

## **Diversity and Felicity: Hobbes's Science of Human Flourishing**

We do not generally take the Hobbesian project to be one that encourages human flourishing. I will argue that it is; indeed, I will propose that Hobbes attempts the first modern project to provide for the possibility of the diversity of human flourishing in the civil state. To do so, I will draw on the recent work of Donald Rutherford, who takes Hobbes to be a eudaimonist in the Aristotelian tradition. In "The End of Ends: Aristotelian themes in Early Modern Ethics" Donald Rutherford proposes that the recent fashion for categorizing the ethical writings of early modern philosophers as "Epicurean" or "Stoic", obscures the early moderns' debt to Aristotle. Despite early modern philosophers' vocal rejections of Aristotle, his ethics pervades theirs. Rutherford argues that even one of the most strenuous objectors to Aristotle, Thomas Hobbes, is best understood as an ethical eudaimonist. According to Rutherford, to embrace of eudaimonism requires includes accepting two principles:

1. That the idea of happiness as human end (as the end of action)
2. That one achieves the former (1) through rational deliberation

Rutherford argues that Hobbes accepts (1) and requires (2). Tellingly, Rutherford does not require something like (3) that there must be one 'Good' that all seek, generally thought to be the defining characteristic of eudaimonism. Rutherford argues that early modern ethics, particularly that of Hobbes and Spinoza, could not ignore the diversity of human ends. Rather, beginning with a diversity of human ends is what characterizes Hobbesian ethics. Flourishing, Hobbes recognizes, can take many forms, and this forms the basis of his argument for a strong, but limited state. These philosophers transform the notion of eudaimonism; yet, Rutherford argues, they do so still firmly within the Aristotelian eudaimonist tradition in accepting (1) and (2).

Rutherford makes an excellent start at defending Hobbes as a theorist of felicity and diversity; however, his proposal that, for Hobbes, one achieves felicity through reason mischaracterizes Hobbes's moral psychology. I will reject one of Rutherford's proposals, namely that Hobbes requires the notion of practical reason or rational

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deliberation to yield individual and collective flourishing. Rutherford argues that Hobbes requires a notion of practical reason so that he can explain how individuals are able to seek happiness more successfully than they would be by passion alone. However, this notion of practical reason is misapplied to Hobbes. Hobbesian biology and psychology, I will argue, are the principal partners in any program of individual or collective happiness. Reason can do some work, but it is not *required* to achieve happiness, nor does Hobbes give us an account of practical reason as such.

Hobbes does not think reason motivates morality. Instead, he offers an account of human moral and political motivation based on Aristotelian notions of voluntary motion. Appetites -- not reason -- motivate human action. As such, for Hobbes, effective 'felicity' or happiness must be achieved through the manipulation of the affects and appetites. For Hobbes, morality is a political project. The state, for Hobbes, is a prerequisite to any individual notion of flourishing. Whether one seeks trade, learning, or pleasure, a civil state is required.

To create a peaceful state -- the prerequisite for individual flourishing -- one must coordinate the appetites and actions of a multitude of diverse individuals. Doing so requires understanding what reliably motivates them. To do so one needs not reason but knowledge of cause and effect -- something quite different than reason in Hobbes's view. I will argue that neither individuals nor the sovereign use or require practical reason to yield individual or collective felicity and thus reject Rutherford's proposal (2, above) that practical reason is required for achieving felicity or flourishing in Hobbes's moral philosophy.

Rejecting (2), however, does not necessarily sink Rutherford's overall thesis that Hobbes is a eudaimonist. In the second part of this paper, I will show that by tying Hobbes's argumentation in favor of felicity to his additional arguments from flourishing in his justification of the civil state we can amass further evidence for (1), that Hobbes' program is essentially one that seeks human felicity while recognizing the plurality of the good.

## **Part 1: Hobbes on Felicity and Reason**

Although it fits well into our contemporary understanding of ethics and politics, the idea that each individual seeks his or her own good, and that there may not be one single good which all ought to seek, challenges the Aristotelian account of eudaimonia as understood in the seventeenth century and today. Hobbes' rejection of the summum bonum of Aristotle, and his proposal that each individual seeks his or her own 'felicity' has been taken by most ethical theorists and Hobbes scholars to be a rejection of Aristotle's eudaimonism and indeed the basis of his ethical egoism.<sup>1</sup>

Donald Rutherford's proposal that Hobbes is a variety of eudaimonist challenges these interpretations. Rutherford does so by arguing that although Hobbes recognized the plurality of 'goods' sought by individuals, he still sought human felicity as the highest human good. However, recognizing the diversity of human conceptions of felicity, Hobbes sought to create an ethical-political solution – the civil state – which would allow for the diversity of human felicity while mediating the problems that might occur with such diversity. That each individual might seek his or her wellbeing reliably, was, for Hobbes, and before him Grotius, an ethico-psychological posit to fend off skeptical proposals that, for humans, there could be no such universal ethics for fallen human beings.<sup>2</sup> Hobbes understands the diversity of human ends as a fact that any ethical or political theory must take seriously. Rutherford's proposal that Hobbes is a eudaimonist recognizes Hobbes not as making a skeptical claim – that because of diversity we cannot have any ethical or political system applied to humans – but rather, transforming eudaimonism into a theory which can retain the end of human happiness, while recognizing that this happiness might take radically different forms for each individual human. Rutherford's interpretation of Hobbes as a eudaemonist comes within his larger argument that the importance of Aristotle for early modern ethics has been largely ignored at great detriment to our understanding of the moral and political philosophy of seventeenth century ethics.

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<sup>1</sup> John Deigh, "Reason and Ethics in Hobbes's Leviathan" *Journal of the History of Philosophy*. (Volume 34, Number 1, January 1996), Edwin Curley, "Reflections of Hobbes: Recent Work on His Moral and Political Philosophy," *Journal of Philosophical Research* (1990), esp. pp. 187-94.

<sup>2</sup> Richard Tuck, *Philosophy and Government 1572-1651*. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993)

Rutherford argues Hobbes was just one of the early modern philosophers by whom, "The framework of Aristotle's eudaimonism is adapted and reconfigured".<sup>3</sup> This reconfiguration allowed for diversity, but also for a new understanding of happiness as 'psychological'.<sup>4</sup> Happiness becomes, for early modern philosophers like Hobbes, "just that affective state (one of pleasure, contentment or satisfaction) that human beings most desire to be in and whose attainment they can deliberate about in deciding to act."<sup>5</sup> Hobbes rejects the notion of the highest good, and instead argues that individuals seek what they believe to be good for them, and avoid what they believe to be harmful. Hobbes' psychological conception of felicity, Rutherford argues, while it rejects the central tenet of the summum bonum and the teleological conception of the good in eudaimonism,<sup>6</sup> "preserves the psychology within which Aristotle's eudaimonism is developed, particularly as it is exemplified in non-human animals."<sup>7</sup> Further, Rutherford argues, Hobbes "uphold[s] the primacy of practical reason as the standpoint from within which deliberation about the ends and means of action is conducted."<sup>8</sup> Rutherford takes the consonance between Aristotle and Hobbes on the question of practical reason to show the following, that Hobbes, like Aristotle, "take[s] the fundamental practical question for human beings to be the question of how one ought to live, and assume[s] that human beings are cognitively and motivationally equipped to respond to this question in ways that are likely to increase their prospects for happiness."<sup>9</sup> While the claim that humans are cognitively and motivationally equipped to address the question of how one ought to live is true of Hobbes, the claim that practical reason plays a role in Hobbes's ethical theory is on more tenuous grounds.

Rutherford himself recognizes that Hobbes doesn't seem to have a view of practical reason: "Hobbes official position is that, strictly speaking, there is no power of

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<sup>3</sup> Donald Rutherford, "The End of Ends? Aristotelian Themes in Early Modern Ethics," in *The Reception of Aristotle's Ethics*, ed. Jon Miller (Cambridge University Press, 2012) 196

<sup>4</sup> *The End of Ends?*, 197

<sup>5</sup> *The End of Ends?*, 197-198

<sup>6</sup> *The End of Ends?*, 199, 201-2

<sup>7</sup> *The End of Ends?*, 204

<sup>8</sup> *The End of Ends?*, 204

<sup>9</sup> *The End of Ends?*, 204

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reason."<sup>10</sup> He argues that Hobbes requires such a notion to gain the end of a peaceful state. Despite the fact that "Hobbes leaves no room in his philosophy for a substantive notion of practical reason."<sup>11</sup> Rutherford argues, he is preoccupied by a practical question: namely, "in what manner must human beings live, what rules must govern their lives in order that they may enjoy a peaceful and secure social existence?" This practical question, Rutherford proposes, requires practical reason to solve. Rutherford writes, "If this is right, Hobbes, no less than Aristotle, requires an account of practical reason: an account of how reason, as he understands it, can influence and improve practice with the result that individuals are able to enjoy a better life than they would if guided by passion alone."

Hobbes then, must be as concerned as Aristotle was with "How the passions (especially fear and desire) can be regulated by reason so that human beings are able to enjoy the best life they can in community with other human beings."<sup>12</sup> Here, Rutherford takes the civil state – community with other human beings -- and the peace of this community to be the highest end for Hobbes. In this, I believe he has the priority of the peace and felicity backwards. Indeed, Rutherford has previously recognized the instrumental nature of the civil state. The good, for humans, is felicity. The state is what makes human felicity possible. That is, for Hobbes, without the civil state, there can be no human felicity. The civil state is the means by which the end of human felicity, understood plurally, is achieved. Once the state is created, the role of the state is to support the project of individual human happiness exclusively through maintaining itself.

What regulates the passions, for Hobbes? How can we guarantee peace? For Hobbes, the primary mechanism is the civil state. All Hobbes requires for human felicity is the civil state. In Hobbes's state of nature, this requires a modicum of instrumental reason and fear to institute. Once the civil state is instituted, individuals in the state can seek their felicity in whatever manner they choose. They do not need, nor do they have, a faculty of practical reason to guide their choices. What they do have is the law. The law, for Hobbes, is meant to guide the appetites and aversions of the subjects of the civil state

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<sup>10</sup> *The End of Ends?*, 208

<sup>11</sup> *The End of Ends?*, 208

<sup>12</sup> *The End of Ends?*, 209

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in the following way: where they seek something that the law prohibits, they yield to the law. How do they do this? Is it through practical reason? No. Rather, it is through fear of the sovereign. The Hobbesian mechanisms of appetite and aversion, along with a knowledge of the law and fear of the sovereign is enough for individuals in the Hobbesian civil state to conform, that is, to follow the law. For Hobbes, fear of the sovereign and knowledge of the law are sufficient to guarantee obedience. To understand why, we need to look back to Hobbes’s conception of human motivation.

For Hobbes, individual humans are affective machines, moving alternately toward and away from those things we desire or wish to avoid.<sup>13</sup> Hobbes calls these motions toward appetite and aversion.<sup>14</sup> Humans seek naturally, that is, physiologically, and as material beings. Hobbes applies a technical term for this seeking seemingly specific to humans and animals: *conatus*. We have no special faculty of the will or deliberative reason. Hobbes famously rejects these notions.<sup>15</sup> Rather, he argues, “deliberation is nothing else but a weighing, as it were in scales, the conveniences and inconveniences of the deed we are attempting; where that is more weighty, doth necessarily according to its inclination prevail within us.”<sup>16</sup> Deliberation, then, is not the deliberative reason of Aristotle, but rather, just the process of internal vacillation. What each individual seeks will depend on what appetite or aversion tips the scales toward action – that is, what is the last appetite before action. As such, Hobbes writes, “The considerations of appetites and aversions are divers [sic]. For seeing living creatures have sometimes appetite and sometimes aversion to the same thing, as they think it will be for their good or for their hurt; while that vicissitude of appetite and aversion remains in them.”<sup>17</sup> Differences in experience also shape what individuals seek. Hobbes describes how this works in human development:

“Little infants, at the beginning and as soon as they are born, have appetite to very few things, and also they avoid very few, by reason of their want of experience

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<sup>13</sup> [Removed for anonymous review]

<sup>14</sup> Thomas Hobbes, *Leviathan*. Edwin Curley, (ed.) (Indianapolis: Hackett, 1994) Chapter 6, pp. 27-28

<sup>15</sup> Thomas Hobbes, *De Corpore*, Chapter 25, section 13

<sup>16</sup> Thomas Hobbes, *De Cive*, II.xiii.16, 269

<sup>17</sup> *De Corpore*, Chapter 25, section 13

and memory; and therefore they have not so great a variety of animal motion as we see in those that are more grown. For it is not possible without such knowledge as is derived from sense, that is, without experience and memory, to know what will prove pleasant or hurtful... And hence it is, that though they do not know what may do them good or harm, yet sometimes they approach and sometimes retire from the same thing, as their doubt prompts them. But afterwards, by accustoming themselves little by little, they come to know readily what is to be pursued and what avoided; and also, to have ready use of their nerves and other organs, in the pursuing and avoiding of good and bad. Wherefore, appetite and aversion are the first endeavors of animal motion."<sup>18</sup>

Humans are seeking beings. Sense, experience and memory shape what we seek. We gain experience by following our appetites in the world. Through this experience, we learn which appetites and which aversions lead to felicity. We, further, create representations of the world. Our appetites shape our representations; our representations, in turn, create and transform our appetites.<sup>19</sup> Knowledge of the world and what satisfies our appetites and what does not serves to allow us to develop our appetites and aversions. Practical reason does not play a role here. Reason does not tell us right from wrong, good from evil. Rather, knowledge of cause and effect can transform our appetites and thereby affect our behavior. Individual humans seek what they believe to increase their felicity. However, they do so not based on a faculty of practical reason, will, or other such mental tools. Instead, they are seeking beings whose seeking is shaped by their experience, appetites and aversions.

We may worry that this approach to human felicity is rather haphazard – how can one expect to gain felicity by merely following our desires? Hobbes does not think this is how we ought to seek felicity, but rather, how we do seek our individual good. We are often wrong. Individuals, he proposes, can indeed improve their chances of felicity through understanding the natural world and the workings of cause and effect.

Rutherford recognizes the role of *sapientia*, knowledge of causes and effects which Hobbes calls "philosophy"<sup>20</sup> but argues that this does not solve the practical

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<sup>18</sup> *De Corpore*, Chapter 25, section 12

<sup>19</sup> *De Corpore*, Chapter 25, section 9; Susan James, *Passion and Action the Emotions in Seventeenth-century Philosophy*. (Oxford; New York: Clarendon Press ; Oxford University Press, 1997)

<sup>20</sup> *Leviathan*, Chapter 5, section 21; *De Corpore*, Chapters 1.1 and 25.1

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question of how we ought to live. He further argues that by introducing this notion of knowledge of cause and effects as the way to human wellbeing, Hobbes has divided the conative and the cognitive – reason and appetite.<sup>21</sup> However, if we think of cognition as representations of cause and effect, as Hobbes does, it would seem that there is no metaphysical distinction. We seek, we learn, and we know as part of the same motions that characterize all human action. However, by equating cognition with reason, Rutherford has misconceived Hobbes's point. Yes, we are condemned to seek what we desire, but knowledge of the world and ourselves as part of it can shape our desires. Our knowledge of cause and effect is, and indeed is the only, way we can gain 'better' desires, and thus the only answer that Hobbes has for individuals seeking to answer the practical question: how ought I live? Humans seeking felicity have only the helps of experience and knowledge of cause and effect, which is precisely what makes Hobbes an early modern natural philosopher writing about ethics.

Knowledge, however, and philosophy are hardly the sorts of pursuits one can suggest to a multitude of conative individuals, each seeking felicity through following their appetites. Should one seek such philosophical pursuits, the conative multitude can indeed be an obstacle. To answer Hobbes's more pressing practical question, that is, how can individuals achieve felicity, he focuses on organizing the multitude of desiring machines into a state of peace. The state, for Hobbes, is a kind of desire manipulating machine. As I will propose below, the Hobbesian state does not seek to control *all* human desires or even many – to do so would be imprudent, given the diversity of human desires and the difficulty of promulgating a large set of laws.

Hobbes does not seek the wellbeing of all beyond the institution and maintenance of the state. The state is the solution to the problem of felicity.<sup>22</sup> Whether or not individual humans actually are happy, whether they seek the best for themselves or just follow their appetites is no matter for Hobbes's consideration. The state gives them the conditions for achieving happiness, sought through experience, appetite, aversion and knowledge of cause and effect. This knowledge, for Hobbes, can improve individual

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<sup>21</sup> *The End of Ends?*, 208

<sup>22</sup> Fiammetta Palladini, "Pufendorf disciple of Hobbes: The nature of man and the state of nature: The doctrine of socialitas." *History of European Ideas*. (34 (1))



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chances for happiness; however knowledge or *sapientia* is not practical reason. While this might seem strange as an ethical position now, it certainly makes sense when we think of Hobbes as a seventeenth century natural philosopher who is trying to understand human behavior. In this, he is much like those philosopher who seek human felicity through a better knowledge of ourselves as natural beings, namely, Spinoza. When we know more about ourselves as natural beings, as part of the network of cause and effect, we can achieve what we seek more reliably. Finding out that what we seek might be, for example, unhealthy, is a matter both of experience and knowledge. Appetite and aversion are our motivations. They can be altered through experience, knowledge, and through external manipulation by the state. Reason, in the sense of practical moral reason, plays no part here. Knowledge of natural causes, and affective manipulation are, for Hobbes, the only way to regulate the passions.

Rutherford is right to include Hobbes in the Aristotelian tradition where human felicity is the end of morality and politics. Hobbes reconfigures 'felicity' as psychological and as the only end of human action. Further, he is recognizing it as plural – that is, there may be a different notion of 'felicity' for each human being. However, Hobbes does not think the key to achieving felicity is deliberative reason, as Rutherford suggests. Rather, Hobbes believes the precondition to such flourishing is a state of 'peace' ensured only by a civil state of the kind Hobbes proposes in his political works.

## **Part 2: Felicity and the State**

If Rutherford is right, and practical reason and the end of human happiness are both required for characterizing a figure as a eudaimonist, then, given his rejection of rational deliberation as the means to the end of happiness, Hobbes is no eudaimonist. However, his proposal that in recognizing human diversity and still seeking an ethico-political framework that could accommodate the end of felicity, Hobbes seems to be doing precisely what Rutherford proposes his is doing: trying to keep an Aristotelian notion of eudaimonia while recognizing the irreducible diversity of human felicity. For Hobbes, there is no one thing that can make everyone happy. Yet, there is one thing that will allow for human happiness, diversely conceived, that is the civil state.

In considering how Hobbes's acceptance of (1) we may worry that his 'solution' to the problem of human happiness – the civil state – strikes most readers as a genuine impediment to the same. In fact, for most readers of Hobbes, the Hobbesian civil state seems a mechanism for insuring fear, and rendering any happiness and diversity null. The Hobbesian state seems an unlikely solution to the problem of human flourishing. In the next section, I will take up this objection and propose that, while Hobbes does not respect the ideal of 'liberty', he does fashion his civil state to allow for felicity, indeed, he argues without a civil state no such felicity is possible.

### **Felicity without Liberty?**

Does Hobbes' political framework allow for diversity and happiness? On most interpretations of the civil state of Hobbes's *Leviathan*, it would not appear so. For many readers it appears to be a totalitarian absolutist state. As such, it seems there is little room for human freedom, and thus for humans to seek their own ends. However, Hobbes seeks to divorce the notion of liberty from the notion of felicity and the effective power to achieve it.<sup>23</sup> We can only achieve felicity, for Hobbes, by entering into the civil state where we yield our liberty to a sovereign.<sup>24</sup> For Hobbes, felicity requires giving up liberty.<sup>25</sup>

As Hobbes's contract and civil state are well known, I will briefly set out its features. To exit the civil state, and to end the war of each against each, humans must contract among themselves to give up their natural right to all, and give over all their will and power to a third party – a sovereign, thus instituting the civil state.<sup>26</sup> This sovereign should have absolute power, to allow the ability to secure the commonwealth against internal and external enemies. This power includes making, enforcing, and judging the law, as well as opinion and religion.<sup>27</sup> An absolute political state of this kind is required for achieving or having hope of achieving human felicity.

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<sup>23</sup> Quentin Skinner, *Hobbes and Republican Liberty*. (Cambridge, UK ; New York: Cambridge University Press, 2008)

<sup>24</sup> *Leviathan*, Chapter 17, sections 1-13, pp. 74-78

<sup>25</sup> *Leviathan*, Chapter 13, sections 8-13, pp. 76-78

<sup>26</sup> *Leviathan*, Chapter 13, pp. 74-78

<sup>27</sup> *Leviathan*, Chapter 18, section 16, p. 115

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Hobbes's state is certainly absolute, but is it totalitarian? Does it seek to control its citizen-subjects, and if so, how much? Richard Flathman has argued, persuasively, that Hobbes's state is a 'thin' state. Hobbes famously wrote, that where the law is silent, men are free.<sup>28</sup> According to Flathman, Hobbes's believes the law ought to be *mostly* silent. On Flathman's interpretation of Hobbes, prudence, and a good knowledge of human passions will guide any sovereign to the conclusion that fewer laws are better.<sup>29</sup> Fewer laws allow the subjects of the civil state maximal opportunity to pursue their own ends, their own felicity. Since Hobbes has recognized the diversity of human ends, Flathman argues, his state is designed such that the sovereign allows for this diversity of felicity through creating only those laws that preserve the state. Extraneous or numerous laws inevitably invade the space of silence where the subjects are free to pursue their own ends.

Fewer laws are also makes it more likely that individuals will know what the laws are. Indeed, Hobbes was very concerned to make sure that the laws were known. He goes so far as to propose public educational meetings to let the people know the law. To know the law, for Hobbes, is to know when one must adjust one's will. Fewer laws also make it more likely that the laws will be both known and remember. Hobbes writes, "It is against the charge of those who command and have the authority of making laws that there should be more laws than necessarily serve for good of the magistrate and his subjects. For since men are wont commonly to debate what to do or not to do, by natural reason rather than any knowledge of the laws, where there are more laws than can easily be remembered, and whereby such things are forbidden as reason of itself prohibits not of necessity, they must through ignorance, without the least evil intention, fall within the compass of the law, as gins laid to entrap their harmless liberty."<sup>30</sup> I take this passage to show that, for Hobbes, when there are more laws than can be easily remembered, humans tend to use their natural reason, which leads to their own ends. Without knowing whether the law is silent on this point, they can unintentionally break the law, thus 'falling within

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<sup>28</sup> *Leviathan*, Chapter 21, section 18, 143; *De Cive*, Chapter 13

<sup>29</sup> Richard E. Flathman, *Thomas Hobbes: Skepticism, Individuality, and Chastened Politics*. (London: Sage Publications, 1993), 112

<sup>30</sup> *De Cive*, Chapter 13, *Skepticism, Individuality, and Chastened Politics*, 118

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the compass of the law', and undermining the safety of the state. This passage also sheds light on Hobbes's view of 'natural reason'. Rather than help follow the law, natural reason feeds potentially seditious debate which only knowledge of the law can quell. The laws must be few, easily remembered and based on a knowledge of human appetites and passions, if the state should remain secure.

On Flathman's interpretation, Hobbes is a thin state theorist because he recognized both the diversity of human notions of felicity. Flathman argues that Hobbes, in the *Leviathan*, is "concerned with the conditions of felicity."<sup>31</sup> Flathman continues, "The primary objective of his moral thinking is to promote and protect each person's pursuit of her own felicity as she herself sees it."<sup>32</sup> Hobbes understands the diversity of human passions. Because of this, Hobbes seeks a strong and absolute state, but one which has the minimum number of laws. Each law, on Hobbes's view, forces the will of individual subjects. Human appetites are diverse, but when the sovereign speaks, that is, when there is a law allowing or prohibiting some action, the will of the subjects must conform to the sovereign's will. Each individual seeks his or her own felicity through following his or her appetites. Fewer laws allow individuals more space or freedom to seek their own ends.

We may wonder how the sovereign chooses the few laws that allow both a diversity of felicity seeking and secure the state. For this, Hobbes writes, the sovereign must understand human passions and appetites.<sup>33</sup> The knowledge of the causes of human appetites is the kind of wisdom, or *sapientia*, required for an effective sovereign.<sup>34</sup>

For Hobbes, human felicity amounts to being able to follow one's appetites. Without laws, in the state of nature, no individual can successfully seek his or her own ends. The equality and diversity of human ends prevents this. Too many laws make it more difficult to seek one's individual good, since one would be required to follow the will of the sovereign rather than one's own will or appetite. As such, just those few laws required to secure the state are necessary to allow the condition of the possibility of

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<sup>31</sup> *Skepticism, Individuality, and Chastened Politics*, 112

<sup>32</sup> *Skepticism, Individuality, and Chastened Politics*, 8

<sup>33</sup> *Skepticism, Individuality, and Chastened Politics*, 112; *Leviathan*, Introduction, pp. 3-5

<sup>34</sup> *Skepticism, Individuality, and Chastened Politics*, 84, 112

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human felicity and to allow the diversity of human appetites that is required for achieving felicity. Thus, Hobbes's state is absolute, but not totalitarian. The laws should be few, well known and limited to just those required to allow humans to seek their diverse conceptions of the good.

The end of the state, for Hobbes, is to provide the condition for human flourishing: peace. Peace is only required if we care about seeking our own ends, that is, seeking felicity each in our own way. So, for Hobbes, the state is the prerequisite to human flourishing, however one conceives one's own flourishing. Conflicts between the law and one's own end of flourishing should be minimal, since the laws in a Hobbesian state should be few.

#### **IV. Diversity as a Revolution in Ethics**

A eudaimonist in the Aristotelian tradition would, no doubt, reject the idea of plural 'good' as part of the tradition. Such a theorist might well characterize the idea of a plural good as subjectivist or relativist – two terms that have been used to describe Hobbes's moral philosophy. In placing Hobbes within this tradition, Rutherford rejects these latter labels, arguing that Hobbes is best understood in context as revising this theory to make room for the reality of diversity.

For Hobbes, writing in the midst of the wars of religion and the English Civil war, the idea of one unifying good that can draw on human benevolence to yield a stable political order was no longer a possibility. Such a fiction could no longer be sustained in the midst of violent disagreement. Recognizing that each seeks a different good, Hobbes takes human diversity as basic. His innovation is his attempt to show how, given such diversity, peace and flourishing can be achieved. Rutherford allows us to see Hobbes's political achievements in a clearer light. Hobbes, he shows us, offers us a way to achieve the good –whatever that might mean to individual humans – through political order. This political order, then, becomes the necessary condition for the possibility of any kind of flourishing. The civil state, sovereign and all, are necessary for peace, without which no flourishing is possible.

Reframing Hobbes in this way achieves two things: 1. It puts him squarely in the liberal tradition, where diversity of human ends is assumed, and 2. It shows that his

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theory of absolute sovereignty aims not at crushing humans into obedient slaves; rather, it aims to allow them the possibility of flourishing, in whatever way they seek. Hobbes is no liberal.<sup>35</sup> However, for contemporary liberal theorists, liberalism at its essence recognizes the idea that given human diversity, any unified notion of the good is untenable.<sup>36</sup> Hobbes, thus, has an important role in this tradition as the first philosopher in the early modern to argue that the good is plural.<sup>37</sup>

### **Conclusion:**

Hobbes took up eudaimonism, as Rutherford argues, but only in a more limited way suggested in 1) above, in order to transform it. *Pace* Rutherford, practical reason in Hobbes does not play the role it does in Aristotle. For Hobbes, appetites do the work of yielding increased happiness. The political state does indeed have a role to play in shaping the affects of those in the multitude; however, Hobbes does not seem to think it should do so on every matter, recognizing the importance and irreducibility of human diversity in desire and appetite. This recognition of diversity is the revolutionary spin Hobbes's takes on the idea of eudaimonia – felicity without one Good.

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<sup>35</sup> Den Uyl, Douglas and Stuart D. Warner. "Liberalism and Hobbes and Spinoza." *Studia Spinozana Volume 3: Spinoza and Hobbes*. (Aling: Walther & Walther Verlag, 1987)

<sup>36</sup> John Rawls, *Political Liberalism*. Second edition. (New York: Columbia University Press, 2005). Martha Nussbaum, "Perfectionist Liberalism and Political Liberalism." *Philosophy & Public Affairs* (Volume 39, Issue 1, Winter 2011).

<sup>37</sup> Quentin Skinner *The Foundations of Modern Political Thought, Volume Two: The Age of Reformation*. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1978); Ursula Goldenbaum, "Sovereignty and Obedience" in Desmond M. Clarke and Catherine Wilson (Eds.) *The Oxford Handbook of Philosophy in Early Modern Europe*. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011)