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Striving, Happiness, and the Good: Spinoza as Follower and Critic of Hobbes

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It is often noted that among the ways that Spinoza's philosophy reflects the influence of Hobbes is in terms of his conception of striving (*conatus*).[1] While this is undoubtedly true, in this chapter I wish to analyze one important way in which Hobbes and Spinoza differ in their understanding of "striving" and to show that this difference goes some distance in accounting for their remarkably different normative philosophies. I argue that Spinoza's commitment to an essentialist reading of striving helps to explain his profound, and somewhat underappreciated, break with Hobbes not only in terms of his views of right and obligation, but also in terms of his conceptions of happiness and the good.

The structure of this chapter is as follows: I open by examining the similarities between Hobbes's and Spinoza's views on motivation. This is followed by an analysis of the distinct ways in which they understand striving, and in turn agency and artifice, showing how these differences are reflected in their conceptions of civil life. Finally, I consider how the differences described in the preceding sections yield fundamentally different views of goodness, happiness, liberty, and the function of the state.

Fundamentals of Moral Motivation

Though Spinoza's debt to Hobbes is widely acknowledged in the scholarly literature,[2] the striking ways in which Spinoza's account of motivation resembles Hobbes's has not been fully charted. In this section I survey of some of the important connections. To appreciate their accounts of moral motivation, we must situate them in relation to the Scholastic model that they both sought to supplant.

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Critique of Scholasticism

The Scholastic account of human action assigned an irreducible and ineliminable explanatory role to final causes. Final causes were not only distinct from and irreducible to efficient causes, they explained the efficacy of efficient causes themselves. As Aquinas puts it: "the end is the cause of the causality of the efficient cause, for it makes the efficient cause to be an efficient cause."[3] For humans, goodness is the end of action, or that towards which the will is directed and which consequently shapes the particular desires by which we act. Even when we desire something that is not really good, we still pursue things under the appearance of the good, with goodness itself – along with our capacity to be apprehend and be drawn by its power – grounding any explanation of why we choose what we do.[4] Goodness, as the end of action or the object of the will, enables us to apprehend courses of action as choiceworthy in some respect.

Still, Scholastics did not think that the apprehension of goodness alone fixes action, as this would imply an execrable form of intellectual determinism. Instead, they maintained that we possess another power – i.e., the liberty of exercise – by which we can perform or refrain from performing the action specified by the intellect.[5] The liberty of exercise is a self-determining power, a two-way ability to do or forebear. The Scholastic conception of action thus depended both on the explanatory independence (and priority) of final causes and a libertarian freedom of the will.

Hobbes and Spinoza reject both of these elements. Hobbes categorically denies the existence of a free will, claiming that it is flatly incompatible with the notion of a cause, which is such that when all of the contributing factors are present "it cannot be understood but that the effect is produced at the same instant; and if any one of them be wanting, it cannot be understood but that the effect is not produced" (EW I.122).[6] Since nothing exists for which there is not a total and sufficient cause, Hobbes infers that "whatsoever is produced is produced necessarily … and therefore also voluntary actions are necessitated" (EW V.380). To appeal to a free will to explain action would be to invite an untenable regress: "a man can no more say he will will, than he will will will, and so make an infinite repetition of the word will; which is absurd and insignificant" (EW IV.69).

Hobbes also rejects the view of final causes as grounding the efficacy of efficient causes. In response to Bramhall, he writes that any attempt to show that human action is "moved not by an efficient [cause], is nonsense" (EW V.77; cf. EW I.131–2). Still, he admits that human actions can be explained in terms of ends, provided that we concede that the representation of an end "is entirely the same as an efficient cause," since the imagination of some pleasure gives rise to "motion towards the desired object" (1976, 315; EW I.131–2). He inverts the priority relationship between appetites and goodness: we do not desire things because they are good; rather "good" and "evil" are just terms that denote that which we desire or imagine with pleasure (2012, 80–2; 1651, 24; see also EW IV.32).

Spinoza denies free will and final causation on similar grounds. He asserts that "in nature there is nothing contingent, but all things have been determined from the necessity of the divine nature to exist and produce an effect in a certain way" (1p29; 1985, 433).[7] The view that everything that exists is necessary follows in part from his commitment to a robust version of the principle of sufficient reason (e.g., 1p11 alt. dem;

1985, 417). On the basis of his necessitarianism, he straightforwardly rejects the notion of the will as a two-way power or faculty (see 2p48 [1985, 483]; 2p35s [1985, 473]; 1 Appendix [1985, 440]).

Spinoza also rejects the standard view of final causes. *Ethics* 1 Appendix includes a protracted diatribe against natural teleology in which he claims that: "all the prejudices I here undertake to expose depend on this one: that men commonly suppose that all natural things act, as men do, on account of an end … Nature has no ends set before it … all final causes are nothing but human fictions" (1985, 439, 442). But while he denies that end-directed explanations are distinct from efficient causal explanations, he, like Hobbes, allows for reductive sense of final causation: "What is called a final cause is nothing but a human appetite in so far as it is considered as a principle, or primary cause, of some thing … It is really an efficient cause, which is considered as a first cause, because men are commonly ignorant of the causes of their appetites" (4 Preface; 1985, 544). Consequently, he also inverts Scholastic explanatory order, explaining "ends" in terms of appetites, rather than the other way around (1 Appendix [1985, 442]; 3p9s [1985, 500]).

We see then that Hobbes and Spinoza not only reject these fundamental elements of Scholastic accounts of motivation, they do so for similar reasons. They are both determinists who deny the existence of free will on the grounds that it jars with causal sufficiency, and in place of the view of final causes as explaining the efficacy of efficient causes, they reduce final causes, or ends, to efficient causes. This clears the ground for their positive, naturalistic accounts of motivation.

Hobbes on Motivation

At the foundation of Hobbes's account of human motivation is the concept of endeavor – or *conatus* in Latin – which is defined as the "small beginning of motion" (2012, 78; 1651, 23). The notion of conatus figures into nearly every aspect of Hobbes's philosophy, from his physics to his account of sense perception.[8] Unsurprisingly, then, it is the foundation of his account of motivation: "This endeavour, when it is toward something which causes it, is called appetite, or desire … And when the endeavour is from ward something, it is generally called aversion" (2012, 78; 1651, 23). Endeavor is the fount of action.

Appetites and aversions are not blind impulses, but rather "depend always upon a precedent thought of *whither, which way*, and *what*" (Hobbes 2012, 78; 1651, 23; see also 1972, 55). The specific thoughts that direct one's endeavor are anticipations of "good and evil consequences" (2012, 94; 1651, 29; cf. EW V.357–8), or hedonic or painful representations of various courses of action (2012, 82; 1651, 25; see also EW IV.32). And to represent something as pleasant is to perceive it as good, representations of goodness being nothing apart from pleasure, appetite, or love (EW V.390; EW IV.32; 1972, 47; EW II, 196; 2012, 80; 1651, 24; 2012, 242; 1651, 79). Ultimately, Hobbes folds a number of affective and motivational dimensions into his conceptions of pleasure and pain, claiming that pleasure and pain are themselves appetitive and aversive motions and that passions like love, hate, hope, and fear are mere permutations of pleasure and pain. As he baldly puts it in *Elements of Law*, "pleasure, love, and appetite,

which is also called desire, are divers names for divers considerations of the same thing" (EW 4, 32; cf. 2012, 80; 1651, 23–4). Hobbes thus advances a stripped-down account of motivation: appetitive pleasure and aversive pain are motions that lead us toward or away from some object, and the representations of goodness and evil are simply manifestations of appetitive pleasure or aversive pain (EW V.358; 2012, 90; 1651, 28; EW I.409–10).

Finally, to get the full picture of Hobbes on the metaphysics of motivation, we may observe that pleasure and pain are themselves rooted in a system's functioning:

> This Motion, which is called Appetite, and for the apparence of it Delight, and Pleasure, seemeth to be, a corroboration of Vital motion, and a help thereunto; and therefore such things as caused Delight, were not improperly called Jucunda, (A Juvando,) from helping or fortifying; and the contrary, Molesta, Offensive, from hindering, and troubling the motion vital. (2012, 82; 1651, 25; cf. EW IV.31)

Ultimately, then, human motivation depends on how one's vital, preservational motions are affected.

Spinoza on Motivation

Striving is also at the root of Spinoza's account of motivation: "each thing, as far as it is it in itself [*quantum in se est*], strives [*conatur*] to persevere in its being" (3p6; 1985, 498; translation modified). Striving is a thing's fundamental motive tendency: insofar as we are in ourselves,[9] we will do things that promote our being. This is the ground of everything that we do.

But what one does is not determined by one's conatus *simpliciter*, but rather by one's affective state, or how one's conatus is constituted (3 DA 1, expl; 1985, 531). There are three basic classes of affect: joy (*laetitia*), sadness (*tristitia*), and desire (*cupiditas*). Joy and sadness are for Spinoza what pleasure and pain are for Hobbes: they are the fundamental springs of action that reflect changes to our vital activity. Joy marks an increase in one's power of acting, while sadness marks a decrease of this power. Not only does Spinoza follow Hobbes in explaining basic affects in terms of changes to one's preservational activities, he also accepts Hobbes's view that these basic affective states are complex intentional states, not blind, raw feelings.[10] Because affects are representational, they direct our striving so that we pursue things that we imagine with joy and avoid things that we imagine with sadness (3p12–13; 1985, 502).

As for desire, it is simply one's essence or striving insofar as this essence is constituted by a form of joy or sadness (3p56d [1985, 527]; cf. 3 DA I, expl. [1985, 531]).[11] On this view, the same "mode" may be understood either as a form of joy (e.g., a love of an object) or as a desire (a striving for an object), depending on whether or not one is attending to the way in which this mode orients one's striving. Desire is just an emotion considered *strivingly*. This reveals yet another way in which Spinoza's position resembles Hobbes's. Just as Hobbes thinks that pleasure and pain are motivational, such that pleasure itself is an appetite and pain an aversion, Spinoza thinks that modes that constitute joy and sadness are motivational, with the distinction between emotions like joy

and sadness and desires being merely aspectual. For Spinoza, as for Hobbes, there is no gap between how we are affected and how we are determined to act.

Finally, to get the comparison with Hobbes in full view, let us consider how evaluative judgments fit into this account of motivation. Having rejected the Scholastic view that good and evil are features of the world that compel our will, Spinoza embraces the Hobbesian view that judgments of the good are grounded in our desires: "[W]e 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" (3p9s [1985, 500]; cf. 3p39s [1985, 516–17]). The specific nature of the dependency relationship between evaluative judgments and desire is fleshed out in *Ethics* 4, where Spinoza maintains that that the ideas of good and evil are nothing but affects themselves (4p8 [1985, 550]; 4p19d [1985, 556–7]).[12] Like Hobbes, Spinoza denies that judgments of good and evil play any independent explanatory role in human motivation, treating them instead as motivational just insofar as they are affects.

We see from this that Spinoza and Hobbes advance remarkably similar accounts of motivation. They both reject free will and the traditional conception of final causes and along with it the explanatory independence of evaluative judgments. Instead, they offer mechanistic accounts according to which: we strive to persevere in our being; joy/pleasure and sadness/pain are responses to how one's vital functioning is impacted; these basic affective states are also motivational; evaluative appraisals are constituted by affects or desires.

In light of how similar their views are, it seems fair to conclude that Spinoza, an eager and astute reader of Hobbes, was strongly influenced by his predecessor in developing his account of moral motivation. But while Spinoza and Hobbes adopt similar motivational frameworks on which they base their moral and civil philosophies, they nevertheless arrive at fundamentally different normative conclusions. In this next section, I will explore one notable difference in their accounts of motivation, a difference that is the wedge that drives their views apart.

Striving and Essence

The crucial difference between Hobbes and Spinoza concerns the role that essences play in their respective conceptions of striving. Put simply, Spinoza is committed to the explanatory significance of essences, whereas Hobbes is not.

Spinoza on Striving and Essence

Essences figure into Spinoza's account of striving in a couple of ways. On the one hand, Spinoza claims that striving is "the actual essence of the thing" (3p7; 1985, 499). It is what one does and cannot but do. As one's essential activity, striving not only generates, but informs, particular desires. In other words, all desires in some sense express, or inherit the very character of, that essential tendency.[13]

Moreover, it has plausibly been argued that to strive is to realize one's essence as far as possible.[14] Although striving to "persevere in its being [*in suo esse*]" (3p6; 1985, 498)

is sometimes glossed as a principle of mere existential inertia, in fact such a reading jars with other claims in the *Ethics*.[15] Just as existence should not be measured in terms of persistence over time (2p45s [1985, 482]; 1D8 exp [1985, 409]), neither should striving. Rather, striving is the tendency to increase one's power or perfection, both of which are to be understood in terms of one's essence or nature:

> By virtue and power I understand the same thing, that is (by IIIP7), virtue, insofar as it is related to man, is the very essence, or nature of man, insofar as he has the power of bring about certain things, which can be understood through the laws of his nature alone. (4D8; 1985, 547)
>
> [W]e understand by perfection the very essence of the thing. (3 GDA; 1985, 542–3)
>
> [B]y perfection in general I shall, as I have said, understand reality, that is, the essence of each thing insofar as it exists and produces an effect, having no regard to its duration. (4 Preface; 1985, 546)

In light of this understanding of power and perfection, we see that striving to increase one's power or perfection is tantamount to striving to realize one's essence more completely.[16]

Hobbes on Striving and Essence

Spinoza's essentialist account stands in sharp contrast to Hobbes's view of striving. Hobbes is generally skeptical about the explanatory role of essences or natures. In *Elements of Law*, he reduces a thing's nature to its powers, rather than treating it as the ground of powers (EW IV.2). And in *Leviathan*, he rails against Aristotelian real essences, claiming that "an essence, therefore, is not a thing, either created or uncreated; it is, rather, a name invented for the sake of their craft. It is only Aristotle who has given birth to new, bastard and empty *beings* of this kind" (2012, 1079; 1651, 320 – Curley's translation; cf. 2012, 80; 1651, 24; 2012, 1076–82; 1651, 371–3). By denying real (irreducible) essences, Hobbes also eschews the view of striving as one's essential activity. So, while one's vital motions figure into the generation of voluntary motions, it is not the case that appetites and aversions are conceptually tied to self-preservation (more below); nor can this vital activity be conceptualized as "essence realizing." Put simply, essences play no role in Hobbes's account of motivation.

To be sure, Hobbes does invoke the notion of a human *nature*. However, this conception of nature does not delimit one's range of activity in the way that it does for Spinoza. As S. A. Lloyd and Susanne Sreedhar have stressed for Hobbes, the mere fact that an impulse or desire arises from one's nature does not make it effective. So, for instance, while the aversion to death may be in us by nature, such that in the absence of other impulses we will tend to preserve ourselves, humans commonly "create countervailing forces to thwart the effectiveness of their natural impulses" (Lloyd 2009, 63).[17] Bernard Gert also argues that we must distinguish between what "human beings naturally avoid and what actual human beings (those who have been subject to education and training, good or bad) avoid" (Gert 2010, 45). On such readings, one's nature may be roughly understood as something like one's *biological* nature. But, as Lloyd puts it, we are "as much creatures of our cultural nurture as we are of our abstract nature"

(2009, 66). Indeed, according to Hobbes, in order to live in peace, humans must in some sense transcend or overcome our nature, which would not be possible on an essentialist reading.

From the preceding analysis, we see that while Hobbes and Spinoza both accord to striving a pride of place in their theories of motivation, they conceive of the character and role of striving quite differently. Most notably, Spinoza regards striving as tied to a metaphysics of essences, while Hobbes does not.

This entails that, for Spinoza, while we can desire all sorts of particular things – namely, anything that we represent as the object of joy – these ends are always expressive of our striving to persevere in our being. We might distinguish between the superficial and the deep content of desires. The superficial content – or immediate object – of desire is always conditioned and underwritten by the deep content of striving to persevere in one's being.[18] Because the striving to persevere does not merely generate desires, but is expressed in all desires, Spinoza can only offer a rather tortured analysis of suicide, claiming that apparently voluntary acts of self-destruction are really just instances of destruction by "hidden external causes" (4p20s [1985, 557]; cf. 4p18s [1985, 556]).

By contrast, Hobbes has no such difficulty accounting for suicidal and self-sacrificial behavior (2012, 116; 1651, 37; see also EW VI.281; 1972, 48–9). While we have a natural aversion to death, this aversion can be overridden by stronger passions that we cultivate (EW II.82–3). The fact that a desire or aversion is natural does not mean that it occupies a privileged status in Hobbes's motivational scheme; and it certainly does not mean that all other motives reflect this impulse. For Hobbes, the reasons for which we intentionally or voluntarily act – that is, the aspect or description under which we act – need not appeal to one's striving: one can act for love, glory, charity, salvation, fear of damnation, or any other number of other ends, even at the cost of bodily preservation. So, despite his popular reputation as a psychological egoist, Hobbes was a pluralist about motivation. It is Spinoza, not Hobbes, who is something of a motivational monist, at least in the limited sense that he is committed to the view that desires are always ultimately expressive of striving to realize one's essence.[19]

In the next section we will begin to explore the ethical and political implications of Hobbes's and Spinoza's distinct views of motivation by examining the relationship between their respective views of striving and their accounts of action and artifice. We will see that while Hobbes will have no truck with real essences, Spinoza will have no truck with the notion of overcoming one's nature or creating a realm of artifice.

Action, Artifice, and Civil Life

As noted above, Hobbes thinks that we construct selves beyond our natures. To see how, we must examine Hobbes's views of activity and artifice, which turn on his conception of language. As Philip Pettit puts it: "Language, in Hobbes's story, provides the magic that enables us to jump the limitations of the natural, animal mind" (2008, 25). Hobbes conceives of speech as a kind of technology, calling it "the most noble and profitable invention" (2012, 48; 1651, 13) and claiming that on its basis our faculties "may be improved to such a height, as to distinguish men from all other living creatures" (2012,

48; 1651, 11. cf. EW IV.25). Language augments cognition, facilitates the exercise of deliberative control and agency, and enables us to create social realities through the declaration of will.[20]

Spinoza adopts a fundamentally different conception of action and agency, one that is rooted, unsurprisingly, in his conception of essence. Action, for Spinoza, does not require transcending one's nature; indeed, it is precisely a matter of producing effects *from* one's nature. Spinoza spells this out in the very beginning of *Ethics* 3, where he claims that we act when we are the adequate cause of something, that is, when we produce effects that are explicable through our nature alone (3D1–3D2). By contrast, we are passive when we produce effects only in conjunction with the natures of other things. One exercises one's agency not, *per impossible*, by transcending one's nature,[21] but precisely by bringing it about that one's nature is more efficacious.

Hobbes's and Spinoza's distinct views of action and activity figure directly into their respective analyses of civic life. For Hobbes, speech enables us to construct new social realities, most notably the commonwealth.[22] The artificiality of the state is so prominent in Hobbes's account that I needn't belabor this point. I note it simply to set up the contrast with Spinoza, who, when prompted by his friend Jarig Jelles to explain how his view differs from Hobbes's, responded: "As far as Politics is concerned, the difference you ask about, between Hobbes and me, is this: I always preserve natural Right unimpaired and I maintain that in each State the Supreme Magistrate has no more right over its subjects than it has greater power over them" (Ep. 50; 2015, 206). For Spinoza, right is coextensive with power, which, *as one's very essence*, is not something from which one can be alienated or which one can transfer like a piece of property. So, whereas Hobbes thinks that authority is constructed through the transfer of right or declaration of will, Spinoza thinks that authority is a fully natural (*de facto*) condition that is established only insofar as dependency relations obtain (TP 2/10 [2015, 512]; TTP 17.5–6 [2015, 512]).[23] This point of contrast between Spinoza and Hobbes is rooted in their distinct views of one's nature or essence: for Hobbes, one's nature is merely the starting point of human life, whereas for Spinoza one's nature is one's inalienable power that defines all that one is and does.

These different conceptions of right yield correspondingly distinct views of obligation. For Hobbes, transferring right through declaring one's will entails incurring obligation, so that to violate a covenant is to have conflicting wills, or to contradict oneself (EW IV.96). By contrast, Spinoza denies that contracts oblige independent of perceived utility (TTP 16.20 [2015, 512]; TTP 16.9 [2015, 512]; TP 2/12 [2015, 512–13]). This follows from his view that right is coextensive with power: being obligated entails lacking the right to something; but anything one *can* do – including breaking pledges – one does by right (TP 2/12; 2015, 512–13). Like authority, obligation is a *de facto* condition: it consists in actually being held to something, which in the case of contracts or promises is a matter of remaining motivated to comply with them.[24]

On the basis of their distinct understandings of right, authority, and obligation, Hobbes and Spinoza adopt very different views about how the commonwealth should be structured and what sovereign absolutism entails.[25] But rather than lingering on these juridical differences, I want to turn in this final section to a set of concepts that have received comparatively less attention as a point of contrast, namely, their respective conceptions of goodness and happiness.

Striving, Happiness, and the Good

Hobbes and Spinoza both claim that the concepts of good and evil depend on the motivational states of the agent. But, as we will see in this section, their distinct views about motivation yield different views of value (e.g., good and evil) and happiness.

Hobbes on Happiness and the Good

We saw in the first section that Hobbes thinks that the concepts of good and evil refer to our affective responses to things rather than to mind-independent properties. We call things good insofar as they please us and we desire them, and we call things evil insofar as they displease us and we are averse to them. This is not just a point about we happen to use language, it is a claim about the very meaning of the concepts of good and evil: they are terms we ascribe to things based on how they affect us – things that delight us or impel us are good, while things that displease us or repel us are bad. In presenting good and evil as affect-dependent concepts, Hobbes calls attention to their variability. Not only are there differences between individuals in their axiological appraisals, but the very same individual may adopt different evaluative stances at different times in relation to one and the same thing (see e.g., 2012, 242; 1651, 80). The instability of evaluative standards contributes to disputes and antagonisms. The remedy, of course, is to establish a public standard of good and evil in the form of a sovereign or authorized legislator (see 2012, 1090; 1651, 376).

By establishing a common standard of right, wrong, good, and evil, the commonwealth functions to reduce conflict, while providing the security that everyone desires. The state is thus the "the greatest of human powers" (2012, 132; 1651, 41), powers being means for obtaining other goods or desires (2012, 132; 1651, 41). Other powers include friendship, riches, wisdom, the arts and sciences, and honor (1972, 47–51; EW IV.37–8; *Leviathan* chapter 10). Such things are useful irrespective of one's particular intrinsic ends and may consequently be regarded as common goods in Hobbes's sense (1972, 47). The fact that there are common goods and that the state supplies a public standard of good and evil might lead us to think that Hobbes has a desire-independent conception of good. In fact, though, Hobbes insists that "whatever is good, is good for someone or other" (1972, 47; EW V.193) and that public standard of the civil law and the goodness of powers are parasitic on the intrinsic desires of individuals. Consequently, nothing in Hobbes's account of the public standard or of common goods implies a disavowal of his desire-dependent conception of the good.

Nevertheless, not everything that one desires is good. Hobbes is keen to distinguish real from apparent goods (1972, 48; EW IV.25), claiming that one can desire something the obtainment of which would actually be, on balance, bad for the agent. For instance, he claims that emotions "militate against the real good, and in favor of the apparent and most immediate good, which turns out frequently to be evil when everything associated with it hath been considered" (1972, 55). One might wonder how Hobbes, who rejects any conception of proper functioning, can distinguish desires that aim at "real goods" from those that do not. The answer is that, unlike merely apparent goods, real goods are things that one pursues insofar as one is rational, in the sense of properly

reckoning long-term consequences (1972, 48; cf. EW IV.34). Emotions "obstruct right reasoning" because they prompt one to pursue lesser proximate goods without regard to long-term consequences (1972, 55; cf. EW II.47–8; 2012, 282; 1651, 94). This is consistent with the good being desire-dependent, since what counts as a real good ultimately depends on what one desires, or what one would desire if one were adequately informed. Nothing in the account presupposes the existence of substantive, desire-independent ends.

Just as real goods vary from person to person, so does felicity or happiness. Felicity is defined in explicitly desire-dependent terms as: "continuall successe in obtaining those things which a man from time to time desireth" (2012, 96; 1651, 29). This is one way in which Hobbes sets his account of felicity apart from the eudaimonist tradition: he denies that it consists in something like proper human functioning, claiming instead that what makes one happy varies according to one's desires (2012, 150; 1651, 47).[26] Another way that Hobbes breaks from classical eudaimonism is in his denial that happiness consists in perfecting of one's capacities, whether intellectual or moral.[27] And whereas, on a classical conception, to perfect one's capacities is, in a sense, to acquire all that one lacks, Hobbes emphatically insists that because human desires are never fully satiated, happiness consists in *prospering*, not having prospered (2012, 150; 1651, 47; see also 1972, 53). We should not, therefore, take happiness to be the contentment that arises from self-perfection: "the felicity of this life consisteth not in the repose of the mind satisfied. For there is no such *Finis ultimus* (utmost aim) nor *Summum Bonum* (greatest good)" (2012, 150; 1651, 47).

Let me conclude by noting a couple of significant consequences of Hobbes's desire-dependent conceptions of goodness and felicity. First of all, it limits the moral ambitions of the state. To be sure, the sovereign is enjoined to govern so as to promote peace, preservation, and the "commodious life" of citizens. However, as Bernard Gert puts it, the "positive goal" of promoting felicity "has no specific content" (2010, 50), since it depends on desires. So, while Hobbes advocates the establishment of a rather robust conception of safety that facilitates the procurement of "all other contentments of life, which every man by lawful industry, without danger or hurt to the commonwealth, shall acquire to himself" (2012, 520; 1651, 175; cf. 2012, 196; 1651, 63; EW II.167–8), he acknowledges that such contentments will vary from person to person. Consequently, although Hobbes does think that the state can and should seek to supply the means for contentment or commodious living, it remains the case that individuals retain their own particular sets of desires and conceptions of the good and felicitous life, the obtainment of which lies somewhat beyond the ambit of state power.[28]

Moreover, since Hobbes rejects appeals to essences or proper functioning, he also abjures the ideal of positive liberty as self-realization. Instead, in *Leviathan* 21 he famously conceives of liberty in terms of the absence of physical or "artificial" impediments, rendering one free to the extent that one is not prevented from doing what one wills. His novel "negative" conception of liberty is to some extent an outgrowth of his desire-relative conception of goodness and his corresponding rejection of perfectionism.

Spinoza on Happiness and the Good

The contrast with Spinoza on goodness, happiness, liberty, and the aims of the state could hardly be starker. For Spinoza, while goodness is, in some sense, motivation-dependent, the relevant motivation here is one's essential, invariant striving. This serves as a fixed standard of evaluation: things really are good or evil relative to how they impact one's striving or essence.

Spinoza advances his revisionist accounts of good and evil in *Ethics* 4, where, after again denying that predicates like good, evil, imperfect, and imperfect are intrinsic properties of things, he proposes that we understand good and evil in terms of how things affect one's essence or power of acting (4p8d; 1985, 550). Things are good insofar as they increase one's power or aid one in realizing one's power and are evil insofar as the diminish one's power or prevent one from realizing one's power. This fits with the other prominent way in which Spinoza construes the concepts of good and evil, namely, in terms of whether something brings one closer to, or renders one further from, the "model of human nature" (4 Preface; 1985, 545) The model of human nature is a paradigm of human power or "reality" – that is, it is a model of a fully realized human essence.

So, while Spinoza's conception of the good is motivation-dependent, it is *in some sense* mind-independent, in that it does not hinge on one's perceptions or on the superficial content of one's desires. Things really are good insofar as they conduce to essence realization, even if they are not overtly pursued or represented as good. Put somewhat differently, Spinoza thinks that while some ways of striving are fully one's own, or authentic, there are also ways of striving that reflect the influence of external natures.

We can elucidate this point via the distinction between action and passion. We will recall from the previous section that, according to Spinoza, one acts in the strict sense when and only when one is the adequate cause of something. In *Ethics* 4, Spinoza casts this notion in a few interchangeable ways. For instance, he defines virtue as one's essence or power of bringing about effects from one's nature (4D8; 1985, 547), from which he infers that to act from virtue is to act from the laws of one's nature, or to act in the strict sense (4p24d; 1985, 558). Moreover, having previously argued that one acts in the strict sense when and only when one has adequate ideas (3p1, 3p3; 1985, 493, 497), he claims that one acts from the laws of one's own nature – or, acts in the strict sense – when one is guided by reason: "acting from reason is nothing else but to do what follows from the necessity of our own nature considered solely in itself" (4p59d [1985, 579]; cf. 4p24 [1985, 558]; 4p35d/c1 [1985, 563]; 4p37s1 [1985, 565–6]; 4p52 [1985, 575]).[29] To strive from reason, or to act from rational desires, is to act authentically, from desires that spring from one's nature, which he groups under the rubric "strength of character" [*fortitudo*] (3p59s; 1985, 529). By contrast, to strive from passions or confused ideas, is to be "guided by things outside [oneself]" and to be "determined by them to do what the common constitution of external things demands, not what his own nature, considered in itself, demands" (4p37s1; 1985, 565–6).

On the basis of this analysis, we see that while Spinoza and Hobbes agree that things are really good insofar as they satisfy rational desires, this resemblance cloaks a much deeper division. Hobbes operates with a functional distinction between reason and desire, taking reason to be a cognitive ability that, among other things, enables us to

calculate consequences so as to satisfy our desires, whatever they happen to be. By contrast, Spinoza regards acting from reason as simply acting from the laws of one's nature, or acting authentically, which consists in forming adequate ideas that beget further adequate ideas, producing effects that are intelligible through one's nature alone (see Rutherford 2008). Rational desires follow from one's nature alone and enable one to further realize this very nature. So, while Hobbes and Spinoza agree that what we rationally desire is really good, for Hobbes this is because reason helps us to satisfy our variable desires, whereas for Spinoza this is because acting from reason is just acting from, and more fully realizing, one's essence.

We find a corresponding contrast in their views on happiness. While Hobbes conceives felicity in terms of desire-satisfaction, forsaking any appeal to proper functioning, Spinoza advances a view that is far more congenial to the eudaimonist tradition. He construes "happiness" [*felicitas*] as successful striving (4p18s; 1985, 556), asserting that "if we pass the whole length of our life with a sound mind in a sound body, that is considered happiness" (5p39s; 1985, 614). Happiness is a kind of flourishing that comes from the exercise of virtue (2p49s; 4p20s [1985, 557]), that is, the realization of one's essence. And one's "highest happiness," or blessedness, consists in perfecting one's intellect and coming to know and love God (4 App. Cap IV [1985, 588]; 5p36s [1985, 612–13]; TTP 3.2 [2015, 111]), resulting in a form of reflective self-contentment or "satisfaction of mind" [*acquiescentia mentis*] (4 App. Cap IV [1985, 588]; 5p27 [1985, 609]; 5p32 [1985, 611]; 5p36s [1985, 612–13]). Not only, then, does Spinoza conceive happiness as flourishing or the realization of one's essence, he also represents the affective condition that results from self-realization in terms of something like the very mental repose that Hobbes declared unachievable.

Unlike Hobbes, Spinoza also connects happiness with doing good for others, treating "nobility" [*generositas*], or the desire "to aid other men and join them to him in friendship," as one family of rational desire (3p59s; 1985, 529–30).[30] Indeed, he maintains that "men who are governed by reason … want nothing for themselves that they do not desire for other men. Hence, they are just, honest, and honorable" (4p18s; 1985, 556; cf. 4p37; 1985, 559). Underwriting the rational pursuit of others' power is, once again, Spinoza's essentialism. Because humans agree in their nature,[31] one who acts from reason, or from the laws of our nature, will strive for, and rejoice in, the realization of our common nature: "Man, I say, can wish for nothing more helpful to the preservation of his being than that … that all should strive together, as far as they can, to preserve their being; and that all, together, should seek for themselves the common advantage of all" (4p18s). Leaving aside the reasoning in support of this view, we may note that the resulting picture is that there are goods that are common not merely in the weak sense of being rational for each person to desire, but in the much stronger sense that their promotion is directly beneficial to all. Knowledge or understanding in particular is "a good that is common to all men, and can be possessed by all" (4p36d; 1985,564), and so insofar as one is rational one will promote the understanding of all humans, and in so doing more fully realize one's own essence (4p37d; 1985,559).[32]

Spinoza's account of happiness and the agreement of essences profoundly shapes his view of the function of the state. In the *Political Treatise*, he claims that the purpose of the state is peace, explicating peace in a way that is plainly critical of Hobbes's construal of peace as the absence of war (2012, 192; 1651, 62; see also EW II.11):

> Peace isn't the privation of war, but a virtue that arises from strength of mind [*animi fortitudine*] … the best state is one where men pass their lives harmoniously, I mean that they pass a human life, one defined not merely by the circulation of the blood, and other things common to all animals, but mostly by reason, the true virtue and life of the Mind…peace does not consist in the privation of war, but in a union or harmony of minds. (TP 5/4–5/5 [2015, 530]; TP 6/4 [2015, 533])

While Hobbes thinks that the state fosters conditions in which individuals can pursue their own individual happiness, Spinoza regards it as the aim of the state to cultivate reason, and to bring about a "harmony of minds," which would directly contribute to human happiness.

His account of the purpose of the state in TTP is at least as robust: "The end of the Republic, I say, is not to change men from rational beings into beasts or automata, but to enable their minds and bodies to perform their functions safely, to enable them to use their reason freely … So the end of the Republic is really freedom" (TTP 20.11–12 [2015, 346]). Freedom, for Spinoza, consists in the ability to act and exist from the necessity of one's own nature (1D8 [1985, 409]; Ep. 58 [2015, 427–30]). And, while God alone is fully free, since no finite thing exists from its own nature, human beings are free to the extent that we are able to act from reason, or from our nature alone. The freedom that he promotes in the politics is this very liberty of acting or essence realization: "I call a man completely free just insofar as he is guided by reason, because to that extent he is determined to action by causes which can be understood adequately through his own nature alone" (TP 2/11 [2015, 512]; cf. TP 2/7 [2015, 510]; TP 3/6–3/7 [2015, 519–20]). So, while Hobbes conceives of political liberty as the absence of impediments, Spinoza adopts a positive conception of liberty as self-realization, or acting from one's essence alone, and he maintains that it is the function of the state to promote this positive good as far as possible.

Conclusion

Hobbes's influence on Spinoza's conception of motivation is unmistakable and profound. But while both Hobbes and Spinoza see goodness as in some sense motivation-dependent, Hobbes takes this to imply that goodness and the content of one's happiness depend on the variable content of one's desires, Spinoza regards the motivational tendency on which goodness depends as one's *essential* striving for self-realization, providing a firm standard for evaluating goodness and happiness.

On Spinoza's account, things that aid one's essence or power really are good, while things that inhibit it really are evil, irrespective of how they related to the superficial content of one's desires, which only masks one's deep, essential striving for power. Rational desires are authentic, following from one's essence or striving alone, while passions are not. And insofar as we act from these authentic, rational desires, we will not only act in ways that are empowering to ourselves, but also in ways that are empowering to other human beings, who agree with us in nature. The more one is able to develop one's own mind and to promote human understanding more generally, the more one will have realized one's essence, and the happier one will be.

On the basis of all of this, one sees that Spinoza's normative ethical philosophy has considerably more in common with traditional eudaimonism Hobbes's does. Ultimately, Spinoza builds a modern form of eudaimonism on the basis of a mechanistic moral psychology that is deeply indebted to Hobbes. Like Hobbes, he rejects the intrinsic reality of evaluative predicates and the irreducible efficacy of final causes. But he insists on the explanatory power of non-teleological essences,[33] which anchor a conception of goodness and flourishing that, while in some sense mind-independent, remains firmly motivation-dependent.

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Notes

1 Curley (1988); Jesseph (2016); Malinowski-Charles (2017).
2 See Curley (1992); Malcolm (2002); Wernham (1958).
3 Aquinas, *Opera omnia*, xvi. 340 (cited in Carriero 2005).
4 For a characteristic account of the explanatory role of goodness, see Suarez *Metaphysical Disputations*, disputation 23, Section 5, §15, Opera vol. 25, 867, in Suarez (1856–1870) (cited in Pink 2018, 7).
5 See Pink (2018); Sleigh, Chappell, and Rocca (1998, 1197–1198); Stump (2005), 22.
6 Cf. Spinoza 1A3; 1985, 410.
7 I adopt the following abbreviations for the *Ethics*: Numerals refer to parts; "p" denotes proposition; "c" denotes corollary; "d" denotes demonstration; "D" denotes definition; "DA" denotes Definition of the Affects; "s" denotes scholium (e.g. 3p59s refers to *Ethics*, part 3, proposition 59, scholium). References to the Tractatus Theologico-Politicus (TTP) denote the chapter and section in the Curley translation. For instance, TTP 3.28 refers to chapter 3, Section 28. References to the Tractatus Politicus (TP) denote the chapter and section. For instance, TP 4/1 refers to chapter 4, Section 1.
8 For a sense of the scope of application, see Jesseph (2016).
9 For a discussion of what it means to be *in se*, see Garrett (2018a).
10 See for instance 2A3 (1985, 448) as well as 3 GDA explication (1985, 542–3) and 3p56/d (1985, 526–7), where Spinoza claims that affects are individuated by their affecting objects.
11 For a defense of this reading, see J. Steinberg (2016).
12 For more, see J. Steinberg (2016).
13 Desires express one's striving in Spinoza's technical sense of expression that involves property inheritance. See Karolina Hübner and Róbert Mátyási on "Spinoza on Expression and the Grounds of Intelligibility" (n.d.).
14 See e.g., Garrett (2018a); Viljanen (2011, 125–32).
15 It fails, for instance, to explain the inference from the initial formulation of the doctrine (3p6; 1985, 498) to the "progressive" claim that all things strive to increase their power of acting (3p12–13; 1985, 502). It fails to make sense of his claim that the foundation of virtue is "striving to preserve one's being" (4p18s [1985, 555–6]; 4p22 [1985, 558]) *and* "the striving for understanding" (4p26d; 1985, 559), since understanding goes well beyond

merely enduring. And it cannot easily be squared with the claim that the free man avoids deception even on pain of death (4p72s; 1985, 587). For a helpful discussion, see Youpa (2003).

16 One might worry that the claim that one's essence consists in striving to realize one's essence is circular.While a full response to this worry would require entering the deep waters of Spinoza's metaphysics, I will simply indicate why I don't think that this is a problem. Striving is one's actual essence. However, Spinoza allows for another way of thinking of essences – sometimes flagged as one's *formal* essence – which is something more like a thing's blueprint, an eternal description or structure from which certain properties or effects necessarily follow (2p8/c [1985, 452]; 5p22 [1985, 607]; 5p23/d [1985, 607]; 5p29/d [1985, 609–10]; see Garrett 2018b). One's striving or actual essence consists in tending to realize this (formal) essence and all that follows from it as far as possible.

17 Cf. Sreedhar (2010, 36).

18 This may be one respect in which Spinoza's psychology anticipates Freudian psychotherapy (see Neu 1977).

19 This is not to say that he is an egoist, since he thinks that striving to persevere in one's being entails striving to aid others (discussed in the final section).

20 Recent scholarship has emphasized the ways in which speech facilitates human agency. For instance, Laurens van Apeldoorn has pushed back against the view that Hobbes has an impoverished view of agency, claiming that, for Hobbes, language enables us to order our thoughts, record past experiences, draw inferences on the basis of general rules, and make informed, careful judgments about consequences, thereby exercising deliberative control (Van Apeldoorn 2012, 2014). Arash Abizadeh advances a similar view, according to which language transforms reasoning such that our deliberation may be at once "active" and "strongly cognitive" (Abizadeh 2017).

21 And certainly not though the exercise of language, which Spinoza relegates to the lowest kind of cognition (2p40s2; 1985, 477–8).

22 Without speech, there is "neither commonwealth, nor society, nor contract, nor peace" (2012, 48; 1651, 12).

23 For a full defense of this claim, see Steinberg (2018a). For readings of Hobbes that bring his view closer to Spinoza's, see Field (2014); Hoekstra (2004).

24 For a more complete, and more nuanced, analysis of these points, see Steinberg (2018a, ch. 2).

25 Steinberg (2018b).

26 See Gert (2010, 51); Hamilton (2016, 142).

27 On the severance of happiness and moral virtue, see Hamilton (2016, 146); Rutherford (2003, 380).

28 Again, this is not to deny that Hobbes thinks that the state ought to do more than establish basic physical security. For a discussion of the political significance of felicity, see Rutherford (2003). I find Rutherford's analysis generally compelling, though I think that Hobbes's break with eudaimonism is sharper than Rutherford does.

29 While Spinoza initially introduces reason [*ratio*] as comprising a subset of adequate ideas, namely, those formed from "common notion and adequate ideas of the properties of things" (2p40s2), in *Ethics* 4 he seems to operate with a more expansive conception of reason, comprising *all* adequate ideas (4p26d [1985, 559]; 4p37s1 [1985, 565–6]; 4p52 [1985, 575]).

30 See Curley (1994), xxxii on this point of distinction.

31 For accounts of how to square this with his nominalism, see Hübner (2016); Steinberg (1984).

32 For some analysis of the problems with the reasoning here, and how they might be overcome, See Della Rocca (2004); Steinberg (1984); Steinberg (2019).

33 For good discussions of this point, see Carriero (2005); Viljanen (2011).

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