

## Spinoza and Hobbes

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The English philosopher Thomas Hobbes directly influenced and, possibly, was also influenced by Spinoza. Spinoza studied two of Hobbes's works – the third objections to Descartes's *Meditations* and *On the Citizen*, both of which were in his library – before the completion of his own major works (Van Rooijen 1889, pp. 152–153, 188–189). He mentions Hobbes in a note to Chapter 16 of the *Theological-Political Treatise* (G III/263 ADN 33) and in a 1674 letter (NS, Letter 50). Some scholars push further, arguing that Spinoza's work also shows, directly or indirectly, the influence of Hobbes's masterpiece, *Leviathan*, which was available in a Dutch translation of the 1651 English edition and in a Latin version in the late 1660s, when Spinoza was still working (Malcolm 2002, p. 47). Although Spinoza's works are too late to have had much effect on Hobbes's writings, Hobbes also may have studied Spinoza or have known about Spinoza from mutual acquaintances such as Henry Oldenburg. The best evidence for this is a passage in *Brief Lives* (Aubrey 1898, I, p. 357) in which Hobbes reportedly says of the *Theological-Political Treatise*, that Spinoza, “had cut through him a barre's length, for he durst not write so boldly.”

While the manner and extent of Spinoza's interaction with Hobbes holds great interest, it is also valuable to study the philosophers side by side for the insight that each gives us into the other. Hobbes and Spinoza were both aware of the advanced science of mid-seventeenth-century Europe and of the uncomfortable fit of that science with traditional moral and religious doctrines. Although in different countries and different cultural contexts, both also lived through religiously charged civil turmoil, in the English Civil War and the Rampjaar respectively, which informed their political writings. In addition to this shared background, many of their projects and commitments are similar. Both are causal determinists and, although Spinoza's commitments in metaphysics go further than Hobbes's, both work toward a complete deterministic account of the world in corporeal terms. Both admired geometry, and that admiration reveals itself in their works. Hobbes (L33–39, 44) and Spinoza (TTP 7) both offer something close to a Scriptural hermeneutics. Although Spinoza abandoned this language eventually (in the TP), both build accounts of the basis of society in a contract (*pactum*) in which each person transfers natural right to a sovereign (Hobbes, DC5.6–9; L17 260–261) or social

order (Spinoza, TTP 16) that remains unbound (see Curley 1991 and Garrett 2010 for useful comparative accounts). Both argue that the political sovereign holds, or ought to hold, significant control over the practice of religion in a state (DC6.11; L18; TTP 19). Finally, both Hobbes and Spinoza start from a broadly egoistic conception of human emotion and build upon it a theory of the good. From the most basic term for human desire (*conatus*) to the definitions of particular passions, to accounts of the good that associate it with the satisfaction of desire, the theories' similarity is striking. It is for good reason, then, that some of the most widely read and most valuable critical resources urge students of Spinoza's ethical theory to begin from a comparison to Hobbes (for example, see Curley 1988 and Garrett 1996).

This last topic is my focus here. One aim of this chapter is to introduce the most relevant doctrines to readers for whom they are new. I also offer an argument, however. A close comparison of the authors' psychologies is useful because it helps to emphasize what is distinctive of each view and, subsequently, to explain further, more dramatic differences in the authors' moral theories and conceptions of the state. I argue in Section 1 that for Hobbes, desire is always caused by external objects; for Spinoza, although external objects frequently and even typically cause desire, they do not always do so. Moreover, Spinoza distinguishes, where Hobbes does not, among different degrees to which external objects cause desire. A second subtle difference emerges in the authors' conceptions of human nature, the topic of Section 2. Hobbes seems to assume that our passions, in one sense, are stable. It is for him unimportant, unlikely, or impossible that a human being dominated by fear, for example, can come to be dominated by love. For Spinoza, however, such flexibility is a prominent feature of human nature. In Section 3, I argue that these differences in the authors' moral psychology explain Spinoza's much more robust theory of value and his conviction, lacking in Hobbes, that the purpose of the state is the improvement of its citizens.

## 1. Desire and Causation

A striking similarity in the authors is their emphasis on *conatus*, or striving, in their accounts of desire. *Conatus* for Hobbes is infinitesimal motion: "motion made through the length of a point, and in an instant or point of time" (DCo3.15.2). In animals, including human beings, *conatus* aims at preservation or – and Hobbes takes these aims to be closely related – pleasure and the avoidance of pain:

. . . if vital motion be helped by motion made by sense, then the parts of the organ will be disposed to guide the spirits in such manner as conduceth most to the preservation and augmentation of that motion. . . [I]n animal motion this is the very first endeavour [*conatus*] and found even in the embryo; which while it is in the womb, moveth its limbs with voluntary motion, for the avoiding of whatsoever troubleth it, or for the pursuing of what pleaseth it. (DCo4.25.12)

This passage starts by limiting its account to that vital motion "helped by motion made by sense." The invocation of sense suggests that something outside of the body causes the body to move in order to preserve itself. The end of the passage reinforces this suggestion: an embryo is troubled or pleased by something and so moves to avoid or pursue it.

In Hobbes's human psychology, conatus grounds theories of desire and the most basic passions:

These small beginnings of motion, within the body of man, before they appear in. . . visible actions, are commonly called ENDEAVOUR [*conatus*].

This endeavour, when it is toward something which causes it, is called APPETITE [*appetitus*], or DESIRE [*cupido*]. . . And when the endeavour is fromward something, it is generally called AVERSION. (L6.78.21–28; the language in brackets is from the Latin version of *Leviathan* L6.79.23)

Desire, as Hobbes defines it here, always has an external cause, which brings an individual to strive either to pursue or to avoid it. We have no desire that is originally or wholly our own. Instead, we are always like the fetus in the womb: each of our actions is a response to some external stimulus.

Spinoza similarly emphasizes conatus in his account of desire: “Each thing, insofar as it is in itself, strives [*conatur*] to persevere in being” (E3p6). There are however a great variety of such doctrines in the history of ideas (see LeBuffe 2010, pp. 101–102), and despite their surface similarity, Spinoza's version of the doctrine differs substantially from Hobbes's. First, the theory for Spinoza is a perfectly general one: all singular things – human beings and animals, but also non-animal bodies such as toasters and non-corporeal entities such as minds – strive. Hobbes's notion of conatus describes bodies only, and it does so in terms of a physical concept, motion. Second, perseverance in being associates systematically with conatus in Spinoza (E3p6; see also DPP 2p14). As we have seen, Hobbes associates the conatus for preservation with animal bodies only. His discussions of motion at a point that refer to bodies more generally (for example, DCo3.15.5–7) do not mention preservation. Finally, Spinoza does not introduce the conatus for perseverance, as Hobbes introduces the conatus for preservation, as a response to external causes. How to understand Spinoza's views remains a matter of critical debate (see Hübner 2010 for a useful summary). Nevertheless it is clear that, for Spinoza, all things strive; each strives to persevere; and each strives even where it is a total cause of its own action.

This last point – that the author's doctrines of conatus differ with respect to external causation – is evident in the structure of the authors' presentations. As we have seen, Hobbes's account of desire at *Leviathan* 6 begins with a definition of ‘endeavor’ and precedes immediately to a definition of ‘desire’ that incorporates the notion of an external cause. Spinoza's accounts of conatus and desire (*cupiditas*) in *Ethics* 3 arise only after a discussion of action and passion. Before introducing the conatus doctrine, Spinoza explicitly sets out senses in which things, and specifically human beings, may behave either in response to external causes (this is passion) or in a way that is wholly their own (this is action). He starts by distinguishing senses of causation in which a thing is an adequate (or total) cause or an inadequate (or partial) cause of what it does:

E3d1: I call a cause “adequate” whose effect can be clearly and distinctly perceived through it. I call “inadequate,” however, or “partial” that whose effect cannot be understood through it alone.

The doctrine is complex. For the present purpose, however, all we need note is that Spinoza distinguishes between total and partial causation at 3d1. In subsequent passages, Spinoza moves quickly to a specifically human and mental account of such causation:

E3d2: I say that we “act” when something happens, either in us or outside of us, of which we are the adequate cause. . . . On the other hand, I say that we are “acted on” when something happens in us or outside of us, or something follows from our nature, of which we are not the cause, except in part.

E3p1: Our mind does some things [i.e. acts] but undergoes other things, viz. insofar as it has adequate ideas, it necessarily does some things, and insofar as it has inadequate ideas, it necessarily undergoes other things.

At E3d2, Spinoza introduces the terminology that he will use in discussing human activity as an adequate or inadequate cause. Then, he argues at E3p1 that in fact we are sometimes adequate causes and sometimes inadequate causes. Our adequate ideas belong fully to us, so we will be the adequate causes of our effects insofar as we have adequate ideas. Our inadequate ideas, however, do not belong fully to us, so we will be inadequate or partial causes of effects that follow from them. It is Spinoza’s emphasis on action from adequate ideas that distinguishes him from Hobbes.

Spinoza sets out the view that all things strive for perseverance in being in a brief, much discussed argument from E3p4–p6. The account of desire that follows synthesizes the main points – human minds are both total and partial causes (E3p1), and we strive for perseverance in being (E3p6) – that precede it.

E3p9: The mind, both insofar as it has clear and distinct ideas and also insofar as it has confused ideas, strives to persevere in being. . .

At E3p9, Spinoza argues that the striving doctrine characterizes what we do both as adequate and as inadequate causes. The definition of desire that follows inherits this generality:

E3p9s: This striving. . . when it is referred to mind and body at once is called ‘appetite’. . . . Between appetite and desire there is no difference, except that desire is generally related to men insofar as they are conscious of appetite. So desire can be defined as appetite together with consciousness of appetite.

Here, Spinoza defines ‘appetite’ in terms of striving and ‘desire,’ in turn, in terms of appetite. Tracing the discussion back to E3p9, then, we may conclude that, for Spinoza, human desires are striving from clear and distinct ideas as well as from confused and obscure ideas and, therefore, human desires include activity as a total as well as a partial cause. Some of our desires, then, have no cause other than ourselves. Spinoza draws this conclusion explicitly near the end of *Ethics* 3:

E3p58: In addition to the joy and desire that are passions, there are other affects of joy and desire, which are ascribed to us insofar as we act.

The basis for Spinoza’s theory of desire in an account of causation implies that the distinction between activity and passivity may be incremental: just as, generally, one of two causes may have more influence in a given effect, so in the specific case of desire, a given mind may be a greater or lesser cause of its own desires. The word ‘insofar’ (*quatenus*), which appears at both E3p9 and E3p58, suggests that Spinoza accepts this implication. Whereas Hobbes bluntly defines ‘desire’ as arising from an external cause and offers no finer grained account

of human causal activity in desiring, then, Spinoza builds an account of desire that includes a whole range of causal activity, from desires that arise entirely from us to desires that reflect the defeat of our nature by external causes (see E4p20s).

## 2. Emotions and Human Nature

For both Hobbes and Spinoza, the emotions are basic enough to psychology that a theory of them amounts to a theory of human nature: it tells us what, in a very basic way, human beings are like. This section addresses the authors' views on the question of whether and how human beings can change. I argue that Spinoza emphasizes, where Hobbes does not, the variety and plasticity of human emotion.

Many definitions of particular passions in *Leviathan* 6 refer to appetite, desire, or aversion. Love, for example, Hobbes makes the same thing as desire, "save that by desire we always signify the absence of the object; by love, most commonly the presence of the same" (L6.80.5–8). Hope, he makes "appetite with an opinion of attaining" (L6.84.18). Such passages suggest that, typically, Hobbes takes passions just to be varieties of desire.

Hobbes finds a kind of variety in human nature: the objects of our passions vary. This view is evident in the Introduction to *Leviathan*, where Hobbes qualifies his approval of introspection as a guide to understanding others' passions by noting that it cannot help us to understand the objects of others' passions:

I say the similitude of passions, which are the same in all men, *desire, fear, hope, &c*; not the similitude of the objects of the passions, which are the things *desired, feared, hoped, &c*: for these the constitution individual, and particular education, do so vary, and they are so easy to be kept from our knowledge. . . (LI.18.21–25)

The qualification suggests that as our circumstances vary, so the objects of our passions will vary.

Although this is not explicit in the Introduction, other passages suggest that the objects of a single person's passions may change over time, that is, that they are plastic. At the other end of *Leviathan*, the "Review and Conclusion," Hobbes praises Sidney Godolphin for the objects that attach to his passions:

Nor is there any repugnancy between fearing the laws, and not fearing a public enemy; nor between abstaining from injury, and pardoning it in others. There is therefore no such inconsistency in human nature, with civil duties, as some think. I have known clearness of judgment, and largeness of fancy; strength of reason, and graceful elocution; a courage for the war, and fear for the laws, and all eminently in one man; and that was my most noble and honoured friend Mr. Sidney Godolphin. (LR&C.1133.9–15)

Godolphin is praiseworthy because his courage is for war and his fear is for the laws. The passage suggests, if Godolphin is a model of virtue, that others should follow him: each of us ought to work to attach our fear to the laws rather than to war and, of course, a sovereign ought to work to transform citizens' passions in this way. If we should change the objects of passions, however, then those objects must be flexible. One and the same person may fear different objects in different circumstances.

Setting aside the plasticity of the objects of passion, however, Hobbes seems to assume that human passions do not vary greatly. There is evidence that, in the interpersonal case,

they do vary somewhat. The argument of *Leviathan* emphasizes fear, the passion “to be reckoned upon” (L14.216.7–8). In *Leviathan* 11, “Of the Difference of Manners,” however, Hobbes characterizes different kinds of people as predominantly fearful, competitive, vain-glorious, and so on for the particular purpose of assessing their sociability. The account suggests that different people have different passions. An interpretation of Hobbes’s account of society must give an account of the passions, and especially of the importance of fear, that accommodates this degree of variety.

To turn to the intrapersonal case, there is little evidence that Hobbes thinks that an individual’s passions are plastic and little evidence that such change matters to him. One passage, from *Leviathan* 15 might seem to be such evidence. It includes the warning that we require a sovereign because we each have different desires and even, “the same man in divers times differs from himself” (L15.242.8–9; cf. DC3.31). The passage might initially be taken for a view on which different passions – fear, hope, and anger perhaps – characterize a person over time. We have seen, however, that Hobbes emphasizes the plasticity of objects. That view suffices to explain the plasticity described here: it may be now fear of war and later fear of law that characterizes the same man. In his account of good character, moreover, where one might expect Hobbes to invoke a change in passion, he does not. Godolphin remains fearful. He is distinguished by fearing the right object.

Spinoza’s metaphysics of desire requires different terminology. His broadest term for the emotions is ‘affect’ (*affectus*). He takes passions to be those affects that have partial external causes but also includes active emotions among our affects. In some passages, as at E3p58, Spinoza identifies desire with passion as Hobbes does. Strictly, however, Spinoza makes the basic passions, joy (*laetitia*) and sadness (*tristitia*), changes in the power of conatus (or desire, 3p11s), and he frequently takes particular desires to arise from rather than simply be forms of passion (see, e.g., 3p37, 3p43, 3p44).

Spinoza shares Hobbes’s view about the plasticity of the objects of emotion (3p51). Spinoza, however, emphasizes where Hobbes does not the plasticity of human affects generally. A single person’s affects typically change frequently. The contrast is clearest perhaps in Spinoza’s accounts of fear and society. Hobbes famously emphasizes fear of violent death in the state of nature, and he relies on fear of the law in citizens of a commonwealth. Spinoza mentions fear in the Introduction to the TTP, but it is not so prominent:

If men could manage all their things by a fixed plan, or if fortune always favored them, no one would be held by superstition. Often, though, they are driven into such difficulties that they are capable of producing no plan and usually they desire the uncertain goods of fortune, vacillate miserably between hope and fear, and so have a great tendency to believe anything whatever. The mind, when it is in doubt, is easily pushed this way or that way, and all the more easily when it is hung up, shaken by hope and fear. (G III/5/2–9)

This passage suggests that it is vacillation between fear and hope, and the resulting vulnerability to superstition, that characterizes the state of nature. Returning to the subject in Chapter 16, which introduces the notion of contract, Spinoza suggests that it is the variety of harmful passions and the lack of coordination that they produce that is the principal problem. Notice that fear does not appear in this account:

It is far from true that everyone can always be led under the guidance of reason alone. For each is drawn by his own delight, and the mind is so often filled with avarice, ambition, envy, anger and so on that no place remains for reason. (G III/193/1–4; cf. G III/278/8–9 and 4p37s2 at G II/237/26–33)



Fear might well have appeared here. Spinoza takes it to be a harmful and prominent passion (4p47). It is the variety of passion and lack of coordination, however, that for him characterizes the state of nature.

Spinoza's argument that our emotions can change in the *Ethics* gives him reason to hope that, at least in some circumstances, we might come to act from a different emotion. For example, he argues at E4p63s that the sick man eats food he dislikes because of fear of death but that the healthy man enjoys what he eats. This amounts, I think, to a qualified recommendation of the latter course: some of us can enjoy our food, and we should. Spinoza's account of the state reflects similar hope. Even where reason might not move everybody, Spinoza can still rely on a different passion, devotion, as a means of attaining cooperation:

Two things above all others compelled [Moses to introduce religion]: the defiant character of the people of course (because it would not permit them to be compelled by force alone); and the approach of war, in which, if things are to go favorably, it is necessary to encourage soldiers rather than intimidating them with penalties and threats. In this way each will work more to make himself famous for virtue and greatness of spirit than simply to avoid punishment. That is why Moses by divine power and command introduced religion into the Republic: so that the people would do their duty not so much from fear as from devotion. (GIII/75/14–21)

Spinoza suggests here that whatever passions, or vacillation among passions, characterized the Hebrews beforehand, Moses was able to bring them under the influence of devotion, a form of love. Fear and other passions, however potent they might be in particular cases, are not fixed features of an individual's character.

Spinoza, then, takes people to be plastic in a way that Hobbes does not. Hobbes writes little about changes in the passions themselves, as opposed to the objects of the passions. No element of his argument depends upon such change. Spinoza, however, takes plasticity to be a great problem for many of us: our passions change frequently with external influence. He also takes this plasticity to be something that we, or others, can exploit.

### 3. Value and the State

This section presents consequences of the philosophers' accounts of human nature for their ethics and politics. In their theories of value, Hobbes and Spinoza start from a common theory of use: I call whatever I desire "good." Hobbes's substantive accounts of value and the state offer little beyond this theory: he simply takes as good what is desired. Spinoza, however, in both his ethics and his politics adds a great deal to this doctrine. He emphasizes ways in which individuals can become better, or more free.

Hobbes offers an account of the use of 'good,' 'evil,' and 'vile' (that is, following the sense of *vilis*, valueless) in the course of introducing the passions in *Leviathan* 6. The appearance of the definition there suggests that, in the first instance at any rate, this is an account of use and a doctrine of Hobbes's psychology:

But whatsoever is the object of any man's appetite or desire, that is it which he for his part calleth *good*: and the object of his hate and aversion, *evil*; and of his contempt, *vile* and *inconsiderable*. For these words of good, evil, and contemptible, are ever used with relation to the person that useth them: there being nothing simply and absolutely so; nor any common rule of good

and evil, to be taken from the nature of the objects themselves; but from the person of the man (where there is no commonwealth;) or, (in a commonwealth,) from the person that representeth it; or from an arbitrator or judge, whom men disagreeing shall by consent set up, and make his sentence the rule thereof. (L6.80.29–6.82.4)

The passage begins with an assertion that our use of value terms reflects our desires. Because it does so, Hobbes goes on to note, there is nothing that is simply good. Goodness, understood in these terms is, after all, a relation: chocolate is good for me because I want it. If you neither want nor are averse to chocolate, then it is contemptible for you. In the final clause here, Hobbes foreshadows his account of value in a commonwealth: good and evil in a commonwealth are determined by the sovereign (see L18.274.1–10). This may be understood as a significant consequence of his initial account rather than amendment: in the commonwealth, as outside of it, the good for me is what I desire. In the commonwealth, however, the sovereign's laws and pronouncements both reflect my desires, through my consent, and also, where the sovereign is effective, create circumstances that shape my natural desires. I will be averse to punishment, for example, and so will, like the sovereign, find violation of the law to be evil.

Similar views may be found in the *Ethics*. At E3p9s Spinoza offers an account of the ordinary use of 'good' that emphasizes desire: "It is clear that we neither strive for, nor will, neither want, nor desire anything because we judge it to be good; on the contrary, we judge something to be good because we strive for it, will it, want it, and desire it." At the end of E4 Preface, Spinoza offers a description of good, evil, and indifference as relations:

As far as good and evil are concerned, they also indicate nothing positive in things, considered in themselves, nor are they anything other than modes of thinking, or notions we form because we compare things to one another. For one and the same thing can be good, and evil, and also indifferent. For example, Music is good for one who is melancholy, evil to one who is mourning, and neither good nor evil to one who is deaf.

Finally, at E4p37s2, he builds from desire-satisfaction to an account of 'good' and 'evil' in the state:

Anyone who is in the state of nature. . .determines what is good and what evil for himself and insofar as he takes it to contribute to his own advantage. . .However in a civil state what is good and what is evil is determined by common consent and all must submit to the state.

It is perhaps in these views that Spinoza most closely resembles Hobbes. They warrant a close study of relevant passages (including DC3.31 and DC6.9) for hints about historical influence.

Although this shared ground is significant, it is noteworthy that Hobbes rests here. His account of the laws of nature, which he also calls virtues, starts with each person's right "to use his own power, as he will himself" from "his own judgment and reason" (L14.198.5). That is, it starts from what each of us calls good. At the end of the account of the laws, he reiterates his use of 'good' and 'evil' in the sense of *Leviathan* 6 in characterizing moral philosophy: "For moral philosophy is nothing else but the science of what is good and evil in the conversation and society of mankind. 'Good' and 'evil' are names that signify our appetites and aversions" (L15.242.1–4). Hobbes acknowledges, as we have seen, that different people vary in what they find good, but he argues that we agree about the laws of nature: "all men agree on this, that peace is good; and therefore also the way or means of



peace (which, as I have shewed before), are justice, gratitude. . . and the rest of the laws of nature” (L15.242.13–16). Hobbes takes the laws of nature, then, to be the science of moral philosophy and also what all alike desire and so call good.

Hobbes forcefully dismisses as false more robust theories of value. At the beginning of *Leviathan* 11, he rejects a series of common doctrines that characterize Thomistic and other traditional ethics: “[T]he Felicity of this life consisteth not in the repose of a mind satisfied. For there is no such *Finis ultimus* (utmost aim) nor *Summum Bonum* (greatest Good) as is spoken of in the books of the old Moral Philosophers” (L11.150.7–10). The passage rejects as baseless any view that takes one aim or purported good to be better than another. Hobbes’s theory of value, after all, does not offer a means outside of his accounts of desire, reason, and society by which we might find one end to be better than others.

Spinoza, however, does not rest at a theory of value based upon what people find valuable. This is clear in his definitions of ‘good’ and ‘evil’ at the beginning of *Ethics* 4:

E4d1: By ‘good’ I shall understand this, what we certainly know to be useful to us.

E4d2: By ‘evil,’ however, I shall understand this, what we certainly know prevents us from being masters of some good.

Desires do not always depend upon certain knowledge, so good and evil here are more than simply what one wants. They are what we know helps us to become more like the best or most free human being (see E4 Preface).

Where Hobbes rejects all of the doctrines of the old moral philosophers, Spinoza, albeit in his own way, endorses them:

In life, therefore, it is especially useful to perfect, as far as we can, the intellect, or reason, and in this one thing consists man’s greatest felicity, or blessedness. Indeed, blessedness is nothing but that *acquiescentia* of mind that arises from the intuitive knowledge of God. And perfecting the intellect is nothing other than understanding God and the attributes and actions of God which follow from the necessity of his nature. Therefore, the final goal [*finis ultimus*] of a man who is led by reason, that is, the highest desire by means of which he tries to regulate all the others is that by which he is moved to an adequate conception of himself, and also of all things that can fall under his understanding. (E4App.4)

On Spinoza’s account, because we are more free, powerful, and perfect (see E1d7, E2d6, and E4d8 for definitions of these terms) insofar as we act or are adequate causes, desires in which we are more active are better. The best desire, he writes here, is one for understanding, and Spinoza presents each of the traditional doctrines that Hobbes rejects in similar terms. The *finis ultimus* is understanding, and the knowledge of God is Spinoza’s highest good or *summum bonum* (see also E4p28).

These doctrines depend upon Spinoza’s convictions that the extent of activity in different affects varies and that our affects can change. In *Ethics* 4, he describes the harm that passions can do to us and the ways in which we are and can become more free of that harm. In *Ethics* 5, he builds an account of how the mind can come to be more free from the influence of passion or, in other words, more active. It is because our affects are in varying degrees active and because they are plastic that Spinoza can defend these views about the “growth” (*incrementum*) of affects and how they might “be restrained” (*coercere*). Some of the most important passages for this theme in the *Ethics* are E4p5, E4p7, E4p14, E4p15, E4App.2, and E5p20s.

Spinoza, then, offers an account of value and well-being that draws upon his rich moral psychology to go beyond Hobbesian desire-satisfaction. This difference recurs in the philosophers' accounts of the state. Their accounts of the condition of human beings outside of the commonwealth are similar:

Whatsoever therefore is consequent to a time of war, where every man is enemy to every man, the same consequent to the time wherein men live without other security than what their own strength and their own invention shall furnish them withal. In such condition there is no place for industry, because the fruit thereof is uncertain: and consequently no culture of the earth; no navigation, nor use of the commodities that may be imported by sea; no commodious building; no instruments of moving and removing such things as require much force; no knowledge of the face of the earth; no account of time; no arts; no letters; no society; and which is worst of all, continual fear, and danger of violent death; and the life of man, solitary, poor, nasty, brutish, and short. (L13.192.20–30)

Society is very useful not only for securing one's life against enemies, but also for lightening the many tasks that must be done. Indeed, it is necessary for this. For unless men were willing to give work to each other, anyone would lack both the skill and the time to be able to provide for his own sustenance and survival. Indeed, all are not equally suited to all tasks, and no one alone could provide the things which he most needs. Each alone would lack both the strength and the time, I say, to plow, to sow, to reap, to grind, to cook, to weave, to sew, and to do all the many things which must be done to sustain life – not to mention, the arts and sciences, which are absolutely necessary to the perfection of human nature and to blessedness. We see, then, that those who live barbarously without a state lead a miserable and almost brutish life. (G III/59/13–27)

Two differences in Spinoza account, however, deserve note. The first is an absence: Spinoza does not emphasize fear. We have seen why he does not. It is not fear but vacillation and vulnerability to new passion that causes the misery of human beings outside the state. The second is an invocation of those doctrines of the old moral philosophers that Hobbes rejects. Spinoza concludes by arguing that in the state of nature we lack the means to attain human perfection or blessedness.

We institute states, on Hobbes's account, because they help us to get what we want. They help us to escape death and also to get the basic securities and comforts that are so uncertain otherwise. This is clear, I think, in his account of the office of the sovereign:

The office of the sovereign. . .consists in the end for which he was trusted with the sovereign power, namely, the procuration of the safety of the people. . . [not simply] a bare preservation, but also all other contentments of life, which every man by lawful industry, without danger or hurt to the commonwealth, shall acquire to himself. (L30.520.2–10)

Spinoza, however, has a great interest in the function of the state in cultivating the best human affects. As we might put it today, he has a comprehensive conception of the good, which he takes it to be the office of the sovereign to promote:

It is not, I say, the end of the State to change men from rational beings into beasts or automata, but the opposite, that their mind and body may perform their functions safely and that they may use this same reason freely, and that they should not quarrel in hatred, anger, or deceit, or hold unkind feelings toward one another. The end of the state, therefore, is really freedom. (G III/241/3–8)

Hobbes's account of the office of the sovereign reflects his conviction that the good is simply what we desire: safety and the "contentments of life." Spinoza takes the purpose of the state to be our freedom and rationality, notions that trace back to 3p1. For him, ends such as peace and security are instrumental for these further ends, which are good whether or not people desire them at the moment. Moreover ends that some of us desire "without danger or hurt to the commonwealth" will be valueless if they do not really make citizens better people, that is, if they do not promote freedom and rationality. In his politics, then, as in his ethics, Spinoza depends upon his theory of causation in human affects and his conviction that the degree to which we cause our own actions can change.

#### 4. Conclusion

Scholars recommend that students of Spinoza's ethical and political theory start with Hobbes for good reason. The philosophers' methods and many of their doctrines are similar. Spinoza, however, maintains where Hobbes does not that human emotions are highly variable and highly plastic. His moral and political theory reflects this commitment.

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