related to the political responsibility of the sovereign? To put it differently, what are Hobbes’s views on how to rule a commonwealth that must serve its fundamental purpose as reliably and effectively as the human desires for self-preservation and commodious living require?

2. Hobbes And Aristotle Or The Strong vs. The Virtuous

2.1. The Virtuous

One of Hobbes’s goals in his theory of the state is to clarify the nature and the function of the political authority. In order to bring into relief his views on this clarification, it is helpful to use as a foil Aristotle’s views regarding the principle of rulership. In so proceeding, my purpose will not be to read Hobbes’s views through Aristotle’s, or to suggest any assessment of Hobbes’s insights in reference to Aristotle’s. Taking into consideration Hobbes’s vehement rejection of Aristotle’s philosophy or, according to Leo Strauss, some aspects of Aristotle, any attempt to read Hobbes through Aristotle would be inappropriate.

Although some commentators maintain that in his moral doctrine “Hobbes is closer to Aristotle than he realizes,” according to Hobbes himself, Aristotle’s political philosophy is “not onely Vain, but also Pernicious to the Publique State.” He generally regards Aristotelian philosophy as responsible for providing nonsense concepts that some people use as a weapon to

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13 *Leviathan*, XLVI, 32, 469.
frighten citizens “from Obeying the Laws of their Countrey.”¹⁴ In Hobbes’s view, “the babbling philosophy of Aristotle . . . serves only to breed disaffectation, dissension, and finally sedition and civil war.”¹⁵ He goes on to maintain, “I believe that scarce any thing can be more absurdly said in naturall Philosophy, than that which is now called Aristotles Metaphysiques; nor more repugnant to Government, than much of that hee hath said in his Politiques; nor more ignorantly, than a great part of his Ethiques.”¹⁶

Beyond his rejection of Aristotle’s philosophy in particular, it is Hobbes’s strong conviction that true knowledge of our present world cannot be found in the books of the ancients. In *Leviathan*, he maintains, “to forsake his own naturall judgment, and be guided by generall sentences read in Authors, and subject to many exceptions, is a signe of folly.”¹⁷ This quotation confirms Hobbes’s well known effort to present himself as a free and independent thinker who seeks to ground his theory solely on right reason and direct observation of the world. Thus, to avoid any misreading and distortion, or any temptation to read Hobbes through Aristotle, all the focus will be on Hobbes as a freestanding and independent thinker. Aristotle’s views on the principle of rulership will be used only to help point out Hobbes’s views on the nature and function of the political authority.¹⁸

At the end of *Nicomachean Ethics*, Aristotle remarks that the question of why some “states are well administered and others not”¹⁹ is first and foremost a question of the type of constitution that governs the state. The function of the constitution is to provide “the organization of offices in a state, and [to determine] . . . what is to be the governing body, and

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¹⁴ *Leviathan*, XLVI, 18, 465.
¹⁵ *Behemoth*, 95.
¹⁶ *Leviathan*, XLVI, 11, 461-462.
¹⁷ Ibid., V, 22, 37.
¹⁸ It is important to mention that my intention here is not to offer any exhaustive analysis of Aristotle’s views on rulership, but simply to indicate his major and fundamental lines of thought relative to political rulership.
what is the end of each community.”

20 In other words, according to Aristotle, the question of well governing a state is first a question of determining the best possible way in which a state should be organized, who should rule and who should be ruled. By the best possible way should be understood a way that promotes as much as possible the good life of the citizens. In his investigation, Aristotle concludes that the best form of government is “that which is administered by the best, and in which there is one man, or a whole family, or many persons, excelling all the others together in virtue, and both rulers and subjects are fitted, the one to rule, the other to be ruled, in such a manner as to attain the most eligible life.”

21 In other words, according to Aristotle, “they should rule who are able to rule best,” and to rule best one needs to be an individual of outstanding virtue.

22 For Aristotle, the question of well governing the state is intrinsically related to the question of the type of constitution that governs the state. In the best state, a constitution represents the embodiment of justice. In order to govern according to the natural end of the state, the ruler must not only surpass all others in virtue, but must also be guided by considerations of justice. Aristotle regards “deviation from justice” as the most destabilizing factor and the cause of the downfall of a state. In his view, justice is the order of the best state, and to be guided by considerations of justice means not only to promote the good life of the citizens but mostly to assign to each person a task that fits him best in political society. Hence, the best constitution must have two essential characteristics: (1) it must enjoin the ruler to govern for “the common interest,” in the sense of promoting happiness of the citizens and not of himself only; and (2) it

20 Politics, IV, 1, 1289a, 15-17, translated by Benjamin Jowett, in The Basic Works of Aristotle.
21 Ibid., III, 18, 1288a, 35-39.
22 Ibid., II, 11, 1273b, 5.
23 Ibid., V, 7, 1307a, 5-7.
24 Ibid., III, 7, 1279a, 29-30.
must require that political authority be assigned on the basis of merit, that is, to the best person, to an individual or group of individuals who are outstanding in moral virtue.

In short, with regard to political rule in Aristotle, the first and fundamental element to be taken into consideration is that there are individuals who are “natural ruler” and who should govern over the other members of the state. Only the individual or a group of individuals outstanding in virtue possess the capacity for political rule.

In the Politics, Aristotle begins his inquiry into the best form of a state with the question, what is the most eligible life? He regards this question as of crucial importance and indicates clearly that the question of the best way of ruling a state is intrinsically connected with the best way of life that the government or the ruler is supposed to promote. In other words, for Aristotle, governing a state well can be evaluated only in reference to the possibility for the people to attain the most choice-worthy possible way of life. The criterion by which we can determine if a state is well governed consists in looking at whether or not the state enables its members to live the most eligible life. For, the proper goal of the best government, the one that is “in accordance with our aspirations,” is to create a social and political order “in which every man, whoever he is, can act best and live happily.” The big question then is, what is the most choice-worthy life that the ruler has to promote?

Aristotle presents the city as a political community for the sake of a “self-sufficing life, by which we mean a happy and honourable life.” According to him, happiness is the

26 Ibid., III, 17, 1288a, 15-34.
27 Ibid., VII, 1, 1323a, 14-15.
28 Ibid., IV, 1, 1288b, 23. In some translations, the phrase “in accordance with our aspirations” is literally translated by “according to prayer.” The idea behind these two different translations seems to be the same: things we seek in accordance to our aspirations or things we pray for are those we desire the most. Thus what Aristotle seems to refer to is the type of government every human being would long for.
29 Ibid., VII, 2, 1324a, 24-25.
30 Ibid., III, 9, 1281a, 41-42.
highest aspiration for every human being;\textsuperscript{31} it is the highest human good. The Aristotelian notion of human happiness is complex and rich in meaning, but it includes essentially ethical life.\textsuperscript{32} However, to live a genuine happy life is to live a self-sufficient life, which includes also an adequate level of external goods, that is, material equipment necessary for the exercise of virtue.\textsuperscript{33} In Aristotle’s view, among all kinds of ways of life a human being can embrace, “a life guided by intelligence is the best and most pleasant for man, inasmuch as intelligence, above all else, is man. Consequently, this kind of life is the happiest.”\textsuperscript{34} In other words, the happiest human life, or the most eligible life we seek to attain in the state, is a life that ultimately involves intellectual virtue.

In conclusion, for Aristotle, the most choice-worthy life is that which is informed by virtues. In this regard, the goal of the political authority is to secure the life of virtue for the individual members of the city. The most that can be expected from the ruler in his exercise of political power is to secure the achievement of life of virtue for the citizens. In Aristotle’s view, virtue or excellence is the primary justification for political rule. To rule a state, one needs to be an individual outstanding in virtue; and to rule according to our most fundamental aspiration is to encourage the promotion of ethical and intellectual virtues in individual members of the state. In other words, the art of well governing a state depends mainly on the moral quality of the ruler, who has to govern in a way that enables citizens to be virtuous and to attain the most desirable life. What is important to point out in Aristotle’s principle of rulership is the connection between the moral qualities of the ruler with the possibility of attaining the most desirable life. From an Aristotelian perspective, the best state is a political community whose order depends on the

\textsuperscript{31} \textit{Nicomachean Ethics}, I, 7, 1097a, 35-1097b, 1
\textsuperscript{32} Ibid., X, 6, 1177a, 1-2.
\textsuperscript{33} Ibid., I, 8, 1099a, 31-1099b, 8.
\textsuperscript{34} Ibid., X, 7, 1178a, 6-8.
quality of the individual or group of individuals who are in the position of authority. The best form of government is a sort of reflection of the excellence of the ruler, and in this regard, it is a government that makes possible the attainment of the happiest life, which is ethical life guided by prudence (phronesis) which, at any rate, is both an intellectual and ethical virtue.

2. 2. The Strong

2. 2. 1. A Despotic Rule Or The Pseudo-Hobbes

It has been indicated in the previous chapter that the leading idea in the Hobbesian theory of the state is the insecurity or the threat of anarchy that results from the dissolution of political authority. This insecurity concerns, first of all, one’s life, which Hobbes regards as the greatest of all goods; second, livelihoods, whose want represents one of the greatest evils that make life wearisome; and last, freedom of motion which every human being expects to enjoy while living in society. In Hobbes, the fear of insecurity is the element that explains the centrality of the notion of the safety of the people, and in light of which one should understand his views related to the art of governing a state.

In reference to this leading idea, one of the answers to the question guiding this chapter, and that is usually attributed to Hobbes, is that the sovereign should rule the commonwealth despotically. Hobbes is interpreted as arguing that for the sovereign to be effective in the exercise of his office, all that is needed is to enforce obedience through coercion and threat of punishment. In other words, peace and safety are secured through the imposition of a despotic rule over the people. This is what explains why much of critical literature on Hobbes

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35 In the first chapter, I mentioned the importance of the concept of motion in Hobbes, and presented a picture of human beings as planets in constant motion. This picture is also fundamental in Hobbes’s views on how to govern a commonwealth. In a strictly Hobbesian perspective, a good government is the one that promotes and enhances genuine freedom of motion.
emphasizes his view of the holder of political power as a mighty individual, inspiring fear and compulsion, and from whose command there is no appeal.

Although Hobbes has the reputation of being the great theorist of absolutism, or a defender of authoritarianism, exactly how to understand his authoritarianism is a question much debated among commentators. There is no agreement on the proper interpretation of Hobbes’s authoritarianism. Speaking of the Hobbesian sovereign, Richard A. Matthew offers a description that person’s passions are expressed as law. For example, if the person representing the sovereign had a passion for the color green, and commanded that everyone wear green, this would then be law. For the subject, such a command is not simply sovereign X’s idiosyncratic desire. It has the status of law and is thus impersonal and irrefutable: in this world my welfare depends on wearing green, in much the same way as it depends on breathing.36

According to Richard Matthew, in the Hobbesian state, peace and safety require that individual members obey any command of the sovereign, including commands dictated by the sovereign’s whims and natural passions. A similar negative picture of the Hobbesian sovereign is offered by Blits in his study of the concept of fear in Hobbes. Speaking of the importance of fear in maintaining peace in the Hobbesian state, Blits maintains, “in order to establish and maintain civil society, men’s common fear of the sovereign must be made to overpower their mutual fear of one another.”37 In other word, for peace to be maintained and safety to be secured, individual members must fear the political authority more than anything else.

In his work Behemoth teaches Leviathan, Geoffrey Vaughan rejects such an interpretation and observes, “[i]f one fears the sovereign more than one fears others in the state of nature, and this because there is a great need to fear the sovereign, then civil society is more

intolerable than the state of nature.”  

In the same line of thought, Schmitt denounces the wrong picture often attributed to Hobbes and which portrays people living in a state as “poor human beings fleeing in total fear from the state of nature into the fear of a Moloch or a Golem.”  

The paradox that is often pointed out in such a reading of Hobbes is that, as the state of nature disappears with its chaotic conditions of life, the sovereign appears as a new source of threat against the individual. In other words, Hobbes begins his theory of the state with the chaotic condition of nature and ends up with the most repressive political system. In his theory of the state, all that he had to do was to substitute one form of insecurity for another form that is even greater and more dreadful than the previous one.

To the line of interpretation that attributes to Hobbes the view that the sovereign should rule despotically, there are important questions to ask. The first is, can such a reading be supported by Hobbes’s work taken as a whole? The second question is, when Hobbes argues in favor of the absolutism of the sovereign’s power, does he advocate for despotism, authoritarianism, or tyranny? And finally, what mode of governing does Hobbes really recommend in his theory of the state?

As response to the first question, it is very striking to read in Behemoth Hobbes’s claim regarding the source of political authority, in a statement that he makes in the form of an absolute truth: “The power of the mighty hath no foundation but in the opinion and belief of the

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38 Geoffrey M. Vaughan, Behemoth Teaches Leviathan. Hobbes On Political Education (Lenham: Lexington Books, 2002), 59. In the first chapter, I have indicated that, in his argument, Hobbes’s premise is clearly that subjects fear one another more than they fear the sovereign (see the subsection 5.2. Safety from An Insecure Condition of Violence). Thus, I am at odds with Blits’ reading, and in accord with Vaughan’s line of interpretation.

39 Carl Schmitt, The Leviathan in the State Theory of Thomas Hobbes. Meaning and Failure of a Political Symbol (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2008), 96. Schmitt’s remark refers also to Locke’s objection against Hobbes when he maintains, “are men so foolish that they take care to avoid what mischiefs may be done them by polecats or foxes, but are content, nay think it safety, to be devoured by lions?” (John Locke, Second Treatise of Civil Government, edited by Gough, Blackwell, 1948), 46.
people.\textsuperscript{40} This idea is echoed in \textit{Leviathan} where Hobbes calls for a well governing of people’s opinion, because human actions follow not from the fear of the sword but from the idea that people have in their minds.\textsuperscript{41} A close reading of \textit{Leviathan} reveals his strong conviction that if people have a negative opinion of their ruler, the latter will lose all of his strength and power, and the commonwealth will disintegrate.\textsuperscript{42} No wonder why Hobbes ascribes to the sovereign the task to judge what opinions are averse and what are conducive to peace.\textsuperscript{43} This view of Hobbes is remarkably represented on the title-page of \textit{Leviathan}, as Howard Warrender explains it,

\begin{quote}
The remarkable title-page of \textit{Leviathan} shows the state as a huge and awesome military figure; yet he is made up of and supported by a multitude of small men. No one saw more clearly than Hobbes the peculiar and transitory nature of political power. It is ultimately power over men’s minds, and if the small men for some reason withdraw their support, the whole edifice collapses. Indeed \textit{Leviathan} was written to enlist the continuance of such support.\textsuperscript{44}
\end{quote}

In other words, it is not the terror of the sword but the ability to captivate the people’s mind that gives to the political authority its irresistible power.\textsuperscript{45} Hobbes knows quite well that “men that are once possessed of an opinion, that their obedience to the Soveraign Power, will bee more hurtfull to them, that their disobedienc, will disobey the laws, and thereby overthrow the Common-wealth, and introduce confusion, and Civill war; for the avoiding whereof, all Civill

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\textsuperscript{40} \textit{Behemoth}, 16.
\textsuperscript{41} \textit{Leviathan}, XVIII, 9, 124.
\textsuperscript{42} Recent political changes in Arab world have just confirmed this view of Hobbes. Although people lived under dictatorships for decades, once they realized that they are the true source of political power, all those dreadful regimes collapsed as a house of cards. It is because he strongly believes that actions follow from opinions people have in mind that Hobbes regards civic education as absolutely necessary if the sovereign is to fulfill his duty. The ultimate goal of civic education is precisely to create subjects with civic character and right opinions.
\textsuperscript{43} \textit{Leviathan}, XVIII, 9, 124.
\textsuperscript{45} It is important to mention here that, as Howard Warrender points out, according to Hobbes, irresistible power obliges, but a close reading of his texts indicates that only God has such power. Even though the power of the sovereign is so great, Hobbes indicates that there will always be individuals who will try to resist it for some reason or another. Hence, civic education that teaches the people the grounds of their obedience is really the key for civil peace.
Government was ordained.”⁴⁶ In Behemoth, he also maintains, “if men know not their duty, what is there that can force them to obey the laws? An army, you will say. But what shall force the army?”⁴⁷ In the passage that will be quoted below from Liberty, Necessity, and Chance, Hobbes clearly affirms that people can choose rather to die than to live under a conqueror who rules without their consent. These textual evidences, among many others, suffice to indicate clearly that, for Hobbes, ruling despotically is not the right answer because no ruler can ever possess enough coercive power to generate sufficient fear to compel his subjects to civic obedience.

With regard to the second question, it is very important to point out that, in De Cive, Hobbes speaks of what he regards as the two “rocks” against which stumble individuals living in a state, and that he is trying to prevent in his political philosophy: “either by too much obedience to the civil authority we become stubborn against the divine Majesty; or for fear of sinning against God we run into disobedience against the civil power.”⁴⁸ This concern is echoed in the dedicatory epistle of Leviathan when he remarks, “I know not how the world will receive it, nor how it may reflect on those that seem to favour it. For in a way beset with those that contend, on one side for too great Liberty, and on the other side for too much authority, ’tis hard to pass between the points of both unwounded.”⁴⁹ Hobbes goes even farther to maintain that “if the command [of the sovereign] be such, as cannot be obeyed, without being damned to Eternall Death, it were madness to obey it.”⁵⁰ These are nevertheless strange remarks from someone who is commonly labeled as a defender of authoritarianism. These remarks indicate that Hobbes does not intend to advocate for too much authority that demands unquestioning obedience and

⁴⁶ Leviathan, XLII, 67, 372. This quotation indicates also the importance, in Hobbes’s view, of fashioning people’s opinion and conduct through civic education. As I have already indicated, for Hobbes, the purpose of civic education is to bring people to understand that their obedience to the sovereign is more beneficial than hurtful.
⁴⁷ Behemoth, 59.
⁴⁸ De Cive XV, 1. See also Leviathan, XLIII, 1-2, 402-403.
⁴⁹ Leviathan, Dedicatory Epistle.
⁵⁰ Ibid., XLIII, 2, 403.
commands anything it pleases. Rather, in offering his theory of the state, his intention is “to pass between the points of both [too great liberty and too much authority] unwounded.”

With regard to the question related to the mode of governing, it is worth mentioning Hobbes’s warning to the sovereign: when people believe “that their obedience to the sovereign power, will bee more hurtfull to them, that their disobedience, [they] will disobey the Laws, and thereby overthrow the Common-wealth, and introduce confusion, and Civill war.” In light of this remark, the very idea of ruling despotically and whimsically as Matthew’s description suggests is far from being Hobbesian. In relation to “those things that concern . . . the ease, and benefit the Subjects may enjoy,” Hobbes regards as the best counsel to the sovereign the one that “is taken from the general information, and complaints of the People of each Province, who are best acquainted with their own wants.” He insists that such a counsel is “to be diligently taken notice of.” A recommendation to listen to the “complaints of people of each province” is clearly at odds with a despotic mode of governing a state.

The most important mode of ruling to point out in Hobbes is that ruling a state contrary to or by any means other than law is illegitimate. One of important aspects of the Hobbesian theory of the state is the commitment to a rules-oriented mode of governing. In the first section of the second chapter of the present study, it has been indicated that the primary feature of the condition of war is that of being a lawless condition of life. For Hobbes, an unregulated frame of life is an extremely unpleasant condition of life, and one of the tasks attached to the office of the sovereign is to enforce the laws of nature. The sovereign has the
absolute power to legislate, and whatever law he produces with the purpose of maintaining peace and securing the safety of the people is by definition just. However, Hobbes is not committed to arguing that the ruler has the absolute power in the state to produce laws out of arbitrary impulse. He must produce intelligible law, in conformity with the laws of nature, whose content is not created by the sovereign but “found out by Reason.” Hobbes never says that laws of nature are whatever the sovereign wants them to be. His main argument is rather that the sovereign validates the laws of nature as part of the civil law, that is, he enforces them, and whatever law he produces must be in accordance with laws of nature. Hobbes maintains also that it belongs “[t]o the care of the Soveraign” to make good laws; and “[a] good Law is that, which is Needfull, for the Good of the People, and withal Perspicuous.” He goes on to maintain, “Unnecessary Lawes are not good Lawes; but trapps for Mony: which where the right of the Soveraign Power is acknowledged, are superfluous; and where it is not acknowledged, unsufficient to defend the People.” For Hobbes, all the commands of the sovereign “are to be esteemed good or evil by their causes and usefulness in reference to the commonwealth.” Thus, in a strictly Hobbesian perspective, although laws are the will of the sovereign, they do not result from natural inclinations and passions of the sovereign; their content is deduced from the laws of nature; and their goodness, needfulness, and necessity are defined by reference to the good of the people.

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55 It is important to mention that, for Hobbes, all of the actions of the sovereign are just simply because the notion of justice is exclusively determined in reference to the law, which is nothing but the will of the sovereign. The sovereign cannot be unjust because justice consists in obeying his will; the evaluation of what is just rests not on any transcendent authority but exclusively on the sovereign’s will. The sovereign’s actions cannot be unjust, but they can be iniquitous as breach of the laws of nature and sin against God.

56 *Leviathan* XIV, 3, 91.

57 Ibid., XXX, 20, 239.

58 Ibid., XXX, 21, 240.

59 *Behemoth*, 220.
2. 2. 2. Consent and Artificial Preeminence

As mentioned above, the big question to answer in this chapter is how to rule a state in a way that meets the human fundamental desire for self-preservation and a more contented life. To point out the inadequacy of despotic answer to this question, it is useful also to address the ontologically prior question of what is a political association for Hobbes. More precisely, when Hobbes speaks of the institution of the political association, what kind of frame of life does he have in mind? Before answering this question, we must first recall Hobbes’s well-known disagreement with Aristotle regarding excellence, as or virtue, the criterion for holding political authority. As he clearly puts it,

I know that Aristotle in the first booke of his Politiques, for a foundation of his doctrine, maketh men by Nature, some more worthy to Command, meaning the wiser sort (such as he thought himselfe to be for his philosophy;) others to Serve (meaning those that had strong bodies, but were not Philosophers as he;) as if Master and Servant were not introduced by consent of men, but by difference of Wit: which is not only against reason; but also against experience.\(^60\)

In Hobbes’s view, since “[n]ature hath made men so equall, in the faculties of body, and mind,”\(^61\) there can be no natural authority. In other words, no political authority can justify his rule by the superiority of his nature to the rest of the society. To claim to rule because of the excellence of one’s nature “is not only against reason; but also against experience.”\(^62\)

For Hobbes, the state is not just a raw fact of nature. It is not something founded in nature. It is essentially man-made, an artifact brought to existence for a specific purpose. In all of his three aforementioned major political works, Hobbes presents two ways in which a

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\(^{60}\) *Leviathan*, XV, 21, 107.

\(^{61}\) Ibid., XIII, 1, 86.

\(^{62}\) Ibid., XV, 21, 107.
commonwealth can be established, either by acquisition or conquest, or by institution. In his view, these two kinds of commonwealth are equally legitimate. Where they differ is that in a commonwealth by acquisition, individuals contract with the conqueror to obey him in exchange for life and security, while in a commonwealth by institution individuals contract with each other to make the ruler the third-party beneficiary of their agreement to give up the exercise of some of their natural rights as long as they are protected. Although the two kinds of commonwealth are equally legitimate, in this section and throughout the present study, we are principally concerned with the Hobbesian state in the sense of a commonwealth by institution; and the reason is that, as Martinich maintains, the commonwealth by institution presents the essence of government more clearly than the commonwealth by acquisition. Besides, the centrality of the notion of authorization in Hobbes’s political argument indicates clearly that his primary theoretical form of the political authority is the one that arises from a covenant between two parties for fear of one another, in such a way as each party declares, “I Authorize and give up my Right of Governing my selfe, to this Man, or to this Assembly of men.” The sovereign who is thus created is regarded as both a third non-covenanting party and a beneficiary of the covenant. This is one of the key ideas of Hobbes’s conception of the sovereign.

63 Elements of Law, XIX, 11; De Cive, V, 12; Leviathan, XVII, 15, 121.
64 A. P. Martinich, Hobbes (New York: Routledge, 2005), 125. One of the difficulties, some would say inconsistency, with Hobbes’s view on the commonwealth by acquisition is that the covenant at the origin of the commonwealth is made between the people and the sovereign, making the sovereign both a beneficiary and one of the covenanting parties.
65 Leviathan, XVII, 13, 120.
66 Here below, in the section “Proper Ways to Exercise the Office of the Sovereign,” I will focus on the implication of this idea of the sovereign as a beneficiary of a free gift, particularly in relation to the natural law of gratitude. The aim will be to point out Hobbesian views regarding the way the free gift of the political power should be exercised if the safety of the people is to be the goal.
As Riley notes, almost everything for Hobbes, from the creation of a state to the relationship between parents and children, is defined in terms of consent. Hobbes strongly believes that living in the state is a result of consent. For him, the consent of the people is the necessary condition for legitimacy and justification of the political rule, and it “must either be drawn from the express words, *I authorize all his Actions*, or from the Intentions of him that submitteth himselfe to his Power.” In *De Cive*, he makes the following remark, “no man hath a supreme power which is not bestowed on him by our own consent;” and in *Leviathan*, he maintains that any political authority “must be grounded on the Consent of the People, and their Promise to obey him.” Speaking of the rights of the sovereign, which he accords so much importance for a good and effective government, as I will mention below, he maintains that they are derived originally from the consent of every one of those that are to bee governed; whether they that choose him, doe it for their common defence against an Enemy, as when they agree amongst themselves to appoint a Man, or an Assembly of men to protect them; or whether they doe it, to save their lives, by submission to a conquering Enemy.

Hobbes disputes the validity of claims such as “conquerors who come in by the sword, make their laws also without our assent,” or “if a conqueror can kill me if he please, I am presently obliged without more ado to obey all his laws.” To indicate that he is at odds with such claims,

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67 Patrick Riley, *Will and Political Legitimacy. A Critical Exposition of Social Contract Theory in Hobbes, Locke, Rousseau, Kant, and Hegel* (Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1982), 32. According to Hobbes, even “the right of dominion by generation is not so derived from the generation, as if therefore the parents had dominion over his child because he begat him; but from the child’s consent, either express, or by other sufficient arguments declared” (*Leviathan*, XX, 4, 139).

68 *Leviathan*, XXI, 10, 150.

69 *De Cive*, XIV, 19.

70 *Leviathan*, XL, 6, 324.

71 Ibid., XLII, 123, 395.

he asks, “may not I rather die, if I see fit?” And his conclusion is, “The conqueror makes no law over the conquered by virtue of his power, but by virtue of their assent, that promised obedience for the saving of their lives.” Given the importance that he accords to people’s consent, Hobbes regards anyone who rules by means other than the consent of the people as “an enemy, and by right to be put to death.”

Thus, authority in political society is instituted by the consent of the people who authorize an individual or group of individuals to act on their behalf. The ruler owes his authority not to the excellence of his nature, even less to the divine election, but solely and exclusively to people’s authorization, and his preeminence over the people is essentially artificial.

The idea underlying the interpretation that Hobbes recommends a despotic rule is that the only reason why people choose to leave the state of nature and to enter the political association is that the latter is an evil lesser than the former. In other words, Hobbes is interpreted as arguing merely that threats that individuals face in civil society are acceptable because they are of a lower magnitude than those they may face in its absence. One of the most quoted pieces of textual evidences to support this interpretation is found in *Leviathan*, where Hobbes responds to a possible objection:

> But a man may here object, that the Conditions of Subjects is very miserable; as being obnoxious to the lusts, and other irregular passions of him, or them that have so unlimited a Power in their hands . . . ; not considering that the estate of Man can never be without some incommodity or other; and that the greatest, that in any forme of Government can possibly happen to the people in generall, is scarce sensible, in respect of the miseries, and horrible calamities, that accompany a Civil Warre; or that

73 *English Works*, V, *Questions Concerning Liberty, Necessity, and Chance*, 180. It is worth mentioning that this passage is another indication that, for Hobbes, there are circumstances of life when death is preferable to life.

74 Ibid.

75 *De Cive*, XII, 3. See also VII, 3. It is worth noting that, in Hobbes’s view, an individual who rules without the consent of the people is not even called a tyrant but an enemy; a tyrant is a legitimate ruler who is so called only by those who despise him.
dissolute condition of masterlesse men, without subjection to Lawes, and a coercive
Power to tye their hands from rapine, and revenge.\footnote{Leviathan, XVIII, 20, 128.}

To this apparent textual evidence in support of the view that Hobbes recommends a despotic rule
of the commonwealth, it is very important to mention that Hobbes’s answer in this quotation
does not outweigh his views and statements relative to the nature and the end of the political
association, and to the benefit and the quality of life that individual should rightfully expect from
it. It suffices to mention only from \textit{Leviathan}, among many other passages, the following: the
reason any human being would transfer or renounce some of his natural rights and place himself
under the authority of someone “is either in consideration of Right reciprocally transferred to
himself; or for some other good he hopeth for thereby;”;\footnote{Ibid., XIV, 8, 93.} “no man giveth, but with the intention
of Good to himself; because . . . of all Voluntary Acts, the Object is to every man his own
Good,”\footnote{Ibid., XV, 16, 105. Hobbes’s theory of the state should be understood in light of this passage because, as I will
argue below, in Hobbes’s view, civil society is a result of voluntary act made for the good of the agent, and most
importantly, political power is a free gift and, as such, it is against the law of nature to cause the giver of the gift
regret his act.} human beings institute a commonwealth for “Feare of Death; desire of such things as
are necessary to commodious living; and a hope by their Industry to obtain them;”\footnote{Ibid., XIII, 14, 90.} “the
foresight of their own preservation, and of a more contented life thereby;”;\footnote{Ibid., XVII, 1, 117.} the end of a
commonwealth is to defend people “from the invasion of Forraigners, and the injuries of one
another, and . . . to secure them in such sort, as that by their owne industrie, and by the fruit of
the Earth, they may nourish themselves and live contentedly;”;\footnote{Ibid., XVII, 12, 120. Italicized by me to underscore Hobbes’s description.} and the office of the sovereign is
to secure the safety of his people, that is, not only to protect their lives but also to create
conditions favorable to the enjoyment of “all other Contentments of life, which every man, by
lawfull Industry, without danger, or hurt to the common-wealth, shall acquire to himselfe."\(^{82}\)

Similar statements are found in the *Elements of Law, De Cive*, and other works of Hobbes, and none of them suggests the idea of a choice between two evils, one greater and one lesser. Instead, all these statements are clearly intended to indicate that the primary purpose of political society is to relieve people from the unsocial and unfriendly conditions of war and to enable them to live a more contented life. Civil society is a condition of peace and safety, while the condition of war is an environment of fear and violence. In reference to the purpose for which the commonwealth is instituted, Hobbes’s image of the Leviathan represents the key feature that has most captivated the attention of many of his readers. Regarding the emphasis that some commentators put on this image to describe Hobbes’s conception of the political authority, Carl Schmitt makes the following remark,

> Only the enormous striking power implicit in the image of the mythical beast has led to the mistaken notion that this is the central idea of Hobbes’ theory of the state. The sentences and words that Hobbes used to introduce the leviathan do not leave any doubt that he did not take this image to be believable conceptually.\(^{83}\)

The sentences and words Schmitt may be referring to in this quotation are, in addition to the above from *Leviathan*, human beings “freely assemble themselves, and institute a government, that they might, as much as their human condition would afford, live delightfully;”\(^{84}\) that they might enjoy not only “the good things belonging to life, but also . . . those which advance to delectation.”\(^{85}\) These statements are so central in Hobbes’s conception of the state that any interpretation that overlooks their importance is definitely inadequate. In his view, to live in the

\(^{82}\) *Leviathan*, XXX, 1, 231.


\(^{84}\) *De Cive*, XIII, 4.

\(^{85}\) Ibid.
state is a matter of person’s intentional and voluntary act; and there is no voluntary act which is not for the good of the agent. With these statements in mind, for Hobbes, to choose to live in a political society is to choose to live in a frame of life that is far better than the state of nature. Hence, the right way to describe the Hobbesian state would be to say that it is an association for the protection and welfare of the people, and not merely an evil lesser than the state of nature.

2. 2. 3. The End of Civil Association

Since the state is not a natural organism in which we find ourselves by natural necessity, but a result of consent and agreement of free individuals for a specific purpose, the exercise of the political authority must be absolutely commensurate with the end for which it has been instituted. In Hobbes’s view, the people are not only the source of the ruler’s power as the notions of consent and authorization indicate, but also the end of his rule. In this regard, it is important to look briefly at his view on the end of civil association because this end functions as measure or standard in the assessment of the way political authority should be exercised.

Compared to the *Elements of Law* and *De Cive* where Hobbes discusses the creation and the end of the state, he begins chapter XVII of *Leviathan* with a solemn tone as to underline the unquestionable truth of his statement, “The finall Cause, End, or Designe of men, (who naturally love Liberality, and Dominion over others,) in the introduction of that restraint upon themselves, (in which wee see them live in Common-wealths,) is the foresight of their own preservation, and of a more contented life thereby.” In regard to this statement, it can be maintained that for Hobbes the political authority, by its very nature, incorporates and represents the intention and determination of human beings desiring peace for the preservation of their lives

86 *Elements of Law*, XIX.
87 *De Cive*, V.
88 *Leviathan*, XVII, 1, 117.
and a more contented life. Hence, the art of well governing the state consists in pursuing solely
the end for which the political authority has been created. For Hobbes, peace, protection, safety,
prosperity, comfort are essential features that define the political association and that people
expect to gain in joining social and political life. In one of his well known passages on the state
of nature, he depicts in converse political society as a frame in which people enjoy those things
necessary for living a contented life:

In such condition, there is no place for Industry; because the fruit thereof is uncertain:
and consequently no Culture of the Earth; no Navigation, no 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 Letter; no Society.  

The reverse of this quotation suggests that, for Hobbes, political association is a frame of life that
provides comfort, as opposed to his well known characterization of the state of nature, as a frame
of life dominated by “continuall feare, and danger of violent death; And [in which] the life of
man [is], solitary, poore, nasty, brutish, and short.” One can find the same line of thought in De
Cive, where he makes a striking contrast between two different frames of life: “out of it [the
state], there is a Dominion of Passions, war, fear, poverty, slovenliness, solitude, barbarisme,
ignorance, cruelty. In it, the Dominion of reason, peace, security, riches, decency, society,
elegancy, sciences, and benevolence.” Although Hobbes recognizes that “the estate of Man can
never be without some incommodity or other,” his overall view of political society shows

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89 Leviathan., XIII, 9, 89.
90 Ibid., XIII, 9, 89.
91 De Cive, X, 1.
92 Leviathan. XVIII, 20, 128. The exact meaning of this quotation is provided in the second part of chapter IV of the present study under the subtitle “The Welfare Function.”
clearly that he conceives it as a frame of life in which people should be able to live delightfully “as much as human condition would afford.” 93

In short, all the above statements and pictures used by Hobbes to describe the kind of frame is a political society have more weight in his political thought than his answer to a possible objection regarding the condition of the people under an absolute ruler. Putting too much emphasis on Hobbes’s idea of absolute sovereign, and leaving aside pictures and statements related to his idea of the political association, not only distorts Hobbes’s thought but also overshadows his valuable contribution in political philosophy. The absolutism of the Hobbesian sovereign cannot be interpreted in isolation from Hobbes’s views on the kind of frame a political association should be. If Hobbes’s statements related to the end of the commonwealth and to the type of life people should be free to live are taken seriously and not simply discounted out of hand, the image of the Hobbesian sovereign as a terrifying ruler who governs despotically through fear and the terror of the sword is somewhat overstated.

2. 2. 4. Advocacy for An Authoritative Ruler

In Hobbes, to secure peace and the safety of the people, the need for an absolute sovereign is indisputably true, but to rule despotically, or whimsically, is a debatable question when his work is taken as a whole. It is hardly adequate to argue that Hobbes commits himself to upholding that it is permissible for a political authority to do anything he likes over his people. Instead, what one finds in him is a statement such as, “It is a weak Soveraign, that has weak Subjects; and a weak People, whose Soveraign wanteth Power to rule them at his will.” 94 As indicated above, a close reading of his texts as a whole reveals striking obstacles to interpret him

93 De Cive, XIII, 4.
94 Leviathan, XXX, 21, 240.
as recommending a despotic rule of the commonwealth. Although the idea of ruling despotically looks very Hobbesian, it is not quite very supported by a close reading of Hobbes’s overall political philosophy. His overall argument indicates, rather, that the sovereign cannot command anything except what contributes to peace and the safety of the people. As he puts it, “the Soveraign . . . is understood to do nothing but in order to the common Peace and Security.”95 To do nothing but in order to the common peace must be taken to mean that the holder of the political power should not pursue a policy that is likely to trigger conflict and endanger civil peace. The Hobbesian sovereign is a ruler whose actions “tend to the maintenance of peace at home, and to the resistance of foreign enemies.”96 In Behemoth, Hobbes clearly regrets a series of king’s acts, which not only endangered the common peace but also appeared to be self-weakening and even self-destructive for the king: lack of cooperation with the parliament, extortion of money in unconventional ways from people, which led to tax strike, and worse of all, the “unlucky business of imposing upon the Scots, who where all Presbyterians, our book of Common-prayer.”97 This series of acts of misgovernment led irremediably to the weakening of king’s authority and eventually to his destruction. In the same text of Behemoth, one can also find Hobbes providing an example of a good government, which clearly contrasts with the king’s misgovernment. He praises the Romans’ strategy to win power through concessions, to gain obedience by offering not only protection but also status and rights, and to obtain cooperation and support by putting some boundaries to their own power. As he puts it,

The Romans were masters of many nations, and to oblige them the more to obey the edicts and laws sent unto them from the city of Rome, they thought fit to make them all Romans; and out of divers nations . . . to advance some, that they thought worthy, even to be senators of Rome, and to give to every one of the common people the

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95 Leviathan, XXIV, 7, 172.
96 Behemoth, 44-45.
97 Ibid., 28.
privileges of the city of Rome, by which they were protected from the contumelies of other nations where they resided.\textsuperscript{98}

These two contrasting pictures of ruling that Hobbes points out in \textit{Behemoth}, between the English king and the Romans, leads him to affirm the necessity for a political authority to be “skillful in the public affairs.”\textsuperscript{99} Thus, in Hobbes’s view, the exercise of the political power should not be authoritarian, in the sense of demanding unquestioning obedience while commanding anything one pleases.

In \textit{A Dialogue Between A Philosopher And a Student of the Common Laws of England}, Hobbes is unambiguously clear on his view that a political authority is created for the good of the people, and not the other way around. He maintains, “God made Kings for the people, and not people for Kings.”\textsuperscript{100} In other words, political society is established for the sole purpose of promoting the good of the people and not of satisfying the natural passions of the ruler. From a purely Hobbesian perspective, it is an abuse of the political authority to rule for one’s own interest, at the expense of the people.

Hobbes’s theory of the state taken as a whole should be interpreted as an argument in favor of a peaceful social and contented life. In light of the threats and horrors of war, which is the guiding idea of Hobbes’s political philosophy, the most that can be expected from the political authority is the preservation of peace and the safety of individual members of the society. In ruling political society, no other good can equal peace and safety, for the sake of which governments have been instituted. In this regard, the art of good government requires not the virtuous but the strong ruler who can prevent the horrors of the state of war from happening.

\textsuperscript{98} \textit{Behemoth}, 33-34.
\textsuperscript{99} Ibid., 70.
It can legitimately be maintained that, in Hobbes’s view, the sovereign’s absolutism should not be interpreted as a weapon to oppress people but as a means to serve one purpose: to enable the ruler to deal with any contingency that might threaten the political association and jeopardize peace and the safety of the people.\footnote{101} In Hobbes, all considerations on political power must be read and understood only in light of social unity, peace, safety, and commodious living. In regard to these notions, which are so central to Hobbes’s theory of the state, it can be legitimately maintained that what Hobbes really calls for is not an authoritarian but an authoritative ruler, that is, a strong ruler who is both capable and responsible in governing the state. Authoritarianism does not lead to genuine peace and to a contented life that Hobbes places at the center of individuals’ need to live in a civil association. The notion of living peacefully and delightfully under a despotic and terrifying ruler is an inconsistency that a philosopher of the rank of Hobbes would have been able to notice. Hobbes’s concern for the safety of the people and his preoccupation for “peaceable, sociable, and comfortable living,”\footnote{102} cannot go along with an authoritarian ruler who governs according to his natural passions and personal inclinations.\footnote{103}

\footnote{101} I am not discussing here whether or not Hobbes is right to think that absolutism is the best way to achieve peace and the safety of the people. My aim in this subsection is rather to refute the interpretation according to which Hobbes recommends despotical rule, and to suggest in what sense we should understand Hobbes’s advocacy for political absolutism.\footnote{102} Leviathan, XV, 40, 111.\footnote{103} It is important to make a remark here. One may object that I am simply pointing out an inconsistency or a weakness that one can find in Hobbes’s text. This is a debatable objection. Although there are some inconsistencies in Hobbes’s text, I believe most of the inconsistencies that some commentators point out in Hobbes are rather due to the reader’s interpretive method. For example, if one focuses on some particular statements without trying to understand them within Hobbes’s system of thought in its wholeness, one will find Hobbes’s text full of inconsistencies. My underlying method of interpretation is to read and understand all the major concepts in light of the central issue that Hobbes was confronted with, namely, war and its causes. In this way, concepts such as sovereign, peace, safety, contented life etc. are understood in light of Hobbes’s main concern to avoid civil war. In this regard, the idea of an ever-threatening sovereign contradicts Hobbes’s concern for peace. It is Hobbes’s consistent view that any threat against individual life is sufficient reason to raise war. Besides, this idea of a threatening sovereign does not cohere with Hobbes’s conception of peace that I have developed in the second chapter, namely, peace not by imposition but by removal of the potential causes of conflict that generate fear.
3. For A Good Government of the People

3.1. Right to the Means and Civic Obedience

It is Hobbes’s consistent view that, to be able to fulfill his duty, the ruler must be endowed with certain essential rights, which Hobbes regards as “incommunicable and inseparable” \(104\) from sovereignty. These rights are extensively developed in chapter XX of the *Elements of Law*, chapter VI of *De Cive*, and chapter XVIII of *Leviathan*; and they are regarded by Hobbes as essential means without which the sovereign cannot effectively secure peace and the safety of his people.

For Hobbes, a strong ruler is the one who is endowed with essential rights of sovereignty, and the ability to govern well depends not so much on the moral quality of the ruler, as in Aristotle, but on having the right to the means of governing. He consistently expresses this idea in the three of his aforementioned major political works. He maintains in the *Elements of Law*, “to have the right of the sword, is nothing else but to have the use thereof;” \(105\) and in *De Cive*, “the right of the sword is nothing else but to have power by right to use the sword at his own will.” \(106\) He expresses this idea more clearly in *Leviathan* by maintaining, “because the End of this Institution, is the Peace and Defence of them all; . . . whosoever has right to the End, has right to the Means,” \(107\) and conversely, “he that deserteth the Means, deserteth the Ends.” \(108\) This is one of the key ideas in Hobbes in relation to the good government of the people. In his view, to occupy the position of authority because of outstanding virtue without enjoying essential rights of sovereignty “will produce no effect, in the conservation of Peace and Justice, the end

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104 *Leviathan*, XVIII, 16, 127.
105 *Elements of Law*, XX, 9.
106 *De Cive*, VI, 8.
107 *Leviathan*, XVIII, 8, 124.
108 Ibid., XXX, 3, 231.
for which all Common-wealths are Instituted.” Unlike Aristotle who emphasizes the moral quality of the ruler, Hobbes believes that, without his essential rights, a ruler “cannot performe the office they have put him into; which is, to defend them both from forraign enemies, and from injuries of one another.” Endowing the ruler with these rights, and restricting all the political power to a single person maximizes his efficacy in governing the state in a way that meets the requirements dictated by human fundamental desires for self-preservation and a more contented life.

However, although the essential rights of the sovereign are the necessary condition for the attainment of the end of the state, they are not sufficient by themselves. The absolute authority of the ruler needs the obedience of the people in order to be effective. In Behemoth, Hobbes makes it clear that “it is not the right of the sovereign, though granted to him by every man’s express consent, that can enable him to do his office; it is the obedience of the subject, which must do that.” In the same line of thought, he remarks in Leviathan that these essential rights of sovereignty “cannot be maintained by any . . . terour of legal punishment.” As indicated above, contrary to what is commonly attributed to Hobbes, there are passages in Hobbes where he clearly indicates that to rule despotically by force and coercion is not the answer to the question of peace and the safety of the people. Some commentators, like S. A. Lloyd, provide cases in Hobbes that demonstrate that force and coercion are not regarded as the most effective means to keep down all the people all of the time. According to Lloyd, Hobbes

109 Leviathan, XVIII, 16, 127.
110 Ibid., XXIX, 10, 224.
111 One can see Hobbes’s argument concerning his preference of monarchy over other forms of government in Elements of Law, XXIV, 5 and following; De Cive, X, 6 and following; Leviathan, XIX, 4, 6.
112 This view, overlooked by many commentators, is very important in Hobbes’s conception of political authority. It also puts into question the reading of Hobbes as a defender of a despotic rule.
114 Leviathan, XXX, 4, 232.
regards sheer might as “unlikely to keep down anyone who affirms a disruptive belief when he sees a possibility that his actions will further his transcendent interests.”

Given the importance of transcendent interests for Hobbesian men, the most effective means that really secures lasting peace and that Hobbes recommends in his theory of the state is “education according to sound principles.” In Hobbes’s view, civic education is what helps to shape the thoughts, opinions, and beliefs of the citizens in a way that support the sovereign in the exercise of his essential rights.

Thus, taken as a whole, Hobbes’s political thought does not allow maintaining that it is his view that people accept oppressive government out of fear of death. In his theory of the state, Hobbes unequivocally stresses the necessity and importance of force and fear of punishment. In his view, law is ineffective unless it is backed by the power of a strong political authority. However, the strength of the political authority lies not in force and coercion but in the citizens’ willingness to obey. In other words, although the rights of the sovereign are necessary means for governing a commonwealth, Hobbes gives clear indications that they are not enough for the achievement of peace and safety. Civil association cannot be maintained only by mere endowment of the sovereign’s rights, even less, by sheer force. Hobbes is quite clear that for the sovereign to fulfill his task citizens must be supportive. The achievement of the end of the state depends mostly on the citizens’ willingness to obey the command of the sovereign. As he plainly declares it in Behemoth, “without . . . obedience the commonwealth (which is every subject’s safety and protection) cannot subsist.”

In other words, what counts the most in the exercise of political authority is not so much the right to rule over the subjects, but the ability to obtain the

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115 S. A. Lloyd, Ideals As Interest, 211.
116 S. Ibid.
117 In the first chapter, under the subtitle “Outline of the New Approach,” I have provided a passage from De Hominе where he clearly acknowledges that there are situations when a human being can prefer death to life.
118 Behemoth, 44.
subjects’ willing obedience; and this willingness to obey is obtained by the captivation of the mind through civic education. Without a free and willing cooperation of all its members, a commonwealth cannot last for a significant length of time, and the hope for peace and security will be very slim. Thus, in Hobbes’s view, although force and coercion are necessary, complete safety entails absolute obedience to the sovereign.

The big and important question that needs to be answered is, are the rights of the sovereign and the obedience of the subjects all that is needed for a good government of the people? Do Hobbes’s texts indicate any other important element necessary for peace and the safety of the people? Hobbes maintains,

[T]he duty of the sovereign consisteth in the good government of the people; and although the acts of sovereign power be no injuries to the subjects who have consented to the same by their implicit wills, yet when they tend to the hurt of the people in general, they be breaches of the law of nature, and of the divine law; and consequently, the contrary acts are the duties of sovereigns, and required at their hands to the utmost of their endeavour, by God Almighty, under the pain of eternal death.\textsuperscript{119}

It clearly appears from this quotation that, in addition to civic obedience, Hobbes was also very much concerned about how the sovereign power should be used in the commonwealth. A good government of the people requires that the sovereign abstains from acts that tend to the hurt of the people. In a passage previously quoted, Hobbes indicates clearly that the sovereign’s hurtful action to the people leads to civil disobedience, “confusion, and Civill war; for the avoiding whereof, all Civill Government was ordained.”\textsuperscript{120} Thus, beside a weak sovereign divided into competing decisional centers, and ignorance of the subjects with regard to their civic duty of obedience, there is also misgovernment of the commonwealth by the sovereign that can be the

\textsuperscript{119} Elements of Law, XXVIII, 1.
\textsuperscript{120} Leviathan, XLII, 67, 372.
cause of anarchy, and hence, jeopardize civil peace and the safety of the people. In this regard, the Hobbesian notion of the safety of the people calls necessarily for a proper way to exercise the political power, a way that encourages people’s obedience to the sovereign and makes the exercise of the sovereign’s rights more effective.

3. 2. **Proper Ways To Exercise The Office Of The Sovereign**

For Hobbes, there is a proper way to exercise the political authority that contributes effectively to the maintenance of peace, and hence, to the promotion of the welfare of the people. In addition to the sovereign’s rights and the obedience of the people, the political authority, to be strong, needs to possess the art of governing well if the exercise of the essential rights is to be effective. In this regard, it is necessary to explore Hobbes’s views on these valuable ways in which the sovereign *performs his duty properly*.

For Hobbes, to govern for peace and safety, the holder of political power should command not as a natural person but *as a political person*, that is, he should not act on his emotions but on right reason, seeking only the good of the people; *gratitude* should be his cardinal virtue, abstaining from actions that would make the people reasonably regret making him sovereign; and he should act according to the principle of reciprocity, which Hobbes regards as the most important underlying rule for all the sovereign’s actions. These are Hobbes’s important views on *how to govern*. In regard to these proper ways of governing, my argument is twofold. First, I contend that most of the misrepresentations of the Hobbesian sovereign are due to the fact that these *properly Hobbesian ways of governing* are not taken into consideration. Second, to govern in a way that meets human fundamental desires, the essential rights of the
sovereign can be regarded as genuinely effective means only if they are exercised in accordance with these particular ways.  

3. 2. 1. The sovereign “commands the people . . . as a politic, not a natural person.”  

According to Bernard Gert, Hobbes favored monarchy because he did not sufficiently appreciate “that his account of human nature applies to sovereigns as well as to citizens. Were he to have appreciated that sovereigns are as likely as citizens to act on their emotions rather than their reason, he would most likely have favored a democracy.” A close reading of Hobbes’s texts does not support this view. There are passages that show clearly that Hobbes recognizes that his account of human nature applies also to the individuals who are in the position of authority. As mentioned above, he vehemently rejects Aristotle’s view to make excellence of nature a justification for political rule. In other words, in his view, the individual who becomes sovereign is not morally superior to the rest of the people. He is very clear on the fact that individuals “that have so unlimited Power in their hands” do not always exhibit a high standard of moral virtues. In *Leviathan*, he clearly indicates that “whosoever beareth the Person of the People, or is one of that Assembly that bears it, beareth also his own naturall Person.”  

When Hobbes speaks of bearing one’s natural person, he means being subject to emotions and passions just like any human being. He maintains that, though the sovereign should be careful in his politque Person to procure the common interest; yet he is more, or no lesse carefull to procure the private good to himself, his family, kindred and friends; and for the most part, if the publique interest chance to crosse the private, he

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121 I will use the sovereign’s right to punish to illustrate this second part of my argument.
122 *Behemoth*, 51.
124 *Leviathan*, XVIII, 19.
125 Ibid., XIX, 4, 131.
prefers the private: for the Passions of men, are commonly more potent than their Reason.\textsuperscript{126}

In other words, Hobbes strongly believes that, in a commonwealth, the “Seat of Power” is occupied by an individual human being, who is subject to “naturall Passions, that carry us to Partiality, Pride, Revenge, and the like”\textsuperscript{127} and, hence, capable of “cruelty, iniquity, contumely, and other like vices.”\textsuperscript{128} In answering to an objection on how miserable is the condition of the people under an absolute ruler, he does not deny that a monarch, like any human being, can be “obnoxious to the lusts, and other irregular passions.”\textsuperscript{129} In \textit{Behemoth}, Hobbes goes even further to indicate that conflicts in the commonwealth can result from the political authority acting not on right reason but on irrational passions such as impulsiveness. He mentions, for example, the pointless Dutch decision to insult English ambassadors, and which led to a military defeat;\textsuperscript{130} and the king’s appointment of Arundel to lead an army into Scotland simply because his “ancestor had formerly given a great overthrow to the Scots.”\textsuperscript{131} In short, Hobbes does acknowledge that the individual holder of the sovereign power is psychologically similar to any natural person, and as such, he can act on his passions just like any human being. The sovereign is subject to the same desires and impulses, inclinations and passions like any citizen of the commonwealth.

However, what Hobbes is really saying in his theory of the state is that, in relation to his office, the holder of the sovereign power has to rule over the people not as a \textit{natural} but as a \textit{political} person.\textsuperscript{132} This neglected view of Hobbes is of crucial importance because it indicates not only what it entails in occupying the seat of power but also how political power is meant to

\textsuperscript{126} \textit{Leviathan}, XIX, 4, 131.
\textsuperscript{127} Ibid., XVII, 2, 117.
\textsuperscript{128} \textit{De Cive}, VII, 14.
\textsuperscript{129} \textit{Leviathan}, XVIII, 20, 128.
\textsuperscript{130} \textit{Behemoth}, 174.
\textsuperscript{131} Ibid., 30-31.
\textsuperscript{132} Ibid., 51.
be exercised. It is important to mention that Hobbes holds this view as a response to the question, “What if he [a tyrant] should command me with my own hands to execute my father, in case he should be condemn by the law?”\textsuperscript{133} In his response, Hobbes makes the reader understand that it is unreasonable on the part of the sovereign to ask a son to execute his father, unless it is for the purpose of satisfying some irrational passions. In other words, to command as a political person means to command not as a person who is under the influence of irregular passions, but as a person who is guided by the dictate of right reason.\textsuperscript{134}

The sovereign’s right to inflict punishment can also be used as an example to illustrate Hobbes’s view on how to command as a political and not as a natural person. Hobbes maintains, “although they who among men obtain the chiefest Dominion, cannot be subject to Lawes properly so called . . . yet it is their duty in all things, as much as possible they can, to yeeld obedience unto right reason, which is the naturall, morall and divine Law.”\textsuperscript{135} He recognizes that the holder of the political power is also a natural man, and as such, he can act under the influence of passion. However, his view on civil punishment shows that, as a political person, the sovereign has to listen to the imperatives or the dictates of reason in the exercise of his essential rights.

Hobbes maintains, “to the Soveraign is committed the Power . . . of Punishing with corporall, or pecuniary punishment, or with ignomity every Subject according to the Law he hath

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\textsuperscript{133} \textit{Behemoth}, 51. \\
\textsuperscript{134} It is worth mentioning that, commonly, most commentators point out the view that, in Hobbes, individuals’ use of private reason is one of the causes of war. To look at more closely, it is rather the use to which reason is put that leads to the worst situation of war. Conflict arises not because of the use of reason but mostly because of the interference of passions, which are not the same for everybody and not even the same all the time in the same person. It is under the effect of passions when we reason that Hobbes considers private use of reason as dangerous in civil society. In Hobbes’s view, passions are the chief motives of many of human actions, but they can be governed through the use of reason. If the governing of passions by reason is required of every citizen, it is supremely recommended to the individual who has to rule according to the dictate of reason. Besides, in Hobbes, the use of private reason leads to conflict only in the context of mistrust and competition between individuals, but the individual who is in the position of the sovereign is not in competition with his people, and the trust of the people is exactly what makes him sovereign. \\
\textsuperscript{135} \textit{De Cive}, XIII, 2.
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Although the sovereign has the right to use force and punishment against malefactors on the ground of natural right of self-preservation that every man has in the condition of nature, Hobbes recommends that he uses this right to inflict punishment not as a private revenge, but only as means to a future good. When, on the ground of the right of self-preservation, a natural person uses punishment to avenge himself or simply to cause hurt to a malefactor, as a political person the individual holder of the sovereign power inflicts punishment for the sole aim of promoting peace in the commonwealth. This is so because to govern as a political person requires obedience to the requirements that reason imposes on the inclinations of the human nature.

Another piece of textual evidence that Hobbes enjoins the sovereign to follow the dictates of right reason in governing is when he maintains, “he that is subject to no Civill Law, sinneth in all he does against his Conscience, because he has no other rule to follow but his own reason.” While it is a necessity for subjects to obey civil law, it is a requirement of the law of nature for the sovereign, who is not subject to civil law, to follow the dictates of right reason. What is key in this quotation is the idea of following his own reason. In Hobbes, one needs to distinguish between reason as reckoning and reason as natural faculty of judgment, as opposed to emotion that he also calls perturbation of the mind. In this quotation reason is used to refer to the faculty of judgment. In other words, for Hobbes, the sovereigns sins when, in governing the commonwealth, he acts on his emotion instead of following right reason. Thus, the Hobbesian sovereign is an individual who is able to reconcile his “naturall Person” with his “politique

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136 Leviathan, XVIII, 14, 126.
137 Ibid., XXVIII, 2, 214.
138 Ibid., XXVIII, 7, 215.
139 Ibid., XXIX, 7, 223.
140 See reason as reckoning in Leviathan, V, 2, 32; and reason as opposed to emotion, or perturbation of the mind in De Homine, XII, 1.
Person,” that is, able to reconcile the drive of passions with the requirements of reason.\textsuperscript{141} It is also important to mention that Hobbes is speaking about following his own reason in the context when he is speaking “Of those things that Weaken, or tend to the DISSOLUTION of a Common-wealth.”\textsuperscript{142} In other words, failure to follow the dictates of right reason in governing the commonwealth leads to its dissolution.

To conclude, it can be maintained that, for Hobbes, one of the solid grounds of a good government lies in obedience to right reason. While passions “render men apt to invade, and destroy one another,”\textsuperscript{143} reason is the faculty that enables human beings to solve any chaotic situation they happen to find themselves. This view of Hobbes applies generally to every human being, including the individual who occupies the seat of power. Unlike passions, reason is what tells us what is and is not acceptable and provides guidelines and priorities for how we should create peaceful conditions of life. Hobbes maintains that, to the dictates of reason, or the precepts of laws of nature, “a Soveraign is as much subject, as any of the meanest of his people.”\textsuperscript{144} The laws of nature constitute an objective standard by which the sovereign, as a political person, should measure his actions. In other words, the laws of nature dictate the rules of behavior “to the Consciences of Soveraign Princes and Soveraign Assemblies.”\textsuperscript{145} The sovereign, though accountable to no human authority and subject to no human law, has the rule of right reason as the guiding principle of his political actions. The political authority still has his human nature with all its determining features, but his actions as a politique person must be more determined

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\textsuperscript{141} It is important to mention that, in “A Review, and Conclusion of Leviathan,” Hobbes acknowledges that, in a human being, such a reconciliation between the drive of passion and right reason is difficult but not impossible, “For by education, and Discipline, they may bee, and are sometimes reconciled” (Leviathan, A Review, and Conclusion, 4, 483.), and he maintains that he has seen such a reconciliation in the person of his “most noble and honored friend Mr. Sidney Godolphin.” (Leviathan, A Review, and Conclusion, 4, 484).
\textsuperscript{142} Leviathan, title of chapter XXIX, 221.
\textsuperscript{143} Ibid., XIII, 10, 89.
\textsuperscript{144} Ibid., XXX, 15, 237.
\textsuperscript{145} Ibid., XXX, 30, 244.
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by the exercise of reason. Although he carries his natural person, the political authority is no longer to act as natural human beings do in the state of nature. Instead, he must always “be careful in his politique Person to procure the common interest”\textsuperscript{146} and to turn away from egoistic tendencies dictated by natural passions. As a political person, he has no longer to follow his natural passions but only his right reason in all of his actions. Tom Sorell is very correct in maintaining that, in Hobbes, the individual who assumes the position of sovereignty must also “assume a new frame of mind;”\textsuperscript{147} a frame of mind totally oriented to the achievement of peace and the safety of his people. Political society, with all its demands, requires of him to behave toward his people as a statesman, and not as “ravenous beast.”\textsuperscript{148} Hobbes’s view on the sovereign’s use of his right to punish provides a good illustration on the proper way the rights of sovereignty should be exercised if peace and the safety of the people are the ultimate goal.

If commanding as political person means being guided by right reason, it is legitimate to believe that Hobbes would accept the claim that, in investing an individual with authority that is by nature their own, people do not intend to create a monster to fear more than they fear one another, as proponents of the pseudo-Hobbes claim. They are creating rather a political person, endowed with a new frame of mind, for their security and enhancement of hope to attain the felicity of this life.

To ground the art of good government on the requirement to use right reason raises one of the common questions that most critics raise, namely, what can bind the sovereign to use his power in accordance with right reason? What can make the sovereign follow the dictate of right reason all the time?

\textsuperscript{146} \textit{Leviathan}, XIX, 4, 131.
\textsuperscript{147} Tom Sorell, “Hobbes on Trade, Consumption, and International Order,” in \textit{The Monist} 89, 245-58.
\textsuperscript{148} \textit{De Cive}, Dedicatory Epistle.
To answer this question, it is worth mentioning first that, although the logic underlying Hobbes’s theory of the state requires that no condition of any kind be imposed to the sovereign’s exercise of power, the Hobbesian sovereign, nevertheless, is bound in foro interno, that is, in conscience to follow the dictate of reason. As Hobbes puts it in the passage quoted above, “he that is subject to no Civill Law, sinneth in all he does against his Conscience, because he has no other rule to follow but his own reason.”

To understand well how compelling is conscience in Hobbes’s view, it is important to mention that as rational agents, we can be bound to act in a particular way in two ways. We can be bound either legally or in conscience. With regard to being bound in conscience, Hobbes clearly acknowledges some compelling power of conscience, which can challenge even the sovereign’s command, not only when this command threatens the individual’s life but also when it threatens the life of people “whose condemnation a man falls into misery; as of a Father, Wife, or Benefactor.” Hobbes is clear that in conscience one can challenge the command of the sovereign to accuse or to execute one’s parent, relative, or friend. Besides, it is because he acknowledges some compelling force of conscience that Hobbes endeavors to persuade his readers that they should follow their conscience as long as this does not frustrate the end for which political society is established. As He puts it, “When . . . our refusal to obey [the command of the sovereign], frustrates the End for which the Soveraignty was ordained; then there is no Liberty to refuse: otherwise there is.”

Thus, in a given circumstance, one may not be legally obliged by the existing prescription of the law, and yet be compelled, in conscience, to do the right thing that he is expected to do. This is true for any rational agent, that is, not only for the citizen but also for the individual who is in the position of the sovereign. In other words, in the absence of any prescription of the law, like in the case of the

149 *Leviathan*, XXIX, 7, 223.
150 Ibid., XIV, 30, 98.
151 Ibid., XXI, 15, 151.
sovereign who is not subjected to any positive law, the rational agent has a moral sense as a binding power to do what is reasonably correct. This interpretation can be supported also by Hobbes’s appeal to the law of honor, which I mentioned in the previous chapter as the only law observable in the condition of war. By considering that this law “ceaseath not even in time of war itself,” Hobbes is indicating that human beings are endowed with some moral sense which can bind them to do the right thing even in a lawless condition of life. Hobbes would not claim that the exercise of some moral virtues does not cease even in time of war if he did not believe in some compelling force of conscience. Hence, although the individual holder of the sovereign can be regarded as being in the state of nature (for not having contracted with no body), yet as a rational agent and as long as his life is not in danger, he has to follow what, in conscience, is the right thing to do.

A close reading of Hobbes’s texts indicates also the existence of a more interesting type of binding obligation, namely, the obligation attached to the very nature of the sovereign’s office. One of the great teachings one may receive from Hobbes is that the art of governing well matters greatly for the sovereign because the consequences of the state’s failure are very disagreeable to both the sovereign and the people. In Hobbes’s view, to the office of the sovereign is attached the obligation to govern according to the dictates of right reason; and failure to meet this obligation leads inevitably to dramatic consequences as in a cause-effect relationship. Any attempt on the part of the sovereign to use his power in a way that jeopardizes civil peace, places the sovereign and the individual in the relationship of war. This

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152 De Cive, III, 27, note; see also Leviathan, XV, 38.
153 What I have in mind here is the type of obligation that binds a pilot of an airplane. Once the airplane takes off, it would be suicidal for a pilot not to pilot according to the norms; either he abides by what is prescribed and reaches his destination, or he neglects to observe the norms of piloting and faces the consequence, which is death. Hobbes’s view on the duty of the sovereign is very similar to the duty of a pilot in the air. The analogy between piloting and ruling may not hold in many respects, but the point of the analogy is simply that there are duties such as to neglect to fulfill it amounts to inflicting self-destruction.
type of obligation, whose compelling force resides in the very nature of the work to be undertaken, is often overlooked by most of the commentators, and yet it is of crucial importance in Hobbes’s view of the office of the sovereign. He clearly maintains, “he that will do any thing for his pleasure, must engage himselfe to suffer all the pains annexed to it... And hereby it come to passe, that... negligent government of Princes [is naturally punished] with Rebellion.”

This remark is echoed in passages previously quoted from *Behemoth* where Hobbes indicates that some of the king’s actions were responsible to his own destruction. In short, for Hobbes, the office of the sovereign is such as the individual holder of the political power must fulfill his duties, or else he has to face the consequences. In addition to moral obligation, the Hobbesian ruler has an obligation attached to the very nature of his office, and which he cannot neglect at the risk of suffering dramatic negative consequences.

3. 2. 2. The Hobbesian Sovereign and the Moral Virtue of Gratitude

The second Hobbesian proper way to govern well is essentially deduced from the theoretical form of the political authority that arises from the statement, *I Authorize*, but its application extends also validly to a commonwealth established by conquest. As mentioned above, in Hobbes’s view, the sovereign is regarded as a third-party beneficiary of the political power resulting from the agreement between individual members of the political association. Hobbes regards political authority as a free gift from the covenanting parties that create the civil association. The big question in governing the state is, accordingly, what is the implication of this view of the sovereign as the beneficiary of the free gift of political power? Before answering this question, it is important to indicate that, in this subsection, my interpretation is based on Hobbes’s view that the laws of nature apply to both the individual holder of the sovereign power

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154 *Leviathan*, XXXI, 40, 253-254.
and the subject. In a passage previously quoted, he clearly maintains that, to the precepts of laws of nature, “a Soveraign is as much subject, as any of the meanest of his people.”

In all of his three major political works, Hobbes consistently declares that the receiver of a free gift must avoid actions that would make the giver regret his good will. In the *Elements of Law*, he mainatains, “That no man suffer him, that thus trusteth to his charity, or good affection towards him, to be in the worse estate for his trusting.” He expresses the same idea in *De Cive* by saying, “If someone has conferred a benefit on you, relying on your good faith [‘fiducia tua’], do not let him lose on it;” and in *Leviathan*, “That a man which receiveth Benefit from another of meer Grace, Endeavour that he which giveth it, have no reasonable cause to repent him of his good will.” Thus, as subject to the precepts of laws of nature and beneficiary of a free gift, the Hobbesian sovereign is called to exercise his political power in accordance with this natural law that prescribes how a free gift should be used by the beneficiary in relation to the giver.

Before making further interpretation of this natural law in relation to the art of governing, some brief remarks need to be made. First, in all of his three major political works, Hobbes discusses the law of nature that dictates gratitude immediately after discussing the notion of justice, and seems to give them a particular importance in creating and maintaining peace. A close reading of Hobbes’s texts indicates that the two virtues, justice and gratitude, have in common the feature of being the condition of possibility for the maintenance of the political association. He maintains that without justice “we are still in the condition of Warre,” and without the virtue of gratitude there would be “no beginning of benevolence, or trust; nor

155 *Leviathan*, XXX, 15, 237.
156 *Elements of Law*, XVI, 6.
157 *De Cive*, III, 8.
158 *Leviathan*, XV, 16, 105.
159 Ibid., XV, 1, 100.
consequently of mutual help . . . and therefore they [human beings] are to remain still in the condition of War.” Thus, in Hobbes’s view, the law of nature that dictates justice requires as its precondition the law of nature that dictates gratitude; the former is not possible without the latter, and both are key virtues for the creation and maintenance of a political society. The big question to answer is, in whose conduct precisely does Hobbes recommend gratitude as the primary virtue for the maintenance of peace?

According to some commentators, gratitude is the primary moral virtue of the citizen of the Hobbesian state. Mary Dietz maintains that “Hobbes made gratitude a civic virtue because it is the quality that keeps men disposed toward mutual reciprocity.” Since the Hobbesian state lies on trust and mutual help between citizens, the gratitude of each one toward every other is what inclines members of political society to keep on giving assistance to each other.

Hobbes does indicate that gratitude is a virtue expected in subjects for the promotion and maintenance of peace. Dietz’s interpretation of gratitude as an incentive to mutual help between citizens is interesting. However, her interpretation does not shed more light on why Hobbes makes it a key element for peace in the same capacity as justice. Further clarification needs to be made. Hobbes maintains that gratitude is a “cheerful acceptation” of a gift but, speaking of the relationship between children and their parents, he also indicates that gratitude requires that children acknowledge the benefit of their education by honoring their parents. In other words, gratitude is a friendly attitude reflected in a cheerful acceptation of a free gift and in the acknowledgement of a benefit received. In the Hobbesian state, peace, safety, freedom, and all other social goods that individuals enjoy are regarded as benefits (and not properly as free

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160 _Leviathan_, XV, 16, 105.
162 _Leviathan_, XI, 7, 71.
163 Ibid., XXX, 11, 235.
gifts) resulting from mutual keeping of the social covenant. For Hobbes, however, these benefits are possible only under the authority of the sovereign, without which covenants “are but Words.” Importantly, Hobbes notes that without the sovereign’s “visible power to keep them [men] in awe, and tye them by feare of punishment to the performance of their Covenants and observation of those of Lawes of Nature,” there is only a miserable condition of war. Thus, understood in light of the relationship between children and parents, gratitude can be regarded as a civic virtue for the citizens in reference to the benefits they receive from their social life thanks to the authority of the sovereign. In the Hobbesian state, a friendly attitude toward the sovereign is best shown through obedience to his command, which Hobbes regards precisely as the condition sine qua non for civil peace. Hence, Dietz’s concept of grateful citizenry should be taken to refer to people’s friendly attitude to the sovereign’s command in acknowledgement for the benefits they enjoy thanks to his authority.

In the Hobbesian state, gratitude is much better interpreted as the primary virtue of the sovereign, and there are passages where Hobbes clearly speaks of gratitude as virtue expected in the sovereign. Speaking of the sovereign’s duty to punish and reward his subjects, Hobbes maintains that the punishment of an innocent by the sovereign is against the law of nature “which forbiddeth ingratitude,” and rewarding with money “a Popular ambitious Subject” who disturbs civil peace in order to keep him quiet and stop him “from making ill impressions in the mindes of the People” is not “a sign of Gratitude, but of Fear.” These two passages provide a clear indication of gratitude as the virtue of the sovereign in governing a civil association, but the most relevant indication lies in Hobbes’s conception of the sovereign as the

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164 *Leviathan*, XVII, 2, 117.
165 Ibid., XVII, 1, 117.
166 Ibid., XXVIII, 22, 219.
167 Ibid., XXX, 24, 241.
beneficiary of the free gift of his people’s natural right of self-governing. Bernard Gert explains well the reason of the correspondence that Hobbes makes between justice and gratitude in the following terms: “gratitude is the primary moral virtue of the sovereign, whereas justice is the primary moral virtue of the citizens; ingratitude is the primary vice of the sovereign, whereas injustice is the primary vice of the citizens. The parallelism explains why gratitude comes right after justice in Hobbes’s list of the laws of nature.” However, what is debatable in Gert’s explanation of gratitude as the virtue of the sovereign is that he does not explain it in connection with Hobbes’s solemn statement previously quoted, “The finall Cause, End, or Designe of men, (who naturally love Liberty, and Dominion over others,) in the introduction of that restraint upon themselves, (in which wee see them live in Commonwealths,) is the foresight of their preservation, and of a more contented life thereby.” No virtue, whether it is the virtue of the citizen or that of the sovereign, can be understood in isolation from this famous statement that opens Hobbes’s account of the creation of the commonwealth. In his explanation of the terms free gift, Hobbes maintains, “when we say a Guift is Free, there is not meant any Liberty of the Guift, but of the Giver, that was not bound by any law, or covenant to give it.” In this sense, the political authority is said to be a free-gift not because human beings are disinterested benefactors, but because they were not under any constraint in their act of making the gift. The free gift of the political authority is made essentially for security reasons and in the hope of enjoying a more contented life. It is Hobbes’s consistent view that “without . . . security there is no reason for a man to deprive himself of his own advantages.” Thus, the hope to live in peace, to preserve their lives, and to obtain things necessary for a more contented life are

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169 Leviathan, XVII, 1, 117.
170 Ibid., XXI, 2, 146.
171 Elements of Law, XX, 5.
altogether the reason of their gift to the sovereign. Hence, the most reasonable cause that would make the benefactors regret their act of good will would be the frustration against this reason for which the gift has been given.

The second remark follows from the first and concerns another key element in Hobbes’s understanding of a free-gift. Very importantly, for Hobbes, there is no law that can oblige a person to give away his natural right of self governing.\(^{172}\) If a person abandons his natural right of self governing, it can only be in hope of obtaining some good greater than what he has in hands. In the same paragraph where Hobbes speaks of the natural law of gratitude, he also speaks of his well known principle that I have quoted above, and that he regards as fundamental and essential to human motivation, namely, “of all the Voluntary Acts, the Object is to every man his own Good.”\(^{173}\) In the Elements of Law, he underlines that this principle is true “by necessity of nature.”\(^{174}\) Hobbes treatment of gratitude and the good of the agent can be seen as a clear indication that there is a connection between these two concepts. The most obvious connection is that, for Hobbes, even the act of giving a free gift, as a voluntary act, must be regarded as somehow motivated by the hope of obtaining some good. The hope of the benefactor to obtain some good is part of the key elements in Hobbes’s understanding of a free-gift.\(^{175}\) This is clear when Hobbes maintains that in transferring a right as a free-gift, the benefactor

\(^{172}\) Leviathan, XXVII, 25, 208.

\(^{173}\) It is worth noting that Hobbes formulates this statement in absolute terms to include any act that can be described as voluntary.

\(^{174}\) Elements of Law, XVI, 6.

\(^{175}\) It is important to mention here that in the first chapter I mentioned the group of commentators who reject the traditional reading of Hobbes’s theory of motivation in terms of psychological egoism. In their perspective, which I espouse, the terms the good of the agent should not necessarily be taken in an egoistic sense. Thus, in a non-egoistic perspective, the good that a benefactor hopes to obtain can be simply to share the joy of the gift with the receiver, or to see the receiver happy to have the gift (as in the case of a parent offering a gift to his child), and not necessarily to expect any objective good in return. In Hobbes’s view, the only expectation a benefactor has from the receiver of a gift is not to make the benefactor have reasonable cause to regret his good action. To put it differently, the least a benefactor expects from the receiver is a behavior that makes him (the benefactor) regret his good will. In the Elements of Law, Hobbes indicates that the reward that a benefactor expects from the beneficiary is that the gift be well used; and no gift can be well used by causing harm to the giver.
“transfereth [it], in hope to gain thereby friendship, or service from another, or from his friends; or in hope to gain the reputation of Charity, or Magnanimity; . . . or in hope of reward in heaven.”\textsuperscript{176} In this passage, Hobbes’s use of \textit{hope} to explain the reason of the gift indicates clearly the importance he accords to this term. The repeated use of the term \textit{hope} can be seen as an indication of how to be grateful to a benefactor. The best way for sovereigns to show gratitude to the people is to strive “to the utmost of their endeavour,”\textsuperscript{177} or “as much as possibly they can,”\textsuperscript{178} to govern in a way that fulfills the hope of the people.

One may ask whether the Hobbesian sovereign is still a beneficiary of a free gift, and whether the hope of the benefactor creates any obligation on the part of the beneficiary. To this question, the answer is that to say that the benefactor has some hope is not to imply that the beneficiary has the obligation to fulfill this hope. For Hobbes, free gift creates some sort of obligation toward the benefactor only if the latter is someone “to whom we think our selves equall” or whom we acknowledge as superior.\textsuperscript{179} In Hobbes, the people who offer the gift of political authority are not equal or superior to the sovereign. With regard to the relation between the sovereign and his subjects, Hobbes maintains that the honor of the sovereign is so great that, in his presence, the subjects “shine no more than the Starres in the presence of the Sun.”\textsuperscript{180} Thus, it would be inaccurate to interpret Hobbes as saying that the sovereign, as the beneficiary of a gift, owes something to the people, as beneficiaries. In the context of political society, it is the beneficiary who is the superior, not the benefactor. However, in Hobbes, it clearly appears that the free-gift of the natural right of self-governing to the sovereign is accompanied with a strong expectation on the part of the benefactors to live in peace, to preserve their lives, and to satisfy

\textsuperscript{176} \textit{Leviathan}, XIV, 12, 94.
\textsuperscript{177} \textit{Elements of Law}, XXVIII, 1.
\textsuperscript{178} \textit{De Cive}, XIII, 2.
\textsuperscript{179} \textit{Leviathan}, XI, 7, 71.
\textsuperscript{180} Ibid., XVIII, 19, 128.
their desire of “things necessary to commodious living.”\textsuperscript{181} Thus, the sovereign is a beneficiary of a free gift because the reason why the gift is given does not necessarily entail or create any obligation on the part of the beneficiary. However, this reason adds more weight to the idea of endeavoring to act in such a way that the benefactor has no reasonable cause to regret his good will.

In light of these remarks, it is legitimate to maintain that understanding the natural law of gratitude is crucial to understanding how to govern a state. Although gratitude is expected in subjects, it is primarily the virtue of the sovereign. For Hobbes, every ruler of a political society receives his authority as a free gift, and in this regard, he should govern out of gratitude. The Hobbesian foundational statement \textit{I authorize and give up my right to this man or to this assembly of men} can be interpreted and well understood only in light of “no man giveth, but with the intention of Good to himself; because . . . of all Voluntary Acts, the Object is to every man his own Good.”\textsuperscript{182} In Hobbes, this latter statement comes before the former as its condition of possibility. To paraphrase Hobbes, there would be no beginning of the sentence \textit{I authorize} if the statement “\textit{all voluntary acts, the object is to every man his own good}” were meaningless to the agent. In other words, if someone says \textit{I authorize} in a context where the statement \textit{all voluntary acts, the object is to every man his own good} makes no sense, Hobbes would say that such an individual should not “be understood as if he meant it because he cannot be understood to ayme thereby, at any Good to himselfe.”\textsuperscript{183} In the Hobbesian state, political authority is regarded essentially as a gift given with the hope of producing some benefits to the benefactor. The main

\textsuperscript{181} \textit{Leviathan}, XIII, 14, 90.
\textsuperscript{182} Ibid., XV, 16, 105. Hobbes’s theory of the state should be understood in light of this passage because, as I will argue below, in Hobbes’s view, political power is a free gift and civil society is a result of voluntary act, made for the good of the agent.
\textsuperscript{183} Ibid., XIV, 8, 93.
good that is hoped for is the protection of the benefactor and a promotion of conditions favorable for a more contented life.

In Hobbes’s view, though the sovereign is not a contracting party, and hence, under no obligation to fulfill the hope of his benefactors, it is dangerous for him to be ungrateful in the exercise of his authority. If he chooses to be ungrateful by making his people regret their act of creating a sovereign, he undermines the very possibility of peace. As mentioned above, such an attitude is punished with the disagreeable consequence of rebellion, which leads the people to attempt to regain their natural rights, including the right to kill the sovereign if they think doing so will make them more secure. Hence, the political authority should always be exercised out of gratitude; and to govern out of gratitude is to use the political power well, that is, to use it solely for the purpose for which it has been created. The sovereign’s attitude of gratitude is a crucial element that inclines people to keep on offering their obedience and cooperation.

3. 2. 3. A More Certain Rule of Action: The Principle of Reciprocity

In Hobbes’s view, to create and maintain conditions favorable for lasting peace, it is crucially important that the ruler of the political association knows and understands the passions and desires of other human beings like himself; he “must read in himself, not this or that particular man; but Man-kind,” and discern passions, desires, fears, hopes, etc, “which are the same in all men.” Key to understanding Hobbes’s view on how to govern a political association lies in the importance that he attaches to this rule of reciprocity. Hobbes recommends the principle of reciprocity as the guiding rule of action for the political authority in the State. Before examining the importance that he accords to this principle in governing the state, it is useful to explain what it represents in Hobbes’s moral and political philosophy.

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184 *Leviathan*, Introduction, 11.
Thomas Hobbes underlines the fundamental importance of the principle of reciprocity for the maintenance of civil peace: “at the entrance into conditions of peace, no man require to reserve to himself any right, which he is not content should be reserved to every one of the rest.”\(^\text{185}\) In his view, the principle of reciprocity constitutes an essential thread in the fabric of a political association. This principle is the condition *sine qua non* for the formation and maintenance for a significant length of time of any political association. It is the solid ground for civil peace and key to any political association whose existence depends on mutual commitment to pursue peace. Through this principle, Hobbes conveys the idea that, in political society, if I have reason to place demands on others for peace, I must be able to allow others to do the same.

Strictly speaking, in Hobbes, reciprocity is a normative moral principle in human relationships and interactions between equals. Hobbes’s strong belief in natural human equality can be regarded as the underlying support for the justification of the golden rule in human interaction. His overall view regarding equality is that we apply the same set of standards to everyone, without exempting ourselves from rules that we apply to others.\(^\text{186}\) One can see, for example, his insistence on equality of right or of all subjects before the law. In the Elements of Law, he maintains that, in civil society, a man “should esteem his neighbour worthy [of] all rights and privileges that he himself enjoyeth; attribute unto him, whatsoever he looketh should be attributed unto himself.”\(^\text{187}\) He reformulates this idea in *De Cive* by stating that the law of nature “commands every man to allow the same Rights to others they would be allow’d themselves.”\(^\text{188}\)

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\(^\text{185}\) *Leviathan*, XV, 22, 107.

\(^\text{186}\) This interpretation is consistent with Hobbes’s overall view regarding equality.

\(^\text{187}\) *Elements of Law*, XVIII, 6.

\(^\text{188}\) *De Cive*, IV, 12.
From our perception as equals, we are also required to conduct ourselves in a way that would also justify others in conducting themselves in the same way as we do. In other words, in our conduct we must be able to give reasons that justify our equals to do the same. One acts toward another person as equal to himself when one does what he would judge another person justified in doing the same. In responding to the objection of the Foole according to which one can break the covenant if it is in one’s interest to do so, Hobbes clearly indicates that, for the sake of the very possibility of peaceful coexistence with others, one should not simply take into consideration his own well-being as a criterion of one’s action. In Hobbes’s view, to free oneself from the obligation to justify one’s action from another person’s standpoint, is to create the condition of war. The fool represents the typical non-rational agent because he cannot justify his action from another person’s standpoint.

The principle of reciprocity requires that we accept as justifying another person’s action the same consideration that we provide to justify our own. Since all human beings are equal by nature, reciprocity must be the regulatory principle of every social and political interaction. This normative rule of conduct is clearly expressed in all of Hobbes’s

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189 *De Cive*, XV, 4.

190 According to most of the commentators of the traditional line of interpretation, such as Gauthier and Kavka, rationality in Hobbes is measured by the successful realization of the individual’s self-interests; rationality is but a mere correct calculation of how to achieve an end for personal benefit (see Gauthier’s interpretation of Hobbesian rational action in terms of “maximizing view of rational action,” in *Moral by agreement*, 159). In *Hobbesian Moral and Political Theory*, Gregory Kavka also describes Hobbes’s theory of action in terms of the realization of individual’s immediate own benefit. This interpretation does not correspond to what Hobbes presents in *Leviathan*. Hobbes points out that an end can be achieved in many ways, among which are deception and violence (see his discussion on the reasoning of the fool in *Leviathan*, XV, 4, 101-2). If actions that conduce to an end by means of deception or violence were rational in Hobbes’s view, then, the fool or an individual who obtains the crown of a kingdom by treason would be rational. However, in his response to the fool’s objection, Hobbes unambiguously and strongly rejects the idea that rational actions are those “that conduce most to their ends.” Such an idea of rationality is valid only in the context where there is no common power, that is, only in the state of nature. In political society, Hobbes considers as superficial the reasoning that, since “all the voluntary actions of men tend to the benefit of themselves,” rational actions are those “that conduce most to their ends.” He maintains, “This specious reasoning is . . . false” (*Leviathan*, XV, 4, 102). Hobbes’s discussion of the fool’s objection shows clearly that, in the context of political society, it is irrational to use the wrong means in order to get to an end, and focusing on one’s own benefit only is an incorrect reasoning. In political society, genuine rationality includes considerations that go beyond mere pursuit of selfish interests to embrace the common benefit.
aforementioned three major political works with the same force and emphasis. In the *Element of Law*, he maintains,

> there is an easy rule to know . . . whether the action I be to do, be against the law of nature or not: and it is but this, *That a man imagine himself in the place of the party with whom he hath to do, and reciprocally him in his*; which is no more but a changing (as it were) of the scales. . . And this rule is well known and expressed by this old dictate, *Quod tibi fieri non vis, alteri ne feceris.*"\(^1\)

In *De Cive*, he holds that all the laws of nature can be “contracted into one easie sum, intelligible, even to the meanest capacity; and that is, *Do not that to another, which thou wouldest not have done to thy selfe.*”\(^2\) In *Leviathan*, he mentions the principle of reciprocity twice; the first, where he quotes the “Law of the Gospell: Whatsoever you require that other should do to you, that do ye to them. And that Law of all men, *Quod tibi fieri non vis, alteri ne feceris;*”\(^3\) and the second, when he talks about the reasonable character of the laws of nature,

> *though this may seem too subtle a deduction of the laws of nature, to be taken notice of by all men [. . .] yet to leave all men inexcusable, they have been contracted into one easy sum, intelligible even to the meanest capacity; and that is, *Do not that to another, which thou wouldest not have done to thyself;* which sheweth him, that he has no more to do in learning the laws of nature, but, when weighing the actions of other men with his own, they seem too heavy, to put them into the other part of the balance, and his own into their place, that his own passions, and self love, may add nothing to the weight; and then there is none of these laws of nature that will not appear unto him very reasonable.*\(^4\)

\(^{1}\) *Elements of Law*, XVII, 9. It is important to mention here that, in light of the golden rule and its importance in Hobbes’s moral philosophy, I do not share the view that the primary function of Hobbes’s laws of nature is to promote the agent’s self interest. In capturing all the laws of nature in the golden rule, Hobbes’s point is clearly to say that everyone, in his interaction with others, must adopt the point of view of the other person to see if his action is good or bad. In other words, the golden rule requires that, in social interaction, every agent should identify himself with the good and interest of the other party, and in so doing the purpose is not primarily to advance one’s own interest, but to promote “peaceable, sociable, and comfortable” conditions of life.

\(^{2}\) *Leviathan*, XV, 35, 109.

\(^{3}\) Ibid., XIV, 5, 92.

\(^{4}\) Ibid., XV, 35, 109-10.
The purpose of this rule, which Hobbes uses in its both versions (negative and positive), is to avoid harming (negative version) and to do good to (positive version) others. The point that Hobbes is clearly trying to make in his use of the golden rule is that every rational agent must adopt not a point of view that favors him in his interaction with others, but rather a point of view that takes into consideration the good and the interests of others as well.

As briefly shown, the principle of reciprocity concerns social interactions between equals, and its purpose is to make the individual an impartial agent by identifying himself with the good and the interest of others. However, concerning the relation between the sovereign and the people, Hobbes maintains,

And as the Power, so also the Honour of the Soveraign, ought to be greater, than that of any, or all the Subjects. For in the Soveraignty is the fountain of Honour. . . As in the presence of the Master, the Servants are equall, and without any honour at all; So are the Subjects, in the presence of the Soveraign. And though they shine some more, some lesse, when they are out of his sight; yet in his presence, they shine no more than the Starres in the presence of the Sun.  

In other words the relation between the sovereign and his people is a relation between unequal beings. Hobbes clearly places the sovereign out of the sphere of the subjects. However, he gives an indication in his thinking that the principle of reciprocity can also legitimately be seen as a normative guiding principle in governing the state. In De Homine, Hobbes provides a striking remark on his understanding of how the ruler should use the sovereign power over his citizens:

God himself, because he hath made men rational, hath enjoined the following law on them, and hath inscribed it in all hearts: that no one should do unto another that which he would consider inequitable for the other to do unto him. In this precept are contained both universal justice and civil obedience. For who would not judge it inequitable, if he were constituted by the people with the highest sovereignty in the

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195 Leviathan, XVIII, 19, 128.
state, in order to rule and to issue laws, for his laws to be spurned, or his authority overlooked, not to mention disputed, by any subject whatsoever? Therefore, if, when you were a king, you judged this to be inequitable, would you not have, in law, a most certain rule for your actions?196

Hobbes’s argument in this quotation concerns the citizen’s obedience to the ruler, but a close reading of this statement shows that he extends implicitly the rule of reciprocity to the relation between the ruler and the ruled by using a role-changing argument. The use of role-changing argument indicates that Hobbes would expect the holder of the sovereign power to accept and adhere to the principle of reciprocity as a guiding principle in the exercise of his power. It is also important to notice in this quotation Hobbes’s reference to “both universal justice and civil obedience.” This reference echoes his main intention mentioned above to instruct his readers “both how to govern, and how to obey.”197 Hobbes recommends the science of universal justice as the necessary science for every individual who is in the position of authority. As he maintains in concluding the second and center part of Leviathan, “the Science of Naturall Justice, is the onely Science necessary for Soveraigns, and their principall Ministers.”198 In other words, the knowledge of universal justice refers to those who need to know how to govern. In this regard, Hobbes would not deny the use of his role-changing test to apply to the sovereign in order to derive a correct use of his essential rights of sovereignty. Thus, from the above quotation, it can be inferred that just as the actual ruler, were he subject, would like the ruler to exercise his essential rights, so must he rule the state in the same way. In relation to governing the state, the Hobbesian principle of reciprocity can be formulated in the form of the Kantian hypothetical

196 De Homine, XIV, 5, 73.
197 Leviathan, XXXI, 41, 254.
198 Ibid.
imperative as follow: *rule the state in such a way that your policy is to be applied to yourself.*

In light of Hobbes’s use of role-changing argument, this can be seen as an ethico-political imperative for a good government of the state. In other words, applying the principle of reciprocity is not merely a political choice but also a necessary moral requirement in ruling if peace, safety, and contented life are the ultimate goal. To govern well the state, the exercise of the sovereign’s essential rights must be conjoined with the moral obligation to exercise power only in accordance with the principle of reciprocity.

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199 The principle of reciprocity sheds light on Hobbes’s view on civil punishment that I used as an illustration in the previous section. It is legitimate to maintain that, in advocating for a penal system in which malefactors are treated only with a view to future good, Hobbes is recommending to use the right of punishing in a way that is consistent with the principle of reciprocity, that is, the way the ruler would accept if he were a subject.
Chapter 4 - THE HOBBESIAN FOUR BENEFITS

Introduction

Hobbes’s theory of the state is adequately read when his advocacy for political absolutism is balanced by his injunction to the sovereign to secure safety and to promote conditions of life in which people can live a more contented life. His political philosophy abounds with statements that clearly show his intention to commit the sovereign to his primary and fundamental duty to secure the safety of the people. Any attribute that he attaches to the sovereign is intended only to ensure that the sovereign is able or can act to advance this fundamental objective. In the previous chapter, I have argued that putting too much emphasis on Hobbes’s idea of absolute sovereignty, as some commentators do, overshadows his advocacy for civil society as a frame of life created essentially for the flourishing of the citizen. In a strictly Hobbesian perspective, all the actions and policy of the sovereign must be of a nature to make the citizens feel safe and to enable them to live a more contented life.

As already indicated, in Hobbes, safety is the main benefit that people expect to derive in opting to live in a political association. In his explication, Hobbes indicates in all of his three major political works that the notion of safety must include people’s “benefit and good,”¹ their enjoyment of a happy life,² and of “all other Contentments of life.”³ The present chapter is an examination of some benefits that Hobbes enjoins every sovereign to secure for his people in order that they may live a more contented life. This examination will be made through the two main functions that the sovereign is called to fulfill, namely, the protective function and the

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1 *Elements of Law*, XXVIII, 1.
2 *De Cive*, XIII, IV.
3 *Leviathan*, XXX, 1, 231.
welfare function. As many commentators note, in Hobbes the sovereign’s duty to secure the safety of the people can be subdivided broadly into these two functions.

The protective function consists in securing peace domestically and internationally; in Hobbes’s own terms, defending the people “from the invasion of the Forraigners, and the injuries of one another.”\(^4\) In *Leviathan*, Hobbes indicates also that the welfare function consists in securing the people “in such sort, as that by their owne industrie, and by the fruites of the Earth, they may nourish themselves and live contentedly.”\(^5\) Speaking of the duty of the sovereign in the *Elements of Law*, he makes the following observation: “the commodity of living consisteth in liberty and wealth.”\(^6\) Thus, in addition to the protective function, the welfare function of the Hobbesian sovereign can be translated into the provision of the three following benefits: (1) a more contented life; (2) the exercise of a more effective liberty; (3) and the enrichment or enjoyment of prosperity. In *De Cive*, Hobbes presents concisely these four benefits in the following terms: “The benefits of the subjects respecting this life only, may be distributed into foure kindes. 1 That they be defended against forraign enemies. 2. That Peace be preserved at home. 3. That they be enrich’t as much as may consist with publique security. 4. That they enjoy a harmless liberty.”\(^7\)

Before examining these benefits, it is worth understanding first the reason behind Hobbes’s preoccupation to providing an explication of what he means by the safety of the people. In all of his three major political works, the *Elements of Law*, *De Cive*, and *Leviathan*, Hobbes takes a great deal of care to explicate his understanding of the notion of safety, but it is remarkable that most commentators seem to overlook this explication, and attribute to him the

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\(^4\) *Leviathan*, XVII, 12, 120.
\(^5\) Ibid., XVII, 12, 120.
\(^6\) *Elements of Law*, XXVIII, 4.
\(^7\) *De Cive*, XIII, 6.
notion of safety that does not always fit with the explication he provides. In reading Hobbes’s writings, the big question a reader may legitimately ask is, why does he feel the need to explicate what he means by safety?

1. The Reason of Hobbes’s Explication of the Concept of Safety

In his book *People, States, and Fear*, Barry Buzan remarks that security is “an essentially contested concept” because it can be applied in many different ways. Like the concepts of power, justice, peace, equality, and freedom, security is one of those “concepts that necessarily generate unsolvable debate among their meaning and application;” and the reason is because security is a multidimensional concept that encompasses a broad range of issues. Since there are many types of insecurities that can affect the well-being and the security of the people, the concept of security can be considered at various levels, including political, economic, social, and environmental. In addition, security can also be examined at three different levels, international, national, and individual; and what is true at one level is not necessarily applicable at another level. Thus, since the concept of security can be considered in relation to different types of threat and at various levels, it carries different connotations; different types of threats and levels generating different connotations of the notion of security. In this regard, the use of the concept of security always necessitates an additional explication.

It is Hobbes’s well known view that “security is the end wherefore men submit themselves to others; which if it be not had, no man is suppos’d to have submitted himselfe to ought, or to have quitted his Right to all things, before that there was a care had of his

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9 Ibid., 6.
security.” Providing security constitutes the heart of his vision of the political institution created out of the state of war. In the literature, within the field of security studies, Hobbes is commonly associated with realists, those who develop the conception of security in terms of freedom from fear of violence, but violence understood in the most literal sense of physical violence. The main reason of this association of Hobbes with realists is the idea of conflict and war underlying his theory of the state. As mentioned previously, fear of war is in the heart of Hobbes’s understanding of the notion of safety, in the sense that war is regarded as the main threat from which people have to be protected. In this sense, to secure the safety of the people is to free them from war and its consequences.

While it is true that the problem that Hobbes is trying to solve in his political philosophy is the reality and recurrence of civil war that threatens the safety of the people, it is inadequate in reference to war to reduce his notion of safety to mere freedom from physical violence. Hobbes is very clear on the view that the office of the sovereign is far more than a mere securing of physical survival. Besides, as indicated in the second chapter, his notion of war is more complex than it looks at first sight. It goes beyond the mere act of fighting and of engaging in a violent conflict to refer to any social context or political state of affairs characterized by the predominance of a paralyzing fear in people’s lives. For Hobbes, acts of fighting, or physical violence, do not exhaust the meaning of war. Any highly fearful, intolerable, and unacceptable social order that makes life wearisome is a condition of war. This broad and complex notion of war points to a concept of safety that is broad enough to include any warlike situation from which people have to be protected. For instance, in a strictly Hobbesian perspective, a condition

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10 De Cive, VI, 3.
11 Throughout the present study I argue that, for Hobbes, to provide security does not mean simply to protect from bodily harm but also from any harm that makes life wearisome. For a Hobbesian man, conditions of life that frustrate the desire to live a more contented life, which include the enjoyment of honor and dignity, is as hateful as conditions of physical violence.
of life marked by intolerable social injustice that reduces life expectancy of those who suffer it, is as violent as actual war. Such a condition of life not only leads ultimately to violence but also does actually cause premature and unnecessary deaths. In this regard, to secure the safety of the people is to protect them from experiencing such an intolerable social injustice that is responsible for premature, preventable, and unnecessary death. In other words, if safety is protection from war, and war is not only actual fighting, or act of physical violence, but any intolerable social condition of life susceptible to cause a premature, preventable, and unnecessary death, then, to secure the safety of the people is to free them from any of such intolerable and unacceptable social and political condition of life. It has been indicated in the first chapter that Hobbesian man fears violent death, averts dishonorable life, fears conditions of life marked by scarcity of resources and want of basic necessities for survival, and any condition that makes death preferable to life. In this regard, a Hobbesian man sees himself in the condition of safety when the causes of all these fears are removed or significantly reduced. As one can see, the Hobbesian concept of safety entails more than mere freedom from physical violence; and this explains why Hobbes takes a great deal of care to explicate what should be understood by safety. In his explication, he clearly indicates that securing bare life or mere physical survival is not the whole story in the notion of safety. He maintains, in the Elements of Law, “Salus populi suprema lex; by which must be understood, not the mere preservation of their lives, but generally their

12 Hobbes’s notion of violent death is precisely well translated by premature and unnecessary death. In Hobbes, this idea of violent death is opposed to “living out the time, which nature ordinarily alloweth men to live” (Leviathan, XIV, 4, 91). In this sense, any death that is preventable is unnecessary, and thus, violent. Deaths resulting from hunger in a developing country (potentially rich), or from the inability to access a costly health care system in a developed country, can be regarded as violent, as long as these deaths are preventable and unnecessary.

13 It is worth mentioning that, in a strictly Hobbesian perspective, a condition of life marked by social injustice is a breach of contract that unites people and the sovereign. Such a condition jeopardizes life and can be seen by Hobbesian men as sufficient reason to absolve themselves of their obedience to the sovereign (Leviathan, XXI, 21, 153).

14 Leviathan, XIII, 8, 88-89.
benefit and good;”\textsuperscript{15} in \textit{De Cive}, “By safety one should understand not mere survival in any condition, but a happy life so far as that is possible;”\textsuperscript{16} and in \textit{Leviathan}, “by Safety here, is not meant a bare Preservation, but also all other Contentments of life.”\textsuperscript{17}

Felix Oppenheim remarks, “the elucidation of the language of political science is by no means an idle exercise in semantics, but in many instances a most effective way to solve substance problems of research.”\textsuperscript{18} According to Openheim, one of the reasons for providing an explication of a concept is to draw attention to the important aspects of the subject matter that might easily be overlooked.\textsuperscript{19} Thus, in explicating how the term safety should be understood, Hobbes is clearly trying to draw attention to what he regards as an important aspect of this concept that a reader should not fail to consider. The phrases \textit{by which must be understood}, \textit{by safety one should understand}, and \textit{by safety here, is not meant}, are crucially important. These phrases indicate a specific way Hobbes wants his notion of safety to be understood. Therefore, any interpretation of this concept that leaves out what follows from these phrases is inadequate, or simply inaccurate.

In all of his three aforementioned works, when he speaks of safety, Hobbes indicates clearly what the notion of \textit{the safety of the people} must include: “their benefit and good,”\textsuperscript{20} the enjoyment of “a happy life so far as that is possible,”\textsuperscript{21} and of “all other contentment of life.”\textsuperscript{22} These phrases are clearly intended to indicate that mere physical survival is not worthwhile, and hence, freedom from physical violence is not enough for an individual to count himself in the

\begin{flushleft}
\textsuperscript{15} \textit{Elements of Law}, XXVIII, 1.
\textsuperscript{16} \textit{De Cive}, XIII, 4.
\textsuperscript{17} \textit{Leviathan}, XXX, 1, 231.
\textsuperscript{19} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{20} \textit{Elements of Law}, XXVIII, 1.
\textsuperscript{21} \textit{De Cive}, XIII, 4.
\textsuperscript{22} \textit{Leviathan}, XXX, 1, 231.
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state of security. To put it differently, in Hobbes’s view, the sovereign cannot be said to fulfill his duty when all that he does is only to secure mere physical survival or bare preservation of the lives of his people. It is Hobbes’s consistent view that people join civil association in order to “live securely, happily, and elegantly.” Hence, the Hobbesian sovereign genuinely fulfills his duty when he creates conditions that allow his people to live “a happy life so far as that is possible,” or to procure to themselves “all other contentment of life, which every man by lawful industry . . . shall acquire to himself.”

In short, it can be maintained that, in saying by safety should be understood, Hobbes is inviting his readers not to consider the concept of safety in its usual meaning as mere protection against physical violence, but to go beyond and consider human security in its wholeness. From his explication, it clearly appears that the Hobbesian concept of safety entails two demands. On the one hand, it entails the demand of securing the conditions of life such as people may have what is necessary for “living out the time, which nature ordinarily alloweth men to live” and, on the other hand, the demand of securing the social and political conditions for living a more contented life, that is, a happy, enjoyable, and honorable life. Hence, to say I am safe in a strictly Hobbesian sense amounts to saying that I live in a social and political environment favorable for the enjoyment of a more contented life, which includes protection of my physical integrity and conditions favorable for my economic welfare, mental and psychological well-being. Any condition of life that is a threat not only to my physical integrity but also to my economic, mental, and psychological well-being is a warlike condition from which I need protection from the sovereign. Thus, in Hobbes’s view, a safe civil society is

24 De Cive, XIII, 4.
25 Leviathan, XXX, 1, 231.
26 Ibid., XIV, 4, 91.
essentially the one that provides to its members the possibility to live a life that is free of fear of social, psychological, political, economic threats. In light of Hobbes’s understanding of war, it can be said that the safety of the people includes security against physical violence; security of livelihoods; enjoyment of respect, honor and dignity; access to education, etc. To secure the safety of the people means to protect people’s lives, to secure their means of subsistence, and to promote conditions for their well-being and an honorable life. The Hobbesian concept of safety concerns every aspect of human life without which the enjoyment of a more contented life cannot be possible.

27 In *Leviathan*, XIV, 8, which I have quoted in the first chapter under the subsection “Safety for a Better Life,” Hobbes speaks clearly about “the security of mans person, in his life, and in the means of so preserving life, as not to be weary of it.” For Hobbes, the security of livelihoods or, in his own words, “the means of so preserving life,” is an essential component of the notion of the safety of the people.

28 Ibid., XVIII, 15, 126.

29 Very few commentators of Hobbes regard a condition of life marked by the absence of education as a war-like condition from which people have to be protected. However, Hobbes clearly describes the condition of war as a condition where people do not have access to the knowledge of the face of the earth, of account of time, of arts, of letters (*Leviathan*, XIII, 9, 89). Besides, he clearly lists “desire of knowledge” among the motives that incline people to gather in a civil association (*Leviathan*, XI, 5, 71). He goes on to observe that “Ignorance is bad; as in it there is no protection, or foresight of approaching evil” (*De Homine*, XI, 8, 49). He describes civil society as a dominion of sciences (*De Cive*, X, 1), and maintains that science “is related to the mind as food is to the body . . . They differ in this, however, that the body can become satiated with food while the mind cannot be filled up by knowledge” (*De Homine*, XI, 9, 50). From all these references, it clearly appears that, for Hobbes, education is in the heart of a genuine social and political life. Thus, it can legitimately be maintained that the Hobbesian notion of safety entails as one of its essential components the promotion of education, that is, the creation and promotion of conditions favorable to the acquisition of knowledge and science for the development of the mind. In Hobbesian perspective, a lack of access to education can be regarded as the cause of premature, unnecessary and, thus, of violent death (this is mostly verifiable in developing countries, and also to some extent within underprivileged groups in developed countries, where some deaths are merely the result of lack of education). It is very interesting also that many analysts link the rise of terrorism with lack of education. Thus, a sovereign who does not promote education of the people fails to provide them safety from threats against their well-being. Speaking of the importance of education in Hobbes’s theory of the state, it is also worth mentioning his opposition to a certain type of education. Hobbes distinguishes between a good and a wrong kind of education. He strongly believes that a good education is that which makes people fit for society (*De Cive*, I, 2, note), while a wrong one leads to terrible consequences in civil society (*De Cive*, Preface, [5] Warrender’s edition). It is because of the terrible consequences of a wrong education in civil society that he recommends that, for the sake of civil peace, education be controlled by the sovereign. Thus, Hobbes is not opposed to education as a process for the acquisition of knowledge, but he is opposed to what he regards as a wrong kind of education, more precisely, he is opposed to a subversive content of some type of education.
2. The Welfare Function

2.1. A More Contented Life

In the passage from *De Cive* previously quoted in the present study, Hobbes maintains that a civil society is instituted for peace’s sake, and peace is sought after for safety’s sake.\(^{30}\) A close reading of his texts shows that safety itself is sought for the sake of felicity, which Hobbes regards as a good that all human beings pursue in this life. However, it is very important to mention that when Hobbes speaks of felicity, his main focus is not the *best life* in Aristotelian sense,\(^ {31}\) but a life that is delightful and comfortable. The similar and equivalent expression that he also uses is that of *a more contented life*, which he clearly regards as another key element (in addition to the preservation of life) that drives human beings to the creation of the political association. As he puts it at the opening of the second part of *Leviathan*, “The finall Cause, End, or Designe of men . . . in the introduction of that restraint upon themselves . . . is the foresight of their own preservation, and of a more contented life thereby.”\(^ {32}\) Discussing the duties of the sovereign by institution in *De Cive*, Hobbes maintains,

> Those who have taken it upon themselves to exercise power in this kind of commonwealth, would be acting contrary to the law of nature (because in contravention of the trust of those who put the sovereign power into their hands) if they did not do whatever can be done by laws to ensure that the citizens are abundantly provided with all the good things necessary not just for life but for the enjoyment of life.\(^ {33}\)

These two key passages indicate that, for Hobbes, the creation of the commonwealth has no other reason than to secure people’s lives and to promote conditions of life that are more

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\(^{30}\) *De Cive*, XIII, 2.

\(^{31}\) In Aristotle, the best life always entails the exercise of moral and intellectual virtues as one of its essential components, in addition to the enjoyment of external material good. In other words, for Aristotle, there cannot be a best life without moral virtues; there is an essential connection between the virtue of character and the best life in the sense that the best life consists of practicing virtues.

\(^{32}\) *Leviathan*, XVII, 1, 117.

\(^{33}\) *De Cive*, XIII, 4.
enjoyable than the state of nature. Thus, in saying that the notion of the safety of the people should include “their benefit and good,” “a happy life so far as that is possible,” and “all other contentment of life,” Hobbes is indicating the ultimate goal and the very reason of a civil society, compared to the state of nature.

Given the importance of the idea of a happy life or a more contented life in Hobbes’s argument in favor of the creation of the political association, it is worth investigating the meaning of this idea. What does Hobbes mean when he maintains that the end of a civil society is the promotion of a happy or a more contented life? Since the concept of happy life is highly charged in the philosophical tradition, my focus in this investigation will be on the concept of a more contented life in order to avoid any misunderstanding. It should be noted that Hobbes does not really specify what he means by a more contented life, but he provides clues throughout his writings that might help us to understand what he means. Hence, the investigation of this notion will be conducted in light of three major ideas which can be regarded as clues to understand his notion of a more contented life: the idea of summum bonum, of good as a relative notion, and of felicity as continual progress.

2. 1. 1. In Light of The Question of Summum Bonum

According to Hobbes, the object of human motivation differs from person to person because individuals differ from one another in their constitution, thoughts, judgments, values, desires, aversions, etc. He goes on even further to stress that, at different times, the same individual can be different in his thoughts, tastes, desires, values etc. As he puts it, “because the constitution of a mans Body, is in continuall mutation; it is impossible that all the same things

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34 In doing so, my intention, as well as my effort, is to understand Hobbes in himself and to avoid any distortion that may result from reading his thought through any other philosopher who has developed the notion of happy life.
should always cause in him the same Appetites, and Aversions: much lesse can all men consent, in the Desire of almost any one of the same Object.” From this conviction of continual change, Hobbes comes to the conclusion that

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\text{[t]he greatest good, or as it is called, felicity and the final end, cannot be attained in the present life. For if the end be final, there would be nothing to long for, nothing to desire; whence it follows not only that nothing would itself be a good from that time on, but also that man would not even feel. For all sense is conjoined with some appetite or aversion; and not to feel is not to live.}\]

He expresses the same view in *Leviathan* in almost similar terms, “there is no such a thing as perpetuall Tranquility of mind, while we live here; because Life it selfe is but Motion, and can never be without Desire, nor without Fear, no more than without Sense.” Hence, “there is no such *Finis Ultimus*, (utmost ayme,) nor *Summum Bonum*, (greatest Good),” a good the enjoyment of which the human heart might find repose. This view is one of the well-known views in which Hobbes is very consistent throughout his different works. What I would like to do here is to offer some clarifications in regard to Hobbes’s view of the good that I consider crucially important.

In rejecting the notion of *summum bonum*, Hobbes is calling for a right understanding of what should be understood by *a happy life* in civil society. It should be noted first and foremost that, in rejecting the idea of *summum bonum*, what Hobbes is denying is precisely how this notion “is spoken of in the Book of the old Morall Philosophers.” According to “the Book of the old Morall Philosophers,” at least as Hobbes understands it, *summum bonum* refers to a good whose possession offers the tranquility of a mind free of any desire. In *Leviathan*, he makes

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35 *Leviathan*, VI, 6, 39.
36 *De Homine*, XI, 15.
37 *Leviathan*, VI, 58, 46.
38 Ibid., XI, 1, 70.
39 Ibid., XI, 1, 70; see also *The Elements of Law*, Part I, ch. VII, 7.
an observation that captures his view on this question, “the estate of Man can never be without
some incommodity or other.”40 One cannot interpret Hobbes’s idea of happy life apart from this
remark, which Tom Sorell explains well by maintaining that what Hobbes really means is “that
however many desires people, even scientifically sophisticated people, have managed to satisfy,
there will always be further unsatisfied desires to be fulfilled, and inconveniences to be
overcome.”41 Thus, for Hobbes, a state of complete tranquility of mind is not possible in this life
because human beings are by their very nature desiring creatures. As mentioned in the first
chapter,42 for him, desiring is the most prominent aspect of a living human being; the cessation
of desire is equivalent to death, and to respond to one’s desires is to certify that one is alive. To
desire is to be moved toward what one does not have. A desiring creature is the one that is
always in motion toward something it does not have. Once one desire is satisfied, new desires
and goals take place immediately. That is why, says Hobbes, “we are not to marvel, when we
see, that as men attain to more riches, honours, or other power; so their appetite continually
growth more and more.”43 This movement from one desire to another is a movement that
continues uninterruptedly and stops only at death, which is nothing but the cessation of desire.
Therefore, a life of absolute tranquility is not only inconceivable in this life but also in
contradiction with the very idea of being alive. For, desiring is the fundamental feature of a
living human being; and the very act of desiring shows that, in our pursuit of felicity, every
achievement is but a partial (not a complete) fulfillment of our desire. Thus, what Hobbes really
denies in the notion of *summum bonum* as explained in the book of old philosophers is the idea
of a complete contentedness with our present condition: a state of mind where we have no desire

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40 *Leviathan*, XVIII, 20, 128.
42 See the subsection “Life As Motion and Human Desire for Power” in chapter I.
43 *Elements of Law*, VII, 7.
of anything whatsoever. In this life, we cannot live a life entirely free of all desire, pain, discomfort, anxiety, fear, sorrow, anger etc. In Hobbes’s view, such a life, “while we live here . . . [is] incomprehensible, as the word of Schoole-men Beatificall Vision is unintelligible.”

However, contrary to what some commentators suggest, it should be noted that Hobbes does not deny that human beings, in the pursuit of their ends, are able to enjoy a certain amount of satisfaction. In rejecting the idea of sumnum bonum, he is not claiming that we are incapable of enjoying some sort of tranquility in this life. What he does claim is simply that, in this life we cannot reach a state of complete contentedness from which there is nothing more to seek. It is also worth mentioning that to say that there cannot be a sumnum bonum is not to say that there cannot be a more contented life. Hobbes’s rejection of the idea of sumnum bonum in this life is not incompatible with his view that there is a life that can be described as a more contented life. One of the key messages that he is clearly trying to convey in his theory of the state is that there is a certain type of life that can be described as a more contented life, and that is, life in civil society, as opposed to life in the state of nature, which is “solitary, poore, nasty, brutish, and short.”

To conclude, in light of Hobbes’s rejection of the notion of sumnum bonum, understood in terms of a complete tranquility of mind, it can be said that the Hobbesian notion of a more contented life does not refer to a state of complete satisfaction of all desires, but to a state in which comfort and enjoyments are greater than fears and annoyances of life.

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44 Leviathan, VI, 58, 46.
45 Ibid., XIII, 9, 89.
2. 1. 2. In Light of the Idea of Good As a Relative Notion

To investigate Hobbes’s notion of a more contented life in light of his idea of good as a relative notion, the guiding question can be formulated as follows: does the notion of a more contented life refer to any specific way of life, or, does it refer to the possession or the enjoyment of a specific object?

In Leviathan, Hobbes maintains, “whatsoever is the object of any mans Appetite or Desire; that is it, which he for his part calleth Good: And the object of his Hate, and Aversion, Evill . . . For these words of Good and Evill, and Contemptible, are ever used with relation to the person that useth them: There being nothing simply and absolutely so.” He reproduces substantially the same idea in De Homine when he maintains, “good is said to be relative to person, place, and time. What pleaseth one man now, will displease another later; and the same holds true for everyone. For the nature of good and evil follows from the nature of circumstances.” In other words, good differs not only from one individual to another, but it can also differ from one time to another time for the same individual. As most commentators point out, Hobbes strongly believes that human beings have a wide variety of goals that they consider as good for their lives, and there is no objective order as to which of these goals is the best and should come first. In other words, people have different perceptions of good, which cannot be reduced into a one and unique perception; and there is no basis for making such a reduction or privileging one perception over another.

From the above consideration, it follows that, in a strictly Hobbesian perspective, the notion of a more contented life is relative to what an individual perceives as his good, or what one pursues as an end. Since individuals differ profoundly in what they want and in how they go

46 Leviathan, VI, 7, 39.
47 De Homine, XI, 4.
about getting what they want, this notion of *a more contented life* also differs from one person to another person. To put it in different terms, Hobbes’s notion of *a more contented life* does not incorporate any specific object the possession or enjoyment of which makes a particular life a more contented one. There is no indication in his works for supposing that his concept of *a more contented life* should be taken to refer to any specific way of life, or to the enjoyment of any specific object. Unlike Plato and Aristotle, Hobbes does not put forward any specific view of the best life in his political philosophy. In his view, there is no one form of human life by comparison with which other forms would be defective, because in the order of goods there is no objective rank or limit. Hobbes rejects the idea that there exists a certain particular form of life that is to be regarded as the best, and all other forms of life as defective because falling short of it. This being said, some important remarks must be made to avoid any misinterpretation of the relativity of Hobbes’s notion of *a more contented life*.

It is important to mention first and foremost that Hobbes’s phrase “good is said to be relative to person, place, and time” does not necessarily make him a relativist. For in the same paragraph of the passage quoted above from *De Homine* he acknowledges, “There can be a common good, and it can rightly be said of something, *it is commonly a good.*” In other words, there are things that can be objectively regarded as good by everyone. In previous chapters of the present study, it has been indicated that life and peace are among those things that everyone regards as good. It is Hobbes’s view that, in a political society, the pursuit of any end must be related to the overarching end, civil peace, which takes priority over individual ends. Thus, the pursuit of any particular good as an end should be “without danger, or hurt to the

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48 *Leviathan*, XI, 1, 70.
49 *De Homine*, XI, 4.
Commonwealth." An individual has the liberty to strive to fulfill his idea of good but only as long as this pursuit does not endanger civil peace, which is regarded as a common good. One of the clearest passages that shows that Hobbes is not relativist can be found in *Leviathan*, where he is criticizing the school of the Athenians in the following terms,

the rule of Manners, without Civill Government, is the Law of Nature; and in it, the Law Civill; that determineth what is *Honest*, and *Dishonest*; what is *Just*, and *Unjust*; and generally what is *Good*, and *Evill*; whereas they [Athenians] make the Rules of *Good*, and *Bad*, by their own *Liking*, and *Disliking*: By which means, in so great diversity of tastes, there is nothing generally agreed on; but every one doth (as far as he dares) whatsoever seemeth good in his owne eyes, to the subversion of Common-wealth.51

Another indication that Hobbes is not a relativist with regard to his conception of good lies in the view that, for him, the pursuit of what is perceived as a good by an individual should also be without danger to the individual himself. In the first chapter of the present study,52 it has been pointed out that, for Hobbes, in all normal circumstances, every rational being seeks to avoid pain and death, and to preserve his life. This conviction places limits on what a rational individual should desire and pursue as a good or goals in life. In a strictly Hobbesian perspective, everything being equal, any action, desire, and goal that conflict with the fundamental drive of self-preservation is unacceptable. Thus, although it can legitimately be said that Hobbes appears to tolerate different ways of life in a political society because of his idea of good as a relative notion, he nevertheless regards as unacceptable the pursuit of an apparent good that jeopardizes civil peace or increases the risk of death, pain, or any kind of disability for the individual.

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50 *Leviathan*, XXX, 1, 231.
51 Ibid., XLVI, 11, 461.
52 Particularly in section IV, “Human Desire for Self-preservation: Textual Evidences.”
It should also be mentioned that in saying that there is nothing simply good but only what is “relative to person, place, and time,” what Hobbes is really pointing out is, firstly, the fact that there is diversity of things that men regard as good, and, secondly and more importantly, that there is a perspectival character inherent to the good that is relative to each individual. The clue to the fact that the good is perspectival is given by the terms *circumstance, place,* and *time.* These terms indicate that a good is seen from a defined point of view, a specific condition, position and moment. The above passage where Hobbes criticizes the school of the Athenians suggests also that, for Hobbes, because of our inability to avoid this subjective perspective, the notions of honest, dishonest, just, unjust, good and evil within a commonwealth, should refer only to what is so defined by the sovereign, and not by our “own liking and disliking.” Thus, in Hobbesian perspective, to say that good is relative is not to express any relativistic view of good but mostly to point out our subjectivity (not subjectivism) in the appreciation of what is good and what is evil.

The relativity of the Hobbesian notion of *a more contented life* has an important political implication, particularly in the understanding of the office of the sovereign. Since to live a *more contented life* is not to live a predetermined specific way of life but a life that one conceives and perceives as good for himself, it follows that the duty of the sovereign is not to impose or to bring about any specific way of life (contrary to the Aristotelian ruler whose task is to make people virtuous), but only to secure the general conditions of life such as every individual might be able to pursue and obtain what seems good for him. In other words, the relativity of the Hobbesian notion of good implies that every individual should be able to

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53 *De Homine,* XI, 4.
54 For instance, water can be good for someone who is thirsty, or for a farmer in a drought area, but evil for someone (or for the same person) who is drowning in a river.
determine what is a good life for himself, and political society should be regarded only as a framework favorable to the fulfillment of everyone’s goals.

Hence, in light of Hobbes’s idea of good as a relative notion, it can be maintained that the notion of a more contented life refers to a life that is perceived, freely chosen, and pursued as a good by the individual, not a life imposed by any higher moral or political authority. To state it more concisely, in a strictly Hobbesian perspective, a more contented life is not a result of coercion but of a free choice made by the individual.

2. 1. 3. In Light of The Idea of Felicity As A Life of Continual Progress

In his explication of the notion of the safety of the people, Hobbes clearly indicates that safety entails not simply “the sole preservation of life, but in order to its happiness.” To the question what is happiness or felicity? Hobbes’s response, in Leviathan, is that felicity is nothing but a “[c]ontinual successe in obtaining those things which a man from time to time desireth, that is to say, continuall prospering.” He maintains, in the Elements of Law, that it “consisteth not in having prospered, but in prospering.” He is more explicit in Leviathan when he holds that it “consisteth not in the repose of a mind satisfied [but in] a continuall progresse of the mind, from one object to another; the attaining of the former, being still the way to the later.”

Hobbes’s concept of felicity as continual progress is one of the most controversial concepts that have retained the attention of many commentators. In this subsection, I would like to examine why the idea of continuity is so important in Hobbes’s understanding of felicity. In

55 De Cive, XIII, 4.
56 Leviathan, VI, 58, 46.
57 Elements of Law, VII, 7.
58 Leviathan, XI, 1, 70.
other words, why should felicity be understood in terms of a *continual* delight, *continual* success, *continual* prospering, and *continual* progress?

In the present examination, the focus is particularly on the term *continual*. However, before going further in this investigation, it is important to clarify briefly the importance of the term *progress*. Why is the idea of progress so important in Hobbes’s understanding of the notion of felicity? Hobbes remarks, “as long as man thinketh himself well, and that the present government standeth not in his way to hinder his proceeding from well to better, it is impossible for him to desire the change thereof.”\(^{59}\) The key idea in this passage is *proceeding from well to better*, which echoes the idea of progressing in life. According to Hobbes, “[t]o progress is pleasing; for it is an approach . . . to what is more pleasing.”\(^{60}\) In other words, the idea of progress is so important in Hobbes’s understanding of felicity because it entails a movement toward what is more pleasing. The big question to answer, then, is why should progress be continual?

To understand the importance of *continual* progress in Hobbes’s idea of felicity, it is very important to mention first that, in *Leviathan*, Hobbes clearly indicates that when he speaks of felicity, he means “the Felicity of this life.”\(^{61}\) This detail is very important in the sense that Hobbes is providing the reason why he speaks of human felicity the way he does. He is not speaking of felicity in the abstract, but in relation to human life under its essential aspect as motion. In other words, one cannot interpret Hobbes’s concept of felicity apart from his conception of life as motion. Since, in Hobbes’s view, life is essentially motion, a happy life must consist in a continuing satisfaction of desires in order to match the existential motion rooted in our nature as desiring beings.

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59 *Elements of Law*, XXVII.
60 *De Homine*, XI, 12, 51.
61 *Leviathan*, VI, 58, 46.
A close reading of Hobbes’s texts provides also some clues in response to why the idea of continuity is so essential to his notion of felicity. The following observation he makes in \textit{Leviathan} regarding the felicity of beasts provides one of the clues: “there is no other Felicity of Beasts, but the enjoying of their quotidian Food, Ease, and Lusts; as having little, or no foresight of the time to come, for want of observation, and memory of the order, consequence, and dependence of the things they see.”\textsuperscript{62} What makes the felicity of a beast different from the felicity of a humanbeing? It appears from Hobbes’s quotation that the main characteristic of the felicity of the beasts consists in the enjoyment of the immediate, or the present only. In Hobbes’s view, the felicity of beasts is limited to the immediate satisfaction of needs necessary for mere physical subsistence here and now. This is clear from Hobbes’s phrase \textit{no foresight of the time to come}. For Hobbes, the absence of a \textit{foresight of the time to come} is what limits the felicity of beasts to the enjoyment of the moment. Thus, sensual life, which is a primitive way of life which we share with animals, is a life limited to the enjoyment of the present moment without a view to the future; and in any enjoyment of life, the lack of openness to the future is what specifically characterizes the felicity of beasts.

As mentioned previously, Hobbesian man is a desiring being who is concerned not only about the immediate and the present, but also about the “security of future time.”\textsuperscript{63} Unlike a beast, Hobbesian “man is famished even by future hunger,”\textsuperscript{64} because he is an anticipating being who looks “far before him, in the care of the future.”\textsuperscript{65} According to Hobbes, what makes human beings the most rapacious and cruel animals is their concern for the future.\textsuperscript{66} In this regard, human felicity must be more than the enjoyment of immediate sensual delight in the present

\textsuperscript{62} \textit{Leviathan}, XII, 4, 76.
\textsuperscript{63} \textit{De Homine}, XI, 6, 49.
\textsuperscript{64} Ibid., X, 3, 40
\textsuperscript{65} \textit{Leviathan}, XII, 5, 76.
\textsuperscript{66} \textit{De Homine}, X, 3, 40.
moment. Besides, it is Hobbes’s view that, among goods, “the greater is that which lasts longer.” 67 In other words, a good whose enjoyment extends from the present to the future is greater than the one whose enjoyment is limited to the present moment only. In *Thomas White’s De Mundo Examined*, Hobbes maintains, “he who has nothing to seek after enjoys no happiness;” 68 and “because everything we seek must be sought with an eye to the future, we must class happiness as ‘the desire for good that is to come’.” 69 The reason why Hobbes does not place felicity in the present situation is not because the present is not enjoyable, but because “the delight excited by things of the present is short-lived.” 70 Two major political implications can be derived from the distinction between the felicity of beast and human felicity.

First, a political society that is limited to promoting only the felicity of beasts will be similar to Plato’s well-known city of pigs mentioned in the first chapter of the present study. In that chapter, it has been indicated that, in Hobbes, the chief end of all human strivings is self-preservation, but the Hobbesian state is far from being a mere Platonic “city of pigs” because the preservation of bare life is not enough. For Hobbes, human beings are not concerned only with immediate gratification. A life limited to the satisfaction of immediate bodily needs makes men no better off than beasts. Human felicity cannot be reduced to a mere enjoyment of immediate sensual delight because, in Hobbes’s view, human beings seek to live in a civil society mostly for the sake of living a contented life that lasts a whole lifetime. It is very important to note that, in his theory of the state, Hobbes is interested in “security, which men desire should last all the time of their life.” 71 Hence, the felicity for which he is advocating does not consist in enjoying “once

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67 *Leviathan*, XI, 14, 53.  
69 *Thomas White’s De Mundo Examined*, 463.  
70 Ibid.  
71 *Leviathan*, XVII, 5, 119.
onely, and for one instant in time,” but in enjoying the present and assuring at the same time the satisfaction of future desires.\(^{72}\) Thus, for Hobbes, to live *a more contented life*, an individual has to be confident that the delightful and comfortable life that he is living in the present moment is not lost in the future.\(^{73}\) For a human being, the present moment has meaning and is most enjoyable only when it is also open to the future time because a genuine human delight is an appetite that “presupposeth a farther end,”\(^{74}\) and in this regard, a continual “progress is pleasing; for it is an approach . . . to what is more pleasing.”\(^{75}\) In this perspective, to secure safety for the sake of a genuine human felicity amounts to creating and maintaining conditions of life that offer the possibility of continual progress in a whole lifetime.

Significantly, Hobbes’s view of felicity as a continual progress should not be taken in a simplistic sense to mean not facing challenges in the pursuit of one’s goals. In other words, to say that *a more contented life* is a life of continual progress is not to say that it does not involve challenges. As already mentioned above, in Hobbes’s view, felicity is not a condition of absolute rest but that of an activity, and as such, it includes challenges. Hobbes acknowledges clearly that in the pursuit of our goals, we have to expect to face at least “the least hindrance.”\(^{76}\) In *Thomas White’s De Mundo Examined*, he maintains, “the search for things easily obtained . . . is not happiness; if it were, then, . . . someone would be happy who was ever itching and scratching himself in turn.”\(^{77}\) Thus, *a more contented life* does not come without individual’s effort or engagement in productive activity, and facing challenges in one’s activity does not prevent a life from being a more contented one.

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\(^{72}\) *Leviathan*, XI, 1, 70.
\(^{73}\) This is the whole idea behind Hobbes’s claim on human ceaseless desire for power. The drive to seek power after power has no other reason than to secure one’s future.
\(^{74}\) *Elements of Law*, VII, 7.
\(^{75}\) *De Homine*, XI, 12.
\(^{76}\) Ibid., XI, 15.
\(^{77}\) *Thomas White’s De Mundo Examined*, 464.
Second, the human being as a citizen of a commonwealth is more than a natural animal, and as such, he has a natural inclination to \textit{things that conduce to honor}. As indicated previously, it is an essential characteristic of the Hobbesian man to be concerned and to fight for honor and dignity, which other social creatures such as bees and ants do not.\textsuperscript{78} Hence, in addition to the pleasure of the senses, which he shares with beasts, his felicity includes as essential component the enjoyment of things that conduce to honor and dignity. Hobbes provides some clues regarding the type of things which must be taken into consideration when we speak of human felicity. The first clue can be found in his description of political society in which, among the characteristics, he lists, “dominion of reason, peace, security, riches, decency, society, elegancy, sciences, and benevolence.”\textsuperscript{79} The second clue is found in a passage previously quoted from \textit{Leviathan}, where Hobbes seems to refer to things that are part of what he means by the phrase \textit{all other Contentments of life}: culture of the earth, knowledge of the face of the earth, account of time, knowledge of arts, of letters etc.\textsuperscript{80} In other words, human felicity goes far beyond sensual and materialistic considerations to include qualitative considerations of life such as reason, decency, elegancy, culture etc.

In conclusion, the distinction between the felicity of beasts and human felicity adds a very important dimension to be taken into consideration with regard to the benefit of social and political life. In Hobbes’s view, human beings, “who naturally love Liberty, and Dominion over others,” cannot seek to introduce “that restraint upon themselves,“\textsuperscript{81} simply for the purpose of enjoying the “Felicity of Beasts.”\textsuperscript{82} The sovereign’s office of securing \textit{a more contented life} for the people cannot be reduced to offering conditions of life that enable them to enjoy the felicity

\textsuperscript{78} \textit{Leviathan}, XVII, 7, 119.
\textsuperscript{79} \textit{De Cive}, X, 1.
\textsuperscript{80} \textit{Leviathan}, XIII, 9, 89.
\textsuperscript{81} Ibid., XVII, 1, 117
\textsuperscript{82} Ibid., XII, 4, 76.
of beasts only. In other words, providing the security of the present time only is not sufficient to make life a more contented one. As it has been already indicated and suggested throughout the present study, in Hobbes’s view, the satisfaction of the immediate and basic needs of life is necessary but not sufficient for people to live a more contented life. Since a citizen is a being who looks “far before him, in the care of the future,” for him to live contentedly, it is not enough to have a healthy functioning of physical body, or to satisfy his immediate bodily needs only. There cannot be a more contented life for a human being where there is violence and material poverty, but also when life is overwhelmed by moral grievance; where fear is the dominant emotion of people’s daily life; where there is no peace and no possibility of planning for one’s future. In this regard, to secure the safety of the people amounts to creating and maintaining conditions such as each person can live the best sort of life that is possible for him to live now and in the future. It also amounts to putting in place objective conditions that enable people to live a worthwhile and flourishing life. In Hobbes’s view, in contrast with the state of nature where “there is no place for Industry; because the fruit thereof is uncertain,” civil society is a framework within which the enjoyment of the fruit of one’s activity is secured. In this regard, a life can be regarded as a more contented one only when there is a possibility for a continual progress in one’s industry, that is, when the individual, through his activity, has good reason to hope and is able to advance from a good that has been obtained to another good that is to be obtained in the future. Thus, a more contented life is a life of continual progress in one’s undertakings and in the satisfaction of one’s desires.

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83 *Leviathan*, XII, 5, 76.
84 Ibid., XIII, 9, 89.
2. 2. Prosperity And Enrichment

2. 2. 1. Power and Prosperity

The ruler . . . hath fully discharged himself, if he have thoroughly endeavoured by wholesome constitutions to establish the welfare of the most part, and made it as lasting as may be; and that no man suffer ill, but by his own default, or by some chance which could not be prevented.\(^{85}\)

The object of this section is to point out what Hobbes regards as a key ingredient to the notion of safety, and as the primary means to a more contented life. Hobbes’s conception of human beings as power hungry creatures has captivated many of his readers to the point that, according to Michael Oakeshott, his philosophy is sometimes simply labeled as “a philosophy of power.”\(^{86}\) In the first chapter I pointed out the importance of the concept of power in Hobbes’s analysis of human psychology. Hobbes makes his readers understand that, in a context of life within which there is every reason for a hostile confrontation, power appears to be the most important means for one’s safety. In such a situation, to account oneself in the condition of security means necessarily to have power. The more power one has, the more secure one is. It is through the acquisition of power, particularly of the instrumental sort, that an individual assures both his safety and the fulfillment of his present and future desires.

However, in this subsection, I do not intend to read the Hobbesian concept of power in terms of an individual’s strength to master potential competitors or, as Hobbes himself puts it, “to master the persons of all men he can, so long, till he see no power great enough to endanger him.”\(^{87}\) A close reading of his texts indicates that Hobbes has little interest in this type of power. He likens this type of power to a “power in the act of conquest, [in] which . . . [people] pursue

\(^{85}\) *De Cive*., XIII, 3.
\(^{87}\) *Leviathan*, XIII, 4, 88.
farther than their security requires.”

According to Hobbes, in the state of nature an individual strives for this type of power “because he cannot assure the power and means to live well, which he hath present, without the acquisition of more.” In other words, in the state of nature, the drive for power “to master the persons of all men” comes from the fear of uncertainty and of losing one’s possession; that is, it comes from the need to assure one’s security. However, in civil society, security is not an individual’s business but the sovereign’s, whose presence makes the race to power unnecessary because the likelihood of being attacked by one’s neighbor for security reasons is very low. Besides, there is no textual evidence where Hobbes claims or suggests that, in a civil society, neighbors are regarded as competitors who have a restless desire for more power in order to assure their personal security against one another. He is rather very clear that competition is a characteristic behavior of human beings where there is no common power, that is, in the state of nature, where life is likened to a race, and fellow human beings are regarded as competitors. Thus, in civil society, the notion of power as the individual’s capacity to master other individuals for security reason is of little importance in Hobbes’s theory of the state.

As indicated above, in Hobbes’s view, one of the major benefits of living in a political society is the ability to live a more contented life; that is, the ability to fulfill one’s present desires and to secure conditions for the satisfaction of future desires. In this regard, in his theory of the state, Hobbes is very much interested in the notion of power as the individual’s “present means to obtain some apparent future good.” Power so understood is a social good for individuals living in civil society, and it serves as a means necessary “not onely to the procuring,
but also to the assuring of a more contented life."\footnote{Leviathan, XI, 1, 70.} Political society itself is essentially conceived as the compound of individual powers to create a more effective means of procuring and assuring a more contented life. For Hobbes, a more contented life requires power as its condition of possibility. In other words, the enjoyment of \textit{a more contented life} is a direct result or the effect of power, understood in terms of individual’s social (as opposed to natural) capacity to pursue his good. To put it in different terms, the Hobbesian concept of safety, in which should be included the enjoyment of “all other contentment of life,” entails the ability or possibility to have access to the resources necessary to the pursuit of \textit{a more contented life}. If war refers to any threatening condition of life that affects human potential to pursue one’s felicity, the safety of the people refers to conditions that empower them in their pursuit of a more contented life.

As mentioned above, the conception of the human being as a being who looks “far before him in the care of the future” is one of the key elements for a good understanding of Hobbes’s conception of human felicity. Since, in Hobbes’s view, human beings are creatures who are particularly concerned about their future, the acquisition of power is what gives good reasons to have hope and remain confident to embrace the future. In defining power in terms of the individual’s “present means, to obtain future apparent Good,” Hobbes clearly suggests that a powerless individual is anyone who is devoid of means to fulfill his present desires, and whose future is uncertain. Hence, to secure the safety of the people amounts to empowering them by creating and maintaining living conditions that enable them to procure what is necessary for the fulfillment of their present desire and the assuring of their future.

Importantly, in Hobbes’s view, although power is regarded as the condition \textit{sine qua non} for a more contented life, such a life, however, is possible only when the quest for power is reduced to a reasonable level, and life ceases to be like a race in which there is “no other goal,
nor no other garland, but being foremost.” In *Leviathan*, Hobbes clearly suggests that people “can be content with a moderate power” and live delightfully within a safe social and political structure where the ability “and the means to live well” are assured. Power can be pursued in a reasonable fashion only when fear of uncertainty is removed or significantly reduced; and this fear is removed or reduced when conditions favorable for prosperity are secured. Thus, to secure the safety of the people amounts also to creating conditions that moderate people’s drive for power and bringing it to a reasonable level by removing or reducing their fear of uncertainty.

2. 2. 2. Labor And Enrichment

It has been indicated above that the Hobbesian notion of a *more contented life* is a life of continual success in one’s industry. For Hobbes, a *more contented life* is not the enjoyment of idleness, but a continual success in one’s productive activity. In his view, a life that procures contentment superior to the felicity of beasts is fundamentally an active and industrious life. Hobbes is consistent in his strong belief that “power is sustained by industry.” He reproduces similar idea in *De Cive*, “riches are gotten with industry.” Industry, or labor, is what leads to a more contented life, because it is through industry that the hope to obtain things necessary to a more contented life is fulfilled. For Hobbes, people are empowered by the productive activities that they undertake. One of the characteristics of the Hobbesian state of nature is that “if one plant, sow, build . . . others may probably be expected to come prepared with force united, to dispossesse, and deprive him . . . the fruit of his labour.” Thus, in addition to the fear of violent

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94 *Elements of Law*, IX, 21.
95 *Leviathan*, XI, 2, 70.
96 Ibid., XI, 2, 70.
97 *The Whole Art of Rhetoric*, in *English Works*, vol. 7, 471.
98 *De Cive*, XII, 9.
99 *Leviathan*, XIII, 3, 87.
death, the most lamentable consequence of the condition of war that Hobbes mentions is that “there is no place for Industry; because the fruit thereof is uncertain.” Hobbes is very clear on the view that all harmful consequences of war result from the impossibility of undertaking any productive work: “In such condition, there is no place for Industry; because the fruit thereof is uncertain; and consequently no Culture of the Earth . . .; and which is worst of all, continuall feare, and danger of violent death.” To put it in different terms, from a strictly Hobbesian perspective, it is unsafe to live in a condition of life in which there is no incentive to work because the enjoyment of the fruit of one’s labor is uncertain. Hence, part of what it is to rule for the safety of the people is to create conditions that enable citizens to undertake productive works that improves the quality of their life, and to be able to benefit from their labor.

Thus, in Hobbes, people can hope to acquire things that they need to live a more contented life only when the conditions of labor are secured. Before going further in this investigation on the importance of labor for a more contented life, it is worth mentioning Hobbes’s advocacy for public charity, which may seem to oppose the importance which he attaches to labor as the source of individual’s enrichment and flourishing. In Leviathan, Hobbes advocates for charity with a particular emphasis,

many men, by accident unevitable, become unable to maintain themselves by their labour; they ought not be left to the charity of private persons; but to be provided for . . . by the Lawes of the Common-wealth. For as it is Uncharitablenesse in any man, to neglect the impotent; so it is in the Soveraign of a Common-wealth, to expose them to the hazard of such uncertain Charity.

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100 Leviathan, XIII, 9, 89.
101 Italicized by me to indicate that Hobbes’s well-known characterization of the state of nature as a place of continual fear and danger of violent death is a consequence of the fact that there is no place for industry.
102 Leviathan, XIII, 9, 89.
103 Ibid., XXX, 18, 239.
It is important to notice the particular reference to those who, “by accident inevitable,”\textsuperscript{104} cannot undertake any productive work. His argument in favor of public charity is not intended to encourage idleness, or to suggest any sort of dependence on government, but to enjoin the political authority to respond to the misfortunes of its citizens. All that Hobbes is saying in this passage is that the relief of hardship due to “accident inevitable” has to be the responsibility of the state. Thus his advocacy for public charity is not in contradiction with his view on the importance of productive work. It should rather be taken as a clear indication to place the state’s duty to secure the safety of its citizens at a level higher than a mere protection from physical violence. Hobbes’s advocacy for public charity accords with his fundamental view that a state should be able to secure a social order entirely oriented to procuring a more contented life for all citizens without distinction. This being said, Hobbes’s writings abound with passages highlighting the importance of an individual’s labor or industry in the creation of prosperity and mostly in the attainment of things necessary to a more contented life. Hobbes clearly views labor as the source of individual’s enjoyment of a more contented life. Depending on the government’s aid and doing nothing, or in normal circumstances not being able to labor is not part of the Hobbesian notion of a more contented life.

 Worth emphasizing is that part of the Hobbesian notion of the safety of the people is essentially to create appropriate conditions for a productive life, conditions that give people incentives to labor on their behalf, thereby enabling them to have a more enjoyable life. In \textit{Leviathan}, he unambiguously indicates that the sovereign should secure the safety of the people “in such sort, as that by their own industry, and by the fruit of the earth, they may nourish themselves.” In other words, Hobbes regards a civil society as essentially a frame of life in which people should be able to work and to enjoy the fruit of their labor. In \textit{De Cive}, when comparing

\textsuperscript{104} \textit{Leviathan}, XXX, 18, 239.
the state of nature and a constituted city, he maintains, “Out of it [city] no man is sure of the fruit of his labours; in it, all men are.”\textsuperscript{105} To emphasize how important is labor for the flourishing of a man, he goes on to maintain, “It is not enough, for a man to labour for the maintenance of his life; but also to fight, (if need be) for the securing of his labour.”\textsuperscript{106}

Hobbes attaches so much importance to a condition of life where the individual can enjoy good life from the fruit of his own work that he sees in labor the most valuable source of citizens’ prosperity. He maintains, “there are only three things . . . which enable the citizens to increase their prosperity – products of earth and water, hard work and thrift.”\textsuperscript{107} However, because products of earth and water are given by God, there are strictly speaking only “two things necessary to the enriching of Subjects, \textit{Labour} and \textit{thrift}.”\textsuperscript{108} In the beginning of chapter 24 of \textit{Leviathan}, Hobbes is very categorical in maintaining that in a commonwealth the condition of prosperity “dependeth . . . merely on the labour and industry of men.”\textsuperscript{109} In the \textit{Elements of Law}, he maintains approvingly, “men justly\textsuperscript{110} complain as of great grief, that they know not what to do.”\textsuperscript{111} He reproduces the same idea more clearly and even more beautifully and forcefully in \textit{De Homine}, “Work is good; it is truly the motive for life . . . \textit{What shall I turn, what shall I do?} are the voices of people grieving. Idleness is torture.”\textsuperscript{112} In other words, not knowing what to do, and mostly, not being able to work or to have a fruitful work in life, is a major obstacle to experiencing a genuinely more contented life. Thus, throughout his writings, Hobbes is consistent in his emphasis on the importance of engaging in industry and enjoying the fruit of one’s labor as one of the great benefits of living in a civil society. These passages indicate how

\begin{footnotes}
\footnote{De Cive, X, 1.}
\footnote{Leviathan, XXX, 17, 238.}
\footnote{De Cive, XIII, 14.}
\footnote{Ibid.}
\footnote{Leviathan, XXIV, 3, 170.}
\footnote{Italicized by me to indicate Hobbes’s approval.}
\footnote{Elements of Law, VII, 7.}
\footnote{De Homine, XI, 11, 51.}
\end{footnotes}
highly he rates the value of labor for the enjoyment of a more contented life. As it has been just indicated, in his view, work “is truly a motive for life . . . [and] Idleness is torture.”\textsuperscript{113}

In his consideration of the importance of productive work for the citizens’ enrichment, Hobbes enjoins the sovereign to combat idleness by encouraging “all manners of Arts; as Navigation, Agriculture, Fishing, and all manner of Manufacture that requires labour.”\textsuperscript{114} He recommends that the sovereign set up a legal regime that discourages idleness and encourages people to work. He points out that God has provided human beings with enough land, animals, vegetables and minerals to satisfy their needs provided that they are willing to work or to be industrious. After mentioning the three things that “enable the citizens to increase their prosperity,” he maintains: “Laws which promote the skills which improve returns from the products of earth and water, such as agriculture and fishing, will be useful in the first category. Conducive to the second are all the laws by which idleness is prohibited, industry is stimulated.”\textsuperscript{115} With regard to idleness, Hobbes goes as far as to enjoin the sovereign to force people to work. As he puts it, “But for such as have strong bodies, the case is otherwise: they have to be forced to work; and to avoid the excuse of not finding employment, there ought to be such Lawes, as may encourage all manner of Arts; as Navigation, Agriculture, Fishing, and all manner of Manufacture that requires labour.”\textsuperscript{116} In short, what is to be pointed out is that for Hobbes, it is an essential part of the safety of the people that the political authority gives to its citizens not only the freedom to work, but also incentives to engage in productive work for their flourishing; and this incentive to work comes mainly from individuals’ perception that they can directly benefit from the fruit of their labor.

\textsuperscript{113} \textit{De Homine}, XI, 11.  
\textsuperscript{114} \textit{Leviathan}, XXX, 19, 239.  
\textsuperscript{115} \textit{De Cive}, XIII, 14.  
\textsuperscript{116} \textit{Leviathan}, XXX, 19, 239.
2. 2. 3. Property or The Notion of Mine and Thine

One of the main causes of strife and war in the Hobbesian state of nature is that every individual has a right to all things, including one another’s body. In such a condition, property rights are completely inconceivable. There is no notion of mine and thine. As Hobbes puts it, “before constitution of Soveraign Power . . . all men had right to all things; which necessarily causeth Warre;”[117] “[i]t is consequent also to the same condition [of war], that there be no Propriety, no Dominion, no Mine and Thine distinct; but onely that to be every mans, that he can get; and for so long, as he can keep it.”[118] According to Hobbes, “where there is no Own, that is no Propriety . . . and where there is no coercive power erected, that is, where there is no Common-wealth, there is no Propriety; all men having right to all things.”[119] The notion of property and civil society are concomitant: “the Validity of Covenants begins not but with the constitution of a Civill Power, sufficient to compel men to keep them: And then it is also that Propriety begins.”[120] More precisely, “the Introduction of Propriety is an effect of Common-wealth.”[121] Thus, in his view, the right to private property appears to be one of the great benefits “men acquire, in recompense of the universal Right they abandon.”[122] For Hobbes, private property comes into being only with the social contract, which establishes the fundamental and basic principle of the distributive justice according to which “to every man his own.”[123] The right to private property is essentially a creature of the commonwealth. It follows that the sovereign’s duty to secure the safety of the people consists in prescribing “the Rules, whereby every man may know, what Goods he may enjoy, and what actions he may doe, without being molested by

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[117] Leviathan, XVIII, 10, 125; see also De Cive, VI, 15.
[118] Ibid., XIII, 13, 90; see also De Cive, VI, 15.
[119] Ibid., XV, 3, 101.
[120] Ibid.
[121] Ibid., XXIV, 5, 171
[122] Ibid., XV, 3, 101.
[123] Ibid., XXIV, 5, 171.
any of his fellow Subjects: And this is it men call *Propriety.*” In other words, private property does not exist until civil government makes laws on the subject, with each individual’s share being whatever the law makes it. The right to private property in the fruits of one’s labor is made possible only by the institution of the civil society.  

As stated above, the inability to protect one’s possessions from others whose right to them is equally valid is the main characteristic of a state of war. In the first chapter of the present study, it has been indicated that, for Hobbes, one of the main motives that incline men to civil association is the hope to get protection for the products of one’s industry. To assure a descent life, or to be able to enjoy the fruit of one’s labor and to live a more contented life, an individual must have the right and the ability to possess. It is only in such a condition that the hope for the protection of the product of one’s industry is fulfilled, the fruit of one’s labor becomes certain, and the attainment of a more contented life possible. In other words, one begins to account oneself in the condition of security only when one is able to keep and enjoy the fruit of one’s labor; and this is not possible until the division of *mine* and *thine* is established and enforced. As Michael Oakeshott observes, in Hobbes, “[t]he law of property, comprehensively is the most important expression of the will of the sovereign authority, because it is by this law that, each man coming to know what is his own and being protected in the enjoyment of it by the sovereign power, the most elementary form of the peace of civil society is established.”

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124 *Leviathan*, XVIII, 10, 125.
125 It is worth mentioning here that this is the key difference between Thomas Hobbes and John Locke regarding private property right. For Locke, the civil government exists to protect the private property that all men have in the state of nature, that is, prior to the institution of civil government. However, for Hobbes, there is no *mine and thine* prior to the erection of civil government; the notion of private property presupposes the existence of a political power.
126 See chapter I, section V, subsection 3 “Safety for a Better Life.”
127 *Leviathan*, XI, 4, 70.
One of the great benefits of civil society lies in the removal of threats that frustrate people’s desires for a more contented life. The uncertainty to keep and enjoy the fruit of one’s labor serves as one of the major threats that are to disappear at the institution of civil government. In Hobbes’s view, prosperity and the enjoyment of a more contented life are conceivable only in a structured framework in which individuals have the right to private property, and in which everyone recognizes such a right in others. He indicates that where there is no right to possess or, as he puts it, where “every thing is his that getteth it, and keepeth it by force,” there is uncertainty regarding the enjoyment of the fruit of one’s labor. Prosperity and enrichment presuppose the right to private property which is granted and guarantied only by the sovereign.

2. 3. The Enjoyment of Liberty

2. 3. 1. Hobbes’s Definition of Liberty As Absence of External Impediments

Hobbes’s conception of liberty has been widely discussed among commentators, and the debate among them shows that this conception is more complex than it appears at first sight. Nonetheless, the object of this section is not to offer a detailed analysis or any possible correct interpretation of Hobbes’s concept of freedom. This section focuses simply on Hobbes’s view that one of the great benefits of life within a political society is the enjoyment of a genuine and effective freedom. Hobbes’s concept of liberty is not approached here from a metaphysical point of view, in regard to those actions which a man performs qua man; it is approached only from a

\[129\] *Leviathan*, XXIV, 5, 171.

\[130\] A thorough understanding of Hobbes’s concept of liberty requires beforehand a full examination of his mechanistic materialism, with its subsequent determinism, particularly in relation to human motivation, deliberation, and voluntary act. It would also require determining the place and role of Hobbes’s mechanistic materialism in his moral and political philosophy. In the first chapter of the present study, for example, I have indicated that there is a debate among commentators around the question whether or not Hobbes uses his mechanistic materialism to support his views on human agency. As one can see, an adequate examination of Hobbes’s concept of liberty, with all the problems and debates involved, will take us beyond the scope of the present study.
political point of view, that is, in relation to those actions which an individual is allowed to do as
a member of a political society. However, it is worth mentioning briefly that part of the
controversy surrounding Hobbes’s conception of freedom concerns his definition of liberty as
absence of external obstacles. In De Cive, Hobbes maintains,

LIBERTY, that we may define it, is nothing else but an absence of the lets, and hinderances of motion, as water shut up in a vessel is therefore not at liberty, because the vessel hinders it from running out, which the vessel being broken, is made free. And every man hath more or lesse liberty, as he hath more or lesse space in which he employes himself: as he hath more liberty, who is in a large, then he that is kept in a close prison.

According to most of the critics, in so defining liberty, all that Hobbes is saying is that I am free when I am not physically constrained. The absence of physical impediment is the main determining criterion for freedom. Such a characterization of liberty has led the majority of commentators to categorize Hobbes as the precursor of negative liberty theorists, those who conceive liberty solely as absence of impediments.

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132 De Cive, IX, 9. See also The Elements, XXIII, 9.

133 For a better understanding of the difference between negative and positive conception of liberty, one can see Isaiah Berlin, in his Four Essays on Liberty (New York: Oxford University Press, 1971). In this work, Berlin offers a very good and detailed description of two concepts of liberty: negative and the positive. Underlying these two concepts is the conception of the human being as essentially a being who has desires to pursue and to act on. On the one hand, negative liberty refers to the notion of freedom understood in terms of absence of external impediment to doing what one wants. In other words, I am free as long as I am able to do what I want without external interference, which may be individuals, groups, institution etc. To be free is to be able to pursue and act on my desires, whether they are good or bad, without being prevented by any external obstacle. On the other hand, positive liberty is described as freedom to pursue and act on one’s desires consistently with (internal or external) factors that might allow or prevent me from acting.
The above definition from *De Cive* is well reformulated in *Leviathan* in the following terms,

BY LIBERTY, is understood, according to the proper signification of the word, the absence of external impediments: which impediments may oft take away part of a man's power to do what he would; but cannot hinder him from using the power left him, according as his judgment, and reason shall dictate to him.¹³⁴

What should be pointed out in Hobbes's conception of liberty as formulated in *Leviathan* is that when he speaks of external impediments, he is referring not only to impediments that hinder physical movement but also those that hinder an individual “to do what he would” or “to doe what he has a will to.”¹³⁵ As Craig Walton and Paul Johnson point out, the emphasis is switched from physical space to moral space: “[in] Leviathan, ‘liberty’ is defined less physically and more morally not as mere absence of physical impediment as in *De Cive*, but more as moral space in which moral agency can move.”¹³⁶ Taken together in light of this remark, the above definitions from *De Cive* and *Leviathan* suggest that two realms are to be distinguished when Hobbes speaks of freedom: the realm of material bodies and the realm of human volition. Hobbes seems to use the concept of freedom somewhat differently according as he refers to the realm of material bodies¹³⁷ or to the realm of human volition. The definition from *De Cive* seems to be applicable only in the realm of material bodies. However, in the paragraph following his definition of liberty in *Leviathan*, Hobbes provides a detail that sheds some light on the nature of

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¹³⁴ *Leviathan*, XIV, 2, 91.
¹³⁵ Ibid.
¹³⁷ In the first chapter of her book *Lessons from a Materialist Thinker: Hobbesian Reflections on Ethics and Politics*, Samantha Frost offers a very interesting analysis of the concept of matter in Hobbes. She indicates that, in Hobbes, there are different types of material beings, with different properties. Roughly speaking, in Hobbes, there are two category of material beings: inert material beings and sentient material beings. Based on this distinction, in saying that the definition of liberty from *De Cive* is applicable in the realm of material beings, I am referring to inert material beings, as opposed to sentient beings, capable of a wide range of responses to external stimuli.
impediments. Speaking of the free gift and free speech, he maintains, “when we say a Guift is Free, [we mean that] the Giver . . . was not bound by any law, or Covenant to give it. So when we speak Freely, . . . [we speak] of the man, whom no law hath obliged to speak otherwise than he did.” In this passage, it is not the absence of a physical impediment but the absence of a legal obligation to coerce an agent to act in a specific way that is clearly the criterion of being free. Thus, in Hobbes, one can find the conception of liberty understood as the absence of external impediment to the motion, and liberty understood as the absence of obligation, legal or moral. Kramer calls these two types of liberty respectively non-normative freedom, or a state of non-preventedness, and normative freedom, or a state of non-forbiddenness. In the first case, the individual is free to do something, whenever he is irrespective of whether or not it is permitted to be done. In this case, “[a]bility, not permissibility is the key category;” whereas in the case of normative freedom, I am free if and only if I am not prohibited from acting by some authoritative norms, such as civil law or moral precepts.

2. 3. 2. Hobbes And The Political Freedom

Another aspect of the debate among commentators surrounding Hobbes’s conception of liberty concerns the question whether or not he advocates for the promotion of the political liberty. A close reading of the Hobbesian literature indicates that this debate remains wide open. According to some interpreters, the political implication of Hobbesian conception of liberty as absence of external impediment is that it implicitly denies certain rights of the citizens in political society. To say that an individual is free so long as he is not physically prevented from acting, is not to say that one is free when one is able to exercise certain civic and political rights.

138 Leviathan, XXI, 2, 146.
139 Matthew Kramer, The Quality of Freedom, 62.
140 Ibid., 61.
An individual may not be physically prevented from acting, and yet not be free to exercise certain rights necessary for his flourishing as a citizen. This observation has led Quentin Skinner to regard Hobbes as an enemy of what he calls the republican conception of liberty. In his book *Hobbes and Republican Liberty*, Skinner rejects vehemently both Hobbes’s definition of freedom and his view according to which, in a civil society, everyone obtains “his right by means of the Sovereign Power.” He develops what he calls the *republican theory of liberty*, which he describes in terms of not being in any way subject to another’s will. His main argument can be briefly presented as follows: human freedom is not undermined only by physical impediments, as Hobbes claims. There are also a range of conditions that can limit it, and which are not necessarily physical impediments. Among these conditions is the condition of domination, or a state of subjugation. To live under the threat of another’s will, be it a sovereign, is like to live in this type of condition, and is proper to a slave. A person who lives under another’s will is usually disposed to avoid making some choice or inclined to make certain choices to play safe; and the cumulative effect will be to place extensive restraints on the individual’s freedom of action. According to Skinner, the republican conception of liberty requires that we do not hold our freedom “by the grace or good will of anyone;” we should rather hold it “independently of anyone’s arbitrary power to take [it] away from us.” In this regard, he maintains that, since Hobbes is a strong advocate of absolute obedience to the sovereign, he is an enemy of liberty.

Hobbes’s definition of liberty is certainly of great importance in his political theory because of its political consequences, but the crucial question to answer in relation to his theory of the state is, what type of liberty he is advocating for? Or what is it to be free in a political

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141 *Leviathan*, XXII, 29, 164.
143 Ibid., 211-216.
society? These questions are present in all of his major political writings. In answering them, Hobbes clearly wants his readers to understand that freedom in political society means something different than it does in the state of nature. In civil society, we are not in the same condition of freedom as we would be in the state of nature. Therefore, if in civil society freedom should be understood as an absence of external impediments, then, there would be no difference between being free either in a lawless condition or in a structured frame of life like civil society. Following Skinner’s criticism, one can maintain that the political implication of Hobbes’s definition of freedom as an absence of impediments amounts to saying that, in his view, individuals are free so long as there are no impediments (internal or external, physical, mental or intellectual) as they strive to pursue their ideas of good. Although such an interpretation frames very well with the above definitions of liberty, a close analysis of his writings indicates that the very idea of freedom as absence of impediment is exactly what Hobbes is worried about. As evidenced by the chaotic picture that emerges from his account of the state of nature, Hobbes is clearly worried about that type of liberty, which “consisteth in this, that he finds no stop, in doing what he has the will, desire, or inclination to doe.” In his view, this kind of liberty is not only unfruitful, but mostly it makes “the life of man solitary, poore, nasty, brutish, and short.” What Hobbes is really advocating for is a more enjoyable, fruitful and effective type of liberty within the boundaries of law. Hence, the best way to put the political implication of Hobbes’s definition of liberty is that a free human person is one who is not stopped from doing what he has the will and the capability of doing within the boundaries of the law.

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\[144\] One can see how he is articulating this question and the answer he is suggesting to the reader in *Elements of Law*, XXIV, 2; *De Cive*, X, 8; *Leviathan*, XXI, 8.  
\[145\] *Leviathan*, XXI, 2. Italicized by me to indicate Hobbes’s rejection of the conception of liberty in the civil society as absence of impediment.  
\[146\] Ibid., XIII, 9, 89.
A careful reading of Hobbes’s writings shows that, in his view, the very notion of power as the individual’s “present means to obtain some apparent future good”\textsuperscript{147} presupposes free agency. The notion of power so understood would be unnecessary within a frame of life wherein individuals are devoid of freedom of action. Hobbes regards the exercise of freedom as an essential part of a more contented life. His strong conviction is that human beings “naturally love Liberty.”\textsuperscript{148} In this regard, they cannot enjoy a comfortable life without freedom. In \textit{Leviathan}, Hobbes indicates that people value liberty so much that they can anticipate attack in order to prevent the loss of it. As he puts it, “Fear of oppression disposeth a man to anticipate, or to seek ayd by society: for there is no other way by which a man can secure his life and liberty.”\textsuperscript{149} In the \textit{Elements of Law}, he maintains that the liberty of the citizen, compared to the condition of a servant, is “a state of better hope.”\textsuperscript{150} For Hobbes, this better hope lies mainly in the enjoyment of a more contented life, as he indicates in the same work some chapters further, “the commodity of living consisteth in liberty and wealth.”\textsuperscript{151}

In response to Skinner’s criticism that liberty should be held independently of the sovereign’s power, it is very important to clarify first the crucial point in Hobbes’s discussion of liberty. One of the main ideas that Hobbes is clearly trying to convey in his argument in favor of the creation of a civil association is that, while freedom in the state of nature leads to war, its promotion in civil society not only fosters peace but also enhances the good life of the citizens. As many commentators point out, a close reading of his writings reveals that what he is trying to demonstrate is that political liberty in civil society is much better than natural liberty in the state of nature. The exercise of natural liberty leads people to fear of one another, to preemptive

\textsuperscript{147} \textit{Leviathan}, X, 1, 62.  
\textsuperscript{148} Ibid., XVII, 1, 117.  
\textsuperscript{149} Ibid., XI, 9, 71.  
\textsuperscript{150} \textit{Elements of Law}, XXIII, 9.  
\textsuperscript{151} Ibid., XXVIII, 4.
attack, and consequently, to mutual destruction. Hobbes views human action guided by natural freedom as a license to take any action for one’s self-preservation and well-being. This condition provides very little freedom and chance to attain felicity. He maintains, “[e]very man indeed out of the state of civill government hath a most entire, but unfruitful liberty.”152 Part of Hobbes’s political thought is a call to abandon this type of freedom for the benefit of a more enjoyable freedom within the structured framework of political society. In choosing to live in civil association, Hobbesian men give up the unfruitful freedom with the expectation to obtain a genuine type of freedom that allows them to do whatever they think necessary for their felicity. In other words, for Hobbes, it is only in civil society that each individual becomes able to do what he thinks necessary for himself in order to live delightfully, provided that he neither hurts anybody nor endangers civil peace.153

In the previous section, we saw that Hobbes describes the state of nature as a condition of life wherein people are deprived even of the basic freedom to possess and to enjoy the fruit of their labor.154 The Hobbesian notion of safety requires then that people live in conditions in which they are able to enjoy at least the basic human freedoms that are required for an active and a more contented life. Hobbes mentions a number of basic freedoms without which an individual cannot live a more contented life, such as the freedom to govern one’s own body, to have a family, to move from place to place, and to enjoy all things “without which a man cannot live, or not live well;”155 “the Liberty to buy, and sell, and otherwise contract with one

152 De Cive, X, 1.
153 What I mean in this paragraph is that, in Hobbes, there is a clear distinction between having the right to do something and being able to do something. One may have the right to do something, and yet not be able to exercise this right. Hobbes defines the natural right that individuals have in the state of nature as the liberty to perform any action necessary for the preservation of one’s life. However, in the state of nature, where individuals are equal with regard to the ability to kill, the enjoyment of these natural rights are not guaranteed; their exercise becomes really effective only in civil society.
154 Leviathan, XIII, 3, 87.
155 Ibid., XV, 22, 107.
another; to chose their own aboard, their own diet, their own trade of life, and institute their children as they themselves think fit; & the like;”\textsuperscript{156} the liberty to defend oneself even against the sovereign,\textsuperscript{157} to sue for one’s rights and to demand the hearing of one’s cause.\textsuperscript{158} In Hobbes’s view, without these basic freedoms individuals cannot live a more contented life, compared to the state of nature.

Beyond the question of whether or not Hobbes provides a satisfying definition of liberty, there is a very interesting and relevant aspect in his treatment of freedom that should be pointed out: the political authority has the duty to make each person’s freedom both effective\textsuperscript{159} and compatible with the freedom of everyone else. In other words, strictly speaking, the Hobbesian sovereign is not really a grantor of liberty as Skinner portrays him, but a guarantor of individual citizen’s liberty. Hobbes unambiguously indicates that the function of the sovereign is not to hinder people’s liberties, “but to limit the natural liberty of particular men, in such a manner, as they might not hurt, but assist one another, and joyn together against a common Enemy.”\textsuperscript{160} Enhancing the exercise of liberty by making it genuine and effective for everyone is the main task of the political authority in the Hobbesian state. For individuals to live a more contented life in civil society, the ruler must provide and maintain conditions necessary for the exercise of what Hobbes calls harmless liberty, by which he means an individual’s liberty that does not impede the exercise of the same in other individuals and does not interfere with the

\textsuperscript{156} \textit{Leviathan}, XXI, 6, 148.
\textsuperscript{157} Ibid., XXI, 11-15, 150-151.
\textsuperscript{158} Ibid., XXI, 19, 153.
\textsuperscript{159} By effective freedom, I simply mean freedom that an individual can really exercise or enjoy. As indicated above, for Hobbes, a free human person is one who is not stopped from doing what he has the will and the capability of doing within the boundaries of the law. Hobbes regards this ability to exercise one’s freedom as one of the great benefits of life within political society, as opposed to the state of nature in which an individual is naturally free but cannot really enjoy his freedom.
\textsuperscript{160} \textit{Leviathan}, XXVI, 9, 185.
state’s duty to secure the safety of its people. The protection of a harmless liberty is clearly one of the tasks that Hobbes enjoins to the political authority.\footnote{De Cive, XIII, 15.}

One important question that all three major political works of Hobbes indicate clearly, and to which Hobbes is trying to provide an answer is, how much liberty should be allowed to each citizen? This is a very important political question whose answer provided by Hobbes remains consistent throughout his writings. His well known answer is that citizens are free to act in those matters about which the sovereign has not forbidden, and to act in such a way that does not endanger civil peace. As he puts it in the \textit{Elements of Law}, “there [should] be no prohibition without necessity of any thing to any man, which was lawful to him in the law of nature; that is to say . . . there [should] be no restraint of natural liberty, but what is necessary for the good of the commonwealth.”\footnote{Element of Law, XXVIII, 4.} In \textit{Leviathan}, he maintains, “in all kinds of actions, by the law praetermitted, men have the Liberty, of doing what their own reason shall suggest, for the most profitable to themselves.”\footnote{Leviathan, XXI, 6, 147.} The main point Hobbes tries to make in these passages is that citizens’ liberty should not be restricted by law, unless it encroaches upon the state’s right to fulfill its duty to secure the safety of the people. In other words, unnecessary deprivation of freedom by the political authority contradicts Hobbes’s fundamental insight of civil association as the only frame within which people can enjoy a more genuine and effective liberty. In civil society, freedom is defined and restricted by the sovereign only for the purpose of making it harmless and more fruitful for everybody. The restriction of the citizens’ liberty is justified only if the safety of the people demands it; and in this regard, such a restriction should be regarded not as deprivation but as the setting up of objectives rules or guidelines that enable everyone to safely pursue felicity.
3. The Protective Function

3. 1. Securing Domestic Peace

Among all kinds of powers that a human being needs for the attainment of his future good and a more contented life, is civil peace created by the sovereign. Understood in the sense of objectively ordered conditions of life, peace represents the necessary condition for a more effective pursuit of one’s good. The big question is, what does the sovereign have to do in order to promote domestic peace for the safety of the people?

3. 1. 1. Justice As Taking From No Man What Is His

For Hobbes, the first benefit of civil society is that it turns individuals who, in the state of nature, are competitors into a community of people who live under a common authority. The first chapter\textsuperscript{164} indicated that the assurance of being protected from violence in the hands of others is the primary constituent of Hobbes’s notion of safety. The commonwealth is instituted primarily to end the prevalence of any type of violence between individual members. In the Hobbesian state, domestic peace is secured mainly by the enforcement of civil laws, and the primary principle underlying civil law for the promotion of domestic peace is the enforcement of justice in terms of a requirement for every individual to respect the good of any other member of the society. In the previous section, it has been indicated that, for Hobbes, civil society represents objective conditions in which individuals enjoy legally protected rights to property. It is only in civil society that people learn “[r]ules of property (or Meum and Tuum) and of Good, Evill, Lawfull, and Unlawfull.”\textsuperscript{165} Unlike the condition of war, in civil society people learn and interiorize the notion of justice “consisting in taking from no man what is his . . . [that is to say]

\textsuperscript{164} See chapter I, section V ‘The Political Implication: Safety for Self-preservation.’

\textsuperscript{165} Leviathan, XVIII, 10, 125.
not to deprive their Neighbours, by violence, or fraud, of any thing which by the Soveraign Authority is theirs;”¹⁶⁶ and Hobbes goes on to observe that among “things held in propriety, those that are dearest to a man are his own life, & limbs; and in the next degree, (in most men) those that concern conjugall affection; and after them riches and means of living.”¹⁶⁷ According to Hobbes, it is only within civil society that individuals of the state of nature learn to practice “the one Commandement of mutuall Charity, Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thy selfe.”¹⁶⁸ In other words, the sovereign, or civil society, transforms the multitude of individuals into a cooperating group of people, sharing fears and desires, and acting in a coordinated way under the law. Unlike the state of nature, the Hobbesian state is first and foremost a framework of laws and punishments within which individuals have claims on one another’s behavior. Contrary to the state of nature wherein every individual has a right to everything, in civil society, no one has the right to interfere in someone else’s good. In pursuing one’s good, the individual has to take into account not only his own right but also the right of others.¹⁶⁹

3. 1. 2. Justice As Giving Everyone His Own¹⁷⁰

The following passage from Leviathan can be regarded as one of the most important elements of response provided by Hobbes for the securing of domestic peace:

¹⁶⁶ *Leviathan*, XXX, 12, 235.
¹⁶⁷ Ibid., XXX, 12, 236.
¹⁶⁸ Ibid., XXX, 13, 236.
¹⁶⁹ It is important to remember here that Hobbes conceives civil society as essentially a framework of an agreed mutual self-limitation of the right of nature, which is the liberty to do whatever is necessary, including to kill another person, for one’s self-preservation. Hence, to ignore another person’s right in the pursuit of one’s own good is to re-establish a state of nature.
¹⁷⁰ It is important to mention that, in Hobbes, there are two different considerations of justice: justice as the performance of the covenant and justice as equity. He commonly confines the term justice to the performance of covenant but, as one can see in the Epistle Dedicatory to De Cive, he also accepts the traditional view of justice as “a steady will of giving everyone his own.” One can also see *Dialogue between a philosopher and a student of the common laws of England*, p. 58. My focus in this subsection is on distributive justice (Lev. XV, 15), and the proper term that he uses for distributive justice is equity (Lev. XV, 15 ff), which he calls the *Justice of an Arbitrator*, which refers to the sovereign in his capacity as the supreme judge of the commonwealth, whose office is to distribute to every man “his own.”
The safety of the People, requireth further, from him, or them that have the Soveraign Power, that Justice be equally administered to all degrees of People; that is, that as well as the rich, and mighty, as poor and obscure persons, may be righted of the injuries done them; so as the great, may have no great hope of impunity, when they do violence, dishonour, or any Injury to the meaner sort, than when one of these, does the like to one of them.\textsuperscript{171}

For many political thinkers, the problem of good governance of the state, political stability, and civil peace, is associated with the question of justice, which consists in determining ways to establish a well ordered society in which citizens are treated fairly.\textsuperscript{172} The idea underlying most of contemporary theories of justice is that civil peace and its opposite, civil war, depend very much on citizens’ assessment of the advantages and disadvantages accruing to them as “normal and fully cooperating members of society.”\textsuperscript{173} The absence of justice causes certain members of the society to regard themselves as victims and, hence, try to do whatever they can, including armed fighting, to secure justice for themselves. For a political society to be genuinely peaceful and stable, therefore, it must meet certain requirements of justice, which Hobbes refers to in terms of equity. In \textit{Leviathan}, he formulates and explains the natural law that dictates equity as follow:

\textit{if a man be trusted to judge between man and man, it is a precepts of the Law of Nature, that he deale Equally between them.} For without that, the Controversies of men cannot be determined but by Warre. He therefore that is partiall in judgment, doth what in him lies, to deterre men from the use of Judges, and Arbitrators; and consequently . . . is the cause of Warre.\textsuperscript{174}

\footnotesize
\textsuperscript{171} \textit{Leviathan}, XXX, 15, 237.
\textsuperscript{172} Here, I am thinking particularly of contemporary theorists such as Ronald Dworkin, Jurgen Habermas, and John Rawls, who have developed a conception of justice that can satisfy the diverse demands of the citizenry in order to secure the basis for civil peace and political stability.
\textsuperscript{174} \textit{Leviathan}, XV, 23, 108.
This view occupies an important place in Hobbes’s theory of the state, though not sufficiently emphasized by commentators. Although the notion of justice as equity is vital in his political philosophy, his discussion of it seems brief. This may explain why most of Hobbes’s commentators pay less attention to the subject. Hobbes places justice as equity at the heart of political life. As it has already been indicated in the present study, in a strictly Hobbesian perspective, a condition of life marked by injustice is a breach of contract that unites people and the sovereign. Such a condition jeopardizes life and can be seen by Hobbesian men as sufficient reason to absolve themselves of their obedience to the sovereign.

The main idea that Hobbes defends in his treatment of justice as equity is that the arbitrator must “deale Equally;”¹⁷⁵ he must not be partial in his judgment, and must assure “equall distribution to each man, of that which in reason belongeth to him.”¹⁷⁶ In Hobbes’s view, the enforcement of justice as equity is one of the key technical arrangements to make people live peaceably together. The main characteristic of the office of an arbitrator lies in “defining what is Just.”¹⁷⁷ From Hobbes explication of equity, it can be said that “defining what is Just” must be taken to mean assuring impartiality of judgment. In the first quotation of this subsection, the key idea lies in justice being equally administered to all degrees of people. Impartiality in judgment is one of the key factors that foster domestic peace. Hobbes clearly and strongly disapproves of the political context characterized by partiality in judgment: for the same crime, some are punished and some not. He mentions partiality of judgment as one of the factors that lead to war. As he puts it, “He . . . that is partiall in judgment, doth what in him lies, to deterre men from the use of Judges, and Arbitrators; and consequently, (against the fundamentall Lawe of Nature) is

¹⁷⁵ Leviathan, XV, 23, 108.
¹⁷⁶ Ibid., XV, 24, 108.
¹⁷⁷ Ibid., XV, 15, 105.
the cause of Warre.” He reproduces similar ideas in later chapters in the same work by maintaining that partiality leads to impunity, and “[i]mpunity maketh Insolence; Insolence Hatred; and Hatred, and Endeavour to pull down all oppressing and contumelious greatnesse, though with the ruine of the Common-wealth.”

He maintains that unpunished evil acts the ruler seems to authorize provoke indignation in political society, and the feeling of “Indignation carrieth men, not onely against the Actors, and Authors of Injustice; but against all Power that is likely to protect them; as in the case of Tarquin; when for the Insolete acts of one of his Sonnes, he was driven out of Rome, and the Monarchy it selfe dissolved.” In his view, the political context of impunity and permissiveness is one of the factors that lead to political instability and civil war.

3. 2. Protection Against Foreign Enemies

3. 2. 1. Hobbes On Possible Causes Of War Between States

As most commentators point out, throughout Hobbes’s various writings in political philosophy, the question of an external threat to a commonwealth is barely approached. A close reading of his major political works shows that Hobbes is much more concerned about threats within a commonwealth and how to prevent them, than about threats from without. Although he clearly indicates his awareness of threats from without, he has little to say about external threats. Much of his political philosophy focuses on the state as the primary and fundamental organizing unit for the safety and the flourishing of the people. Hence, civil war and internal conflict seem

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178 *Leviathan*, XV, 23, 108.
179 Ibid., XXX, 16, 238.
180 Ibid., XXX, 23, 241.
to be the main problem he is trying to solve. Some commentators regard Hobbes’s lack of interest in external threats as one of the weaknesses in his political philosophy.

Nevertheless, Hobbes describes the political association that emerges from the social contract as a body designed to protect its members from “the invasion of Forraigners.” Protection from a common external enemy is clearly one of the main reasons for the creation of the political association, especially in the case of the commonwealth by institution. He clearly acknowledges that domestic peace and the safety of the people depend not simply on the establishment of an all-powerful authority. As he indicates in the following passages: from the *Elements of Law*, “forasmuch as they who are amongst themselves in security, by the means of this sword of justice that keep them all in awe, are nevertheless in danger of enemies from without;” from the *Cive*, “But in vain do they worship peace at home, who cannot defend themselves against foreigners.” These passages show clearly that Hobbes acknowledges that there exist threats posed by other states and which can hinder a genuine enjoyment of a more contented life that citizens hope to gain from the state. They also indicate that Hobbes places defense against external enemies as one of the primary responsibilities of the sovereign. In his view, the state is established for the sole purpose of securing the safety of its citizens, but the notion of safety is of little sense if it does not include as an integral part the condition of security from foreign enemies. Even if citizens have enough or even more than enough to satisfy their needs, even if they enjoy peace and live contentedly among themselves, their civil peace is precarious and their welfare suffers if threats from a foreign state put them in constant danger or in fear for their lives.

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182 *Leviathan*, XVII, 12, 120.  
183 *Elements of Law*, XX, 8.  
184 *De Cive*, VI, 7.
In Hobbes, the imperative of protecting the people from foreign enemies arises chiefly from the permanent condition of threat inherent in the nature of relations between states. Hobbes extends the right of nature, in virtue of which each individual has the right to do whatever is necessary to maintain his existence, to sovereigns in their relationship with one another. In his view, to some extent, the relationship between states is like the relationship between individuals in the state of nature, and in this regard, “every Soveraign hath the same Right, in procuring the safety of his people, that any particular man can have, in procuring his own safety.” A state has the right, therefore, to attack another state if necessary to ensure the safety of its people. Hobbes describes this relationship as a state of nature since there is no overarching ruler to whom all states are bound by political obligation, and to whom each of them can appeal in settlement of conflicts. As he puts it in *De Cive*,

in all times, Kings, and Persons of Soveraigne authority, because of their Independency, are in continual jealousies, and in the state and posture of Gladiators; having their weapon pointing, and their eyes fixed on one another; that is, their Forts, Garrisons, and Guns upon the Frontiers of their Kingdomes; and continual Spyes upon their neighbours; which is a posture of War. He reproduces more forcefully the same idea in *Leviathan* in the following terms,

as amongst masterlesse, there is perpetual war, of every man against his neighbor . . . so in States, and common-wealths not dependent on one another, every Common-wealth (not every man) has an absolute Libertie, to doe what it shall judge (that is to say, what that Man, or Assemblie that representeth it, shall judge) most conducive to their benefit. But withall, they live in the condition of perpetuall war, and upon the

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185 *Leviathan*, XXX, 30, 244. As Noel Malcolm indicates, it is important to mention here that the parallelism between individual and states regarding the ‘right of nature’ from the principle of self-preservation has limited application. At the level of individuals, in the absence of a common power, the desire for self-preservation leads to war of everyone against everyone, but the absence of an overarching authority at the level of states does not necessarily imply the inevitability of conflict because states can procure goods necessary for their preservation through trade (Noel Malcolm, *Aspects of Hobbes*, p. 446).

186 *De Cive*, XIII, 12.
confines of battle, with their frontiers armed, and canons plated against their neighbours round about.\textsuperscript{187}

Hobbes adds that each state is made insecure by the very existence of others, as each strives to secure its own safety. Hobbes’s description of the international landscape indicates clearly that, regardless of intention, the need for safety of one state is potentially the source of insecurity for other states. He maintains,

\begin{quote}
for the state of Common-wealths considered in themselves, is natural, that is to say, hostile; neither if they cease from fighting, is it therefore to be called Peace, but rather a breathing time, in which one enemy observing the motion and countenance of the other, values his security not according to the Pacts, but the forces and counsels of his adversary.\textsuperscript{188}
\end{quote}

The state of affairs Hobbes is describing in this passage, characterized by mutual fears and great need for security, is described by John Herz in terms of the security dilemma. According to Herz, to secure the safety of the people, actions of each individual state threaten the peace and stability of others. A state’s effort to attain security in order to prevent any possible attack from its neighbors leads other neighboring states to prepare for the worst. In this condition, “[s]ince no one can ever feel entirely secure in such a world of competing units, power competition ensues, and the vicious circle of security and power accumulation is on.”\textsuperscript{189}

In addition to the states’ independency and need for protection from one another, Hobbes adds that the scarcity of goods serves also as one of the reasons for which protection against foreign enemies constitutes an imperative for the sovereign. As mentioned in the second chapter of the present study from Gauthier’s analysis of the major causes of war, according to

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{187} \textit{Leviathan}, XXI, 8, 149.
\item \textsuperscript{188} \textit{De Cive}, XIII, 7.
\end{itemize}
Hobbes the scarcity of goods underlies one of the main causes of quarrel that Hobbes indicates in his account of the state of nature, namely, competition. Hobbes maintains clearly that if individuals happen to desire some good which is not either shareable or not sufficiently enough for them all, “they become enemies, and in the way to their End, (which is principally their owne conservation, and sometimes their delectation only) endeavour to destroy, or subdue one another.”\footnote{Leviathan, XIII, 3, 87.} This logic is also applicable at the international level. Hobbes remarks that it is extremely seldom that a single state has or produces all the commodities it needs to secure its citizens’ contented life. As he puts it, “there is no Territory under the Dominion of one Common-wealth, (except it be of very vast extent,) that produceth all things needful for the maintenance, and motion of the whole Body.”\footnote{Ibid., XXIV, 4, 171.} In other words, the satisfaction of the need of one state regarding the goods which it lacks or is unable to produce carries the possibility of threat or war against the state that possesses the good in question. In a context of scarcity, people of a given state cannot enjoy happy and good life if they are prey to states in need of “foreign commodities.”\footnote{Ibid. It is important to note that I am not attributing to Hobbes the view according to which want of “foreign commodities” in one state necessarily gives rise to threats from another state. As it will be shown below, for Hobbes, the lack of “foreign commodities” can also call for trade between states and not necessarily extortion by means of war.} Thus the shortage of goods makes states potential enemies, each of which wants resources which not all of them can access.

Besides scarcity, there is also another factor that one finds in Hobbes’s writings and that constitutes a potentially serious threat for domestic peace. In Leviathan, Hobbes calls this factor the “insatiable appetite, or Bulimia, of enlarging Dominion.”\footnote{Ibid., XXIX, 22, 230.} In an earlier chapter of the same work, Hobbes expresses the same view in the following terms, “Kings, whose power is greatest, turn their endeavours to the assuring it at home by Lawes, or abroad by Wars: and when
that is done, there succeedeth a new desire; in some, of Fame from new Conquest; in others, of ease and sensual pleasure.”\(^{194}\) This idea of a state’s insatiable appetite to enlarge dominion is also echoed in *Behemoth* where Hobbes comments on the main factor behind the war between England and the Dutch. According to Hobbes, the Dutch “greediness to engross all traffic”\(^ {195}\) by having “dominion of the seas belonging to the English”\(^ {196}\) was one of the major reasons of the war.

All the above factors and reasons indicate that, for Hobbes, it is an undeniable fact that the safety of the people can be seriously affected by threats from outside; and without protection against foreign enemies, the hope to obtain things necessary to *a more contented life* is doomed to remain an illusion. The nature of the relationship between states, the scarcity of foreign goods, and the bulimia of insatiable states are all clear indications that, for Hobbes, the notion of the safety of the people has not to do with domestic peace only; it also concerns threats that can come from outside. The ruler’s duty to secure the safety of the people has to be interpreted also as a mandate to ensure that citizens are protected from threats coming from outside the state. Without protection from external enemies, the fruit of domestic peace will be uncertain, “desire of things necessary to commodious living” will remain unfulfilled, and “the hope to obtain” these things by one’s industry will be questionable. The big question one may ask is, how to protect people without falling into Herz’s dilemma, which creates even more threats?

\(^{194}\) *Leviathan*, XI, 2, 70.
\(^{195}\) *Behemoth*, 174.
\(^{196}\) Ibid., 176.
3. 2. 2. The Right To Declare Offensive War

It is commonly admitted that Hobbes “recognizes a right of war and a right of conquest in the relations of states.” Speaking of the rights of the sovereign, Hobbes maintains, “is annexed to the Sovereignty, the Right of making Warre, and Peace with other Nations, and Common-wealths; that is to say, of Judging when it is for the publique good.” However, from the perspective of the present study, the relevant question is not so much whether he recognizes the right of war, but whether he recommends war as an effective means to securing the safety of the people. The above passages describing the nature of the relationships between states seem to support the idea that Hobbes could be in favor of war as means to securing the safety of the people. Since sovereigns are in the state of nature, they are prone to attacking preemptively each other for their safety. Such an interpretation, though not completely inaccurate, can be misleading. Considered within the overall frame of Hobbes’s reasoning, Hobbes’s remarks in relation to the independence of the states appear to be more descriptive than normative statements, in the sense that Hobbes is not prescribing to sovereigns the recourse to war as an effective means to securing peace and the safety of the people, but he is describing the behavior of some sovereigns. The more plausible interpretation of Hobbes’s realism with regard to the absence of a common authority between states is that every state must be constantly vigilant and always prepared to fight effectively any foreign enemy. A close reading of Hobbes’s texts does not allow interpreting him as arguing that states are as prone to violence as individuals in the state of nature. In A Dialogue Between a Philosopher and a Student of the Common Laws of England, he warns, “The subjects of those Kings who affect the Glory, and imitate the actions of Alexander the Great, have not always the most comfortable lives, nor do such Kings usually very

198 Leviathan, XVIII, 12, 126.
long enjoy their Conquests.”199 The responsibility for people’s safety that Hobbes ascribes to the political authority does not admit the idea of states being prone to wage war against one another because war is an activity whose outcome is uncertain; it can result in either a win or a loss; in Hobbes’s terms, “sometimes [war] augments, but more frequently [it] lessens the subjects stock . . .”200

From the above passages, it is legitimate to maintains that the general presumption in Hobbes’s theory of the state is that he is strongly against offensive war. A number of texts support such a presumption. Speaking of “things necessary to the enriching of Subjects,” Hobbes refers to war as an “old reckoned in the number of the gaining Arts,”201 and unambiguously maintains, “this kind of increase of riches is not to be brought into rule and fashion.”202 He strongly warns that military activity “sometimes augments, but more frequently lessens the subjects stock . . . [it] is like a Dye wherewith many lose their estates, but few improve them.”203 In chapter XXIX of Leviathan, among the diseases “that weaken, or tend to the Dissolution of a commonwealth,” Hobbes mentions “the insatiable appetite, or Bulimia, of enlarging Dominion; with the incurable Wounds thereby many times received from the enemy; And the Wens, of ununited conquests, which are many times a burthen, and with lesse danger lost, than kept.”204

It is Hobbes’s fundamental frame of reasoning that, the safety of the people being the supreme law, any action of the ruler is to be measured in assessing whether the benefit and welfare of the people is best served. Consistent with this perspective, as mentioned above, Hobbes considers that war can be waged only “when it is for the publique good.” In this regard,

200 De Cive, XIII, 14.
201 Ibid., XIII, 14.
202 Ibid.
203 Ibid., XIII, 14.
204 Leviathan, XXIX, 22, 230.
the crucial question is, under what conditions is war a necessary means for the safety of the people?

3. 2. 3. Hobbes On The Necessity Of A Just War

Before examining Hobbes’s idea of just war, it is useful to mention some of the more traditional elements of the just war doctrine developed particularly by thinkers like Augustine, Thomas Aquinas, and Hugo Grotius. In Christian theology, war is generally regarded as an evil to avoid, but there are reasons that can make it a relative good. The concept of a just war, introduced in Christian theology, is commonly used to refer to the necessity to resort to armed conflict when there is a legitimate reason to do so. The causes most frequently mentioned in the just war tradition include: self-defense by a state from external attack; the protection of innocents within its borders; and punishment for wrongdoing.

The Just War Tradition makes a fundamental distinction between *jus ad bellum* and *jus in bello*. *Jus ad bellum* concerns the reasons that justify a war in the first place, while *jus in bello* concerns the conduct and means used in war. In light of this distinction, the following are criteria for waging a just war: (1) the evil must be a threat to the common good; (2) war must be the last resort, in the sense that every possible attempt at a peaceful solution to the conflict must have failed; (3) a proper authority, that is, a legitimate authority is the only one to make the decision to go to war, according to the proper process; (4) war must be waged with the right intention, that is, the state must intend to wage war only for the sake of the just cause; the right intention is generally manifested through the means used in the war (the means used to wage war

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must not be morally evil; the underlying idea being that it is never justified to use immoral means for a morally good end) and in the conduct of the victor (targeting innocent people or killing soldiers who surrender are examples of ill intention); (5) there must be reasonable hope of success; by success should be understood the injury is punished and the injustice is corrected without harm greater than the devastation of war; a state cannot resort to war if it clearly appears that doing so will have no measurable impact on the injury to be repaired. Thus, according to the just war doctrine, war can be justly resorted to only when these five conditions are satisfied.

From this brief note on the theory of just war, what is relevant to the present study and needs to be pointed out is that a just war must always have a moral consideration, in the sense that it is waged for the purpose of inflicting punishment for wrongdoing, and it is always waged with the right intention of repairing an injury or injustice. According to saint Augustine, “Just wars are usually defined as those which have for their end the avenging of injuries.”207 In other words, a just war presupposes a prior wrongdoing by the offending party. In this regard, the punishment of the wrongdoer is “presented as the underlying rationale of just war.”208 Thus, a just war has essentially a punitive character, in the sense that war is used as means to punish the offending party and to deter from possible future injury.

In Hobbes, the sovereign’s duty to declare a just war must be interpreted only in light of the sovereign’s inherent concern for the safety of the people. In Leviathan, Hobbes mentions the necessity of waging a just war, along with labor and trade, as possible means of importing commodities for the safety and prosperity of the people. As he puts it,

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208 Ibid.
And because there is no territory under the Dominions of the Commonwealth, (Except it be of very vast extent,) that produceth all things needful for the maintenance, and motion of the whole Body; and few that produce not something more than necessary; the superfluous commodities to be had within, become no more superfluous, but supply these wants at home, by importation of that which may be had abroad, either by Exchange, or by just Warre, or by Labour.  

Contrary to the just war tradition, Hobbes uses the notion of just war particularly in relation to the survival of the state. He reduces the *jus ad bellum* of the just war tradition to one reason: the survival of the state; his “law of honor” (which requires abstaining during war from unnecessary cruel actions that can be characterized as dishonorable), mentioned in the first chapter, pertaining to *jus in bello* considerations. A good understanding of his view regarding a just war requires the mention, first of all, of the following remark he makes in *A Dialogue Between a Philosopher and a Student of the Common Law of England*, “Necessity and Security are the principal justification . . . of beginning War.” In accord with this remark, Hobbes strongly enjoins the sovereign to avoid “unnecessary wars,” that is, waging “war for itself . . ., out of ambition, or of vain-glory, or . . . to revenge every little injury, or disgrace done by neighbours.” In this regard he recommends only what he calls *just war*. His idea of *just war* can be best understood in light of his response to the question of whether it is lawful for a sovereign to make offensive war against another sovereign; his response is, “The intention may be Lawful in diverse Cases by the right of nature; one of those Cases is, when he is constrained to it by the necessity of subsisting.” For instance, if a state is in wont of a *foreign commodity* that is vitally important to it, and if that state cannot otherwise survive or procure that commodity, the state is entitled by natural right of self-preservation to invade another state in

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209 *Leviathan*, XXIV, 4, 171.  
210 See the subsection “Honor and Safety from Moral Grievance.”  
211 *Dialogue Between a Philosopher and a Student of the Common Law*, 136.  
212 *Elements of Law*, XXIX, 9.  
213 *A Dialogue Between a Philosopher and a Student of the Common Law*, 135.
order to take over supplies of that commodity. In other words, for Hobbes, there is no need of any prior injury to wage a just war. A war of aggression can very well be a just war as long as it is required “by the necessity of subsisting,” that is, when the survival of the state is at stake. In his view, what justifies war is not the moral consideration in relation to the common good, but the survival of the state.

Hobbes differs fundamentally from the just war tradition by removing the idea of repairing injustice or punishing an offending party, and by replacing it with the idea of the necessity of subsisting. For him, to secure the safety of the people, the concept of just war can be used only in face of necessity of survival. In other words, the main acceptable reason to wage war characterized as just is to secure the survival of the state, and not necessarily to correct any prior injury done by an offending state, and even less to satisfy the desire of enrichment of the state.

In Hobbes’s view, another reason that can justify a war that is preemptive is when there is “just fear.”214 In Dialogue of the Common Laws, the philosopher, representing Hobbes, remarks that a sovereign can wage offensive war in support of his “Neighbours . . . born down with the Current of a Conquering Ennemy” if he judges that he will be next in line for conquest.215 However, even when there is a just cause for the state to wage an offensive war, Hobbes very cautiously recommends that the sovereign carefully judge the likely outcome of any war he is inclined to undertake.216

214 De Cive, XIII, 7.
215 Dialogue of Between a Philosopher and a Student of the Common Laws, 23.
216 De Cive, XIII, 7.
3. 2. 4. The Importance Of Cooperation For International Peace

In Hobbes’s view, securing domestic peace and citizens’ good life is intimately connected with conducting well foreign relations with other states rather than waging war against them. There is a sort of interplay relationship between, on the one hand, domestic peace and the enjoyment of a more contented life and, on the other hand, a good relationship with the state’s neighbors. Although he describes the condition between states as a condition of nature, Hobbes recognizes the possibility of a number of forms of cooperation as means of safety at the level of sovereign to sovereign. The above passages in support of his reluctance to war suggest, in converse, his support for cooperation as an effective means in securing and protecting the citizens against foreign enemies. Another indication of his support for cooperation over offensive war can be seen in his use of concepts that are commonly used in reference to international relations, such as negotiation, coalition, alliances, and commercial treatises. He speaks of “contract between Sovereigns,”\textsuperscript{217} of “the well ordering of forraigne Traffique”\textsuperscript{218} and of “importation of that which may be had from abroad . . . by Exchange;”\textsuperscript{219} he speaks of the increase of the state’s power “partly by the labour of trading from one place to another, and partly by selling the Manufactures, whereof the Materials were brought in from other places.”\textsuperscript{220} In \textit{Leviathan}, he maintains, the “Leagues between Common-wealths, over whom there is no humane Power established, to keep them all in awe, are not only lawfull, but also profitable for the time they last.”\textsuperscript{221} In Hobbes’s view, one of the most effective means for securing the well-being of the citizens from foreign enemies is trade. The following passage can be regarded as the obvious reason in support of such an interpretation; he remarks, “there is no Territory under the

\textsuperscript{217} \textit{Behemoth}, 21.
\textsuperscript{218} \textit{Leviathan}, XXII, 18, 160.
\textsuperscript{219} Ibid., XXIV, 4, 171.
\textsuperscript{220} Ibid., XXIV, 4, 171.
\textsuperscript{221} Ibid., XXII, 29, 163.
Dominion of one Common-wealth, (except it be of very vast extent,) that produceth all things needful for the maintenance, and motion of the whole Body.”

The language used in the above quotations may be regarded as a clear indication of Hobbes’s advocacy for cooperation over war between states in relation to the safety and the flourishing of their peoples. All the above passages indicate clearly that Hobbes believes that cooperation of various kinds can exist between states, and that common interest can bring sovereigns to cooperation and, hence, reduce the threat of conflict. In Hobbes’s view, the state should not resort to war against another state for the safety of the people if there are alternatives and more efficient ways of securing safety. He clearly advocates cooperation between states for mutual advantage as an effective means to maintain international peace, and by way of consequence, to secure domestic peace of each state.

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222 *Leviathan*, XXII, 29, 163.
CONCLUDING REFLECTION: The Priority of the Safety of the People

The goal of the present study was to elucidate what can be regarded as the central core of Hobbes’s theory of the state, namely, the notion of the safety of the people. For any student of political philosophy, Hobbes’s insight that safety is not mere protection of bare life but the promotion of a more contented life is very much worth considering. In this study, I have been interested in Hobbes’s thinking about the notion of safety. What is original in his writings, and yet not sufficiently underlined in the literature, and that the present study has intended to show, is that the notion of safety, and its modern most used synonym, security, can be adequately approached and understood only in light of men’s fundamental aspirations. In order to show the centrality of safety in his theory of the state, Hobbes took a very particular approach. He first analyzes human nature to determine the basic drive and the most fundamental needs in human beings and, hence, indicates the necessity of creating a more secure frame of life within which these needs can be satisfied. In other words, for Hobbes, the notion of safety cannot be understood in the abstract but only in relation to threats that frustrate a genuine flourishing of the human life.

One of the most important claims of Hobbes is that human beings are not social by nature, and if they come together to form and live in a political association, it is because of their natural desire for security, and for the purpose of enhancing the length and the quality of their lives. Aristotle also shares the idea according to which the end of the city is not merely to live but to live well. However, what makes Hobbes’s insight particular is the view that the pursuit of a more enjoyable, comfortable, and contented life is fundamentally rooted in human nature and drives all human effort to live in a political society. In Aristotle, there is no such drive as the basis of political life, especially as political society is only the last stage in the development of
human community, whose first stage is the household. Hobbes’s insistence on man’s unsociability and aversion to violent death brings into relief his view that political society exists only for the purpose of preserving people’s lives and allowing them to live contentedly in a peaceful environment. In his view, there is no security when citizens’ conditions of life are unbearable due to distressing situations, such as fear of unnecessary premature death, want of basic needs for survival (want of resources, of employment, of health, of food, etc.), unnecessary and unacceptable restriction of liberty, rough justice, lack of hope for a better future, etc. In a strictly Hobbesian perspective, citizens, who rightfully have to get safety from the state, should not suffer, as part of their daily life, these threats and frustrations. The overall meaning of Hobbes’s views about political society is that it is the most effective device created for the purpose of moving people from warlike condition of life to a condition in which they can enjoy peaceful, prosperous, and dignified lives. His notion of the safety of the people should be interpreted only in accordance with this line of thought.

This dissertation focused on Hobbes’s notion of safety not so much for what Hobbes says regarding this concept but because of the crucial importance that this concept has in political thinking and in our modern world. In adopting as his own the traditional precept the safety of the people is the supreme law in ruling the state, Thomas Hobbes is pointing out the defining feature of the institution of the political authority and the state. From the Hobbesian point of view, a well ordered society is not so much one that is grounded on a cardinal moral virtue, but one that is structured in such a way that meets any demand of objectives social conditions favorable to the flourishing of the people. For Hobbes, more than any other organized structure, the state is the primary social and political structure whose main function is to provide security to its members and to create a living environment that promotes their well-being. In his
view, security is the very reason for establishing a political association; and in his explication of
the concept of safety he insists that the provision of security should not be limited to the
protection of bare life but must include the creation of conditions favorable to the promotion of
people’s well-being. In other words, by its very nature, the state is an institution which people
can count on not only for their preservation but also for their well-being. Citizens must be able to
rely on the state for the enjoyment of conditions of life favorable to their safety and flourishing.

In the first chapter, I have contended that the Hobbesian concept of safety requires
that the ruler of the state confines all his efforts and attention to solving problems related to the
human desire for self-preservation, which ranges from the satisfaction of basic needs for physical
survival to the enjoyment of an honorable life. It has been argued that the primary benefit that
individuals must receive from the state is the protection of their physical integrity. Underneath
this idea of safety in terms of protection of individuals’ physical integrity is the inestimable value
of human life. Hobbes has the merit to point out this elementary but fundamental truth: without
physical survival nothing else is possible. However, for Hobbes, survival for the sake of bare life
is not worth having. A certain degree of acceptable conditions of life is necessary beyond mere
survival. Hence, the importance of peaceful conditions of life developed in the second chapter.

This latter chapter was mainly intended to point out Hobbes’s understanding of peace
as referring to objectively ordered conditions of life, created and maintained by the sovereign,
and that give to each individual the opportunity to pursue what he considers to be his good. In
Hobbes, the notion of peace can be well understood only in light of the notion of war, which
refers not simply to armed conflict but essentially to any social context or political state of affairs
in which people have good reasons to fear for their lives. The elucidation of the notion of war
has shown that the Hobbesian concept of safety entails protection from any warlike condition of life marked by fear for one’s life.

In saying that he put into order his moral and political doctrine to the purpose that men learn *how to govern*, Hobbes was indicating that it is an imperative for the individual holder of the sovereign power to properly exercise his authority if the safety of the people is the ultimate goal of his actions. In reference to that imperative, the third chapter consisted not simply in indicating that the exercise of the sovereign’s rights and the use of force and coercion are not enough to ensure peace and safety, but mostly in pointing out Hobbesian principles valuable for a good governing of the people. These Hobbesian governing principles indicate that, for Hobbes, the enhancement of the quality of life for the people is intrinsically related to the way the political authority is exercised in the state. In other words, the quality of life is substantially enhanced as a direct result of the art of well governing the state.

The fourth chapter argued that the power to govern is ineffective if it is not backed by certain conditions of life made available and secured by the sovereign, conditions favorable for the pursuit of one’s aspirations and the enjoyment of a more contented life. The Hobbesian notion of *a more contented life* is the focal point, the core element, and the ultimate goal of the concept of safety, as Hobbes understands it. His explication of the sovereign’s duty to secure the safety of the people indicates clearly that there is no security where conditions of life do not offer any possibility of pursuing and enjoying a more contented life. To live a more contented life, people must be protected from threats from within and without; they must be able to exercise effectively their freedom, and be able to hope to flourish in their lives.

The unifying thread of the present study was Hobbes’s insight according to which mere survival is far from what people pursue in social life, and that it is only in a political society
that human desire for a more contented life can be fulfilled. The main teaching that can be drawn from the four chapters of the present study can be formulated as follows: within a structured political society, safety is not primarily secured by the armed forces, be it the most powerful in the world, but by the creation of objective conditions of life favorable to peace, without which the pursuit of happiness remains aleatory. People cannot live well unless they are given the opportunity to pursue their good and a chance to fulfill it. Political society, with all its structures, represents these objective conditions that offer such an opportunity; it is the only place where we can live our lives and attain our good. In this regard, fear of violent death, grief of mind arising from want, conditions of enduring scorn and dishonor, lack of hope in the attaining of one’s end, concern for security of future time, are all different kinds of threats from which we should be protected as we opt to live in a civil society. In other words, to be safe should be understood first and foremost as to live in a social and political environment where these threats are not parts of our plans as we pursue and strive to achieve our particular ends. The presence of these threats frustrates the fundamental human aspiration to live a more contented life, and their elimination serves as reference in light of which the reality of the notion of safety must be assessed. In light of this teaching, it can be legitimately maintained that the duty to secure the safety of the people is not only the primary but the true natural task of every holder of the political power, and it consists in protecting from physical violence and in promoting peace, as well as in creating and maintaining living conditions favorable to the well-being, and honorable and dignified life for the people. Hobbes’s phrase by safety should be understood “their benefit and good,” their enjoyment of “a happy life so far as that is possible,” and of “all other contentment of life” opens to a broad range of threats from which people have to be protected, particularly those threats that the political authority has the power to eliminate or prevent. In this regard, even though he does
not list all kinds of those threats, we can add legitimately to the list threats such as racism, tribalism, segregation, hunger, economic hardship, preventable diseases, political intolerance, terrorism etc., insofar as all these threats prevent people from feeling safe and living a more contented life.

One of the most captivating aspects in Hobbes, which has been only indirectly alluded to but not very much developed in the present study, and worth mentioning as a possible and valuable topic of research, is that Hobbes does not simply offer us a negative and fearful picture of life in the absence of the political authority, but also indicates that human beings are endowed with the ability to overcome conflict, to bring about solutions to their problems, to come together and to live peacefully and harmoniously among themselves. This insight indicates that Hobbes can be a source of inspiration in the search for a solution to armed conflicts between states in the modern world. Taken as a whole, the edifice of Hobbes’s political philosophy is not merely a foundational account of political absolutism, as it is commonly presented. It is even more significantly an account of a political framework whose terms and requirements are intended to favor conditions of life in which human beings can come together and hope for a better life.

If there must be a hierarchy of reasons that justify the need of living in a structured frame of life under a political authority, the safety and well-being of the people must certainly be the primary reason. To secure the safety of the people in order to enhance their chance to pursue and to fulfill their fundamental aspirations has never been a trivial matter in the history of political philosophy. The question of the safety of the citizens runs throughout the history of political philosophy, from Plato and Aristotle to contemporary scholars, as one of the key topics in political thinking. This question can be regarded as both an already and a not yet answered
question. If the history of philosophy records a number of valuable insights that make this question looks like an already answered question, the persistent reality of poverty, hunger, diseases, war, violence, and mostly the emergence of new threats and conflicts that gravely endanger the human race in the contemporary world makes it still a not yet answered question. Given the novelty in the nature of the challenges which each generation confronts, the question of safety is always a question to answer and it requires that it be reexamined from time to time and remain at the heart of political thinking. As power, means, and the will to destroy and to kill becomes sophisticated in this twenty first century, and in regard to the fragile and uncertain peace of our modern world, the need to reflect on effective ways to ensure the safety of the people becomes more and more urgent. Thus, the question of the safety of the people remains undoubtedly one of the most important topics to reconsider continually in political philosophy. The present study was meant to be an attempt to respond to this pressing intellectual need of our present time.

The main consideration that led to the choice of the present inquiry into Hobbes’s notion of safety is the pitiful social, political, and economic situations, and the recurrent armed conflicts in some parts of the world, particularly in the African continent. In addition to this, there are also contemporary and more recent developments of social, political, and economic problems, such as different challenges inherent to globalization, violent protest against authoritarian regimes in some parts of the world, financial crises and economic austerity policies that result directly from these crises in the Western democratic countries,¹ and above all, terrorism. All these issues and threats compel any contemporary political thinker to think anew the question of safety and of a more contented life. My choice to turn to Hobbes was grounded in

¹ I think here particularly of the alarming spike in suicide rates and disruptions of families following the worldwide economic crisis that had shaken the West, from 2007 through 2009.
the consideration that his work represents one of the most valuable sources of inspiration when it comes to reflecting on crucial issues of modern society, such as peace, security, freedom, civic rights and duties, political authority, etc. There is no need to follow Hobbes’s practical recommendations and prescriptions on how and in what particular manner the state should be arranged in order to address and solve these issues. My main interest in Hobbes lay mainly in his philosophical position, particularly his insight according to which most civil wars and warlike situations begin generally for motives of security. Whenever individuals feel as if their lives and existence are threatened, or whenever their fundamental aspiration to peace and a more contented life is frustrated, they will undertake action, including the use of force, to protect themselves. Hence the incomparable pertinence of Hobbes’s view according to which securing the safety of the people should always be the supreme law in ruling a state, a truth that remains timelessly valid. This fundamental insight of Hobbes can serve as a powerful analytical grid in questioning the settings of our present conditions of life. It provides a student of political philosophy with an argument that challenges both an unjust social and political structure, and any of its underlying philosophy. Any given social and political structure is deemed just or unjust first according to whether or not it places the safety of the people as its main goal.
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