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Volume III

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12 Hobbes and evil

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Introduction

Since 'in teaching philosophy the first beginning is from definition' (*De Corpore* 1.6.15; EW i, 85), we should begin with Hobbes's definitions of 'good' and 'evil' in *Leviathan*: 'whatsoever is the object of any man's appetite or desire, that is it for which he for his part called *good*; and the object of his hate and aversion, *evil*' (L vi.7; 28). According to these definitions, good and evil exist only in relation to individuals, not absolutely, as Hobbes straightaway acknowledges: 'these words of good and evil . . . 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 objects themselves' (*Ibid.*: 28–9). Furthermore, they are the objects of emotion or passion, rather than thought or understanding. Or, as Hobbes even more bluntly says, 'Good and evil are names that signify our appetites and aversions', at least in the state of nature (L xv.40; 100). Evil, for example, is what a man hates, where hate is just the feeling of aversion to something, whether the thing is present or merely thought (L vi.3; 28). For Hobbes, passions like appetite and aversion are simply motions within the body, especially with the heart, that are directed 'to or from the object' that acts on the sense organs (L vi.9; 28). So good and evil are names for the reactions men feel in their hearts, of wanting to obtain or avoid something on the occasion of its presence or thought. Beginning from these starkly egoistic, emotivist and materialist assumptions, Hobbes develops a surprisingly rich account of the nature, sources and varieties of human evil (and good). This chapter explores this account, giving special attention to Hobbes's egoistic moral psychology, his famous conception of the origin and function of the commonwealth, and his caustic attack on the unholy alliance between scholastic philosophy and the Roman Church, a.k.a. the 'Kingdom of Darkness'.

Moral psychology: motion and power

Hobbes was what we call a 'rational egoist': he believed that the faculty of reason is properly directed to the advantage of the agent, i.e. to preservation of his life and the satisfaction of his desires. In our natural condition, before or without a commonwealth and sovereign, this amounts to a 'right of nature': the liberty that 'each man hath to use his own power, as he will himself, for the preservation of

his own nature, that is to say, of how own life, and consequently of doing anything, which in his own judgment and reason he shall conceive to be the aptest means thereunto' (L xiv.1; 79). This right does not ensure that every one will correctly calculate, perceive and pursue what is good for them (and avoid what is evil): 'Good (like evil) is divided into real and apparent' (*De Homine* xi.5; 48). At the individual level, a person may wrongly prefer the 'short vehemence of any carnal pleasure' over their long-term education, reducing their tastes and hopes to those of lower animals (L vi.35; 31). At the political level, a person may choose to remain in a state of war because they wrongly perceive their liberty to be a greater good than their security, or they may promote rebellion and civil war because they wrongly perceive subjection to the sovereign as evil (L xv. 4–8; 90–3). What typically happens in such cases is that the person's reason is tainted by their passions to such extent they desire what is in fact evil for them. For instance, it is reasonable to pardon transgressors, or punish them only for the sake of future good, since these policies conduce to our long-term security and peace; unfortunately, men act out of vengeance against wrong-doers 'in vain-glory and contrary to reason' (L xv. 8–19; 96). Although 'good is said to be relative to person, place and time' (*De Homine* xi.4), just as different diets are suitable to different constitutions and circumstances, drinking poison and instigating war are evil even for someone who desires these things and calls them 'good'.

Self-preservation is the primary objective good (and self-destruction the primary evil) independently of 'person, place and time'. Indeed, Hobbes maintains that the 'laws of nature' consist precisely in those rules or precepts 'found out by reason by which a man is forbidden to do that which is destructive of his own life' (L xiv.3; 79). In early works, self-preservation is characterized not so much as an obligation as a necessity of our species. In *De Cive*, for example, he writes that every man 'is desirous of what is good for him and shuns what is evil, but chiefly the chiefest of all natural evils which is Death; and this he doth by a certain impulsion of nature no less than that whereby a stone moves downward' (*De Cive* i.7; 115). This is why a person cannot voluntarily give up his right to defend himself against those who attempt to murder him: 'because he cannot be understood to aim thereby at any good to himself' (L xiv.8; 82). Nor is a subject ever obliged to kill himself even if it is commanded by a rightful sovereign (L xxi.15; 142). As for voluntary suicide, Hobbes observes that since the 'natural and necessary' intention of every man is towards his self preservation: 'if he kills himself it is to be presumed that he is not *compos mentis*' (EW vi; 88).

As these passages illustrate, the universal goodness of self-preservation, which is asserted repeatedly in *Leviathan* and later works, is usually paired with the corresponding evil of death. It is somewhat surprising that Hobbes would harp so much on this evil since, unlike most seventeenth-century philosophers, he shared the materialism and mortalism of Epicurus and Lucretius, who famously evangelized against the fear of death.

Necessity of nature maketh man to will and desire *bonum sibi*, that which is good for themselves, and avoid that which is hurtful, but most of all that terrible enemy of nature, death from which we expect both the loss of all power and also the greatest of all bodily pain in losing it (EL I.xiv.6; 54).

Even if the Epicureans are right that the state of being dead is not bad or painful in itself – Hobbes himself notes that after death there is no experience of the tributes paid by the survivors (L xi.6; 59) – death is nevertheless *malum sibi* in two respects. First, it deprives us of all power. The power of a man Hobbes defines as 'his present means to obtain some future apparent good' (L x.1; 50). A man is worthy of honor in proportion to his power. That is why, for example, 'riches are honorable; for they are power; poverty dishonorable' (L x.40; 53). But natural powers, like prudence and strength, and acquired powers, like friends and riches, are not valued primarily as instruments to distinct goods but as means to greater and greater power: 'the nature of power is in this point like to fame, increasing as it proceeds; or like the motion of heavy bodies which the further they go make still the more haste' (L x.2; 50). Death renders us powerless and so robs us of what we most desire for ourselves and most esteem in others: 'I put for a general inclination of all mankind a perpetual and restless desire of power after power, that ceaseth only in death' (L xi.2; 58). Second, death is the most painful of experiences. What entitles Hobbes to assume all deaths are maximally painful? In the *Elements of Law* he explains that pain consists in the diminution of vital motion in the heart (and pleasure in its augmentation) (EL I.vii.1–2; 21–2). Since death brings all vital motion to a permanent end, it is the most painful event a living being will undergo. And since we feel aversion to what is unpleasant, death is for all of us the *summum malum*.

So death is not evil because life *per se* is good, nor because life enables us to achieve some inherently valuable end like peace-of-mind or wisdom, but because life is a precondition for continuous motion and the pursuit of power. We can hope for 'felicity' in this life, i.e. 'a continual success in obtaining those things which a man from time to time desireth' (L vi.58; C 34). But this felicity is never an end to arrive at, a static state, but rather a perpetual, kinetic striving: 'Felicity is a continual progress of desire, from one object to another, the attaining of the former being still but a way to the latter' (L xi.1; 57). This explains Hobbes's dismissive attitude to the philosophical conception of the *summum bonum* as a repose of the mind: 'there is no such thing as perpetual tranquility of the mind while we live here because life itself is motion and can never be without desire nor without fear' (L vi.58; 34–5. See also L xi.1; 57).

As motion and power are goods for humans, stasis and weakness are evils. This comes out clearly in Hobbes's account of the passion 'dejection of mind', which is 'grief from perception of want of power' (L vi.40; 32). In extreme cases, 'dejection subjects a man to causeless fears, which is madness commonly called MELANCHOLY, apparent also in divers manners as in haunting of solitudes and of graves' (L viii.20; 41). The thoroughly dejected person, utterly lacking in power and the honor it brings, feels most at home wandering among the dead. This is Hobbes's paradigm of a miserable and evil human existence.

Hobbes's thoroughly kinetic and dynamic image of the human good – and correspondingly static and impotent conception of human evil – meshes nicely with Hobbes's physiology and physics, as one would expect from a thoroughgoing materialist. Sensations are motions produced in the sense organs by the mechanical action of external bodies. The motions from sensation that linger and fade in the brain are imaginations and memories (L ii.3–4; 8–9). These sometimes trigger invisible 'beginnings of motion' within the agent that ultimately issue in voluntary motions: 'these small beginnings of motion in the body of man, before they appear in walking, speaking, striking and other visible actions, are commonly called ENDEAVOR' (L vi.1; 28). When directed towards something external, the endeavor is called 'desire' and the object is labeled 'good'; when directed away from something the endeavor is called 'hate' and the object is labeled 'bad' (L vi.2–7; 28–9).

Moving to the most fundamental level we find that for Hobbes 'all mutation is motion' and likewise causation, power and activity are nothing but motion (*De Corpore* 2.9.9; EW i, 126).[1] Furthermore, Hobbes's basic physical principles are laws of motion.[2] His fundamental 'dynamical' concept, the energy of moving bodies transferred in collisions, which he terms endeavor or *conatus*, is essentially kinetic: 'motion made in less space and time than can be given' (*De Corpore* 3.15.2; EW i, 206). As Frithiof Brandt remarked many years ago, Hobbes 'should more correctly be called a motionalist' than a materialist (1917: 379).[3] Motion and power are the foundations both of physical change and of human flourishing.

From war to commonwealth

Life in a state of war, apart from the commonwealth and its overawing sovereign, is clearly bad. The story is a familiar one. By their most universal aspirations – self-preservation, occasional delectation, and honor – men come into conflict, engendering mutual aggression, fear and enmity. Trade and industry are precluded by theft and sabotage; science and the arts require a foolhardy vulnerability to treachery; everyone lives continually with violence or its threat. So, 'the life of man, solitary, poor, nasty, brutish and short' (L xiii.9; 76). Since in war any power a man possesses is limited, uncertain and temporary, and the motions of his body and brain are restricted and animalistic, his felicity is tiny in comparison with his misery.

Although 'it is easily judged how disagreeable a thing to the preservation either of mankind, or of each single man, a perpetual war is' (*De Cive* i.13; 118), Hobbes ultimately insists that the brutality of war is not morally wrong. This doctrine seems to evolve. In *De Cive* (1642), Hobbes writes that 'all men in the state of nature have a desire and will to hurt, but not proceeding from the same cause, neither equally to be condemned' (i.4; 114). Killing from vain-glory is worse than killing in self-defense, for example. But in *Leviathan* Hobbes takes a much sterner amoralist view: 'the notions of right and wrong, justice and injustice, have there no place' (L xiii.13; 78). Morality and justice depend on a voluntary covenant among men to transfer their right of nature to preserve themselves as they judge to a sovereign, in order to escape the state of war. Without such a covenant, and an authority to enforce it, 'private appetite is the measure of good and evil' (L xv.40; 100).

But in the established commonwealth, a true science of morality is possible since 'moral philosophy is nothing else but the science of what is good and evil in the conversation and society of mankind' (*Ibid.*).

So in the passage from war to commonwealth, subjective good and evil are transformed into objective morality. This morality is mostly comprised under the 'other laws of nature' – which follow the basic laws, to seek peace and lay down the right of nature in order to secure peace – that Hobbes spells out in Chapter xv of *Leviathan*. It is worth briefly examining Hobbes's articulation of two of these laws, to appreciate how good and evil can be systematized within a commonwealth. The fourth law, Gratitude, states that 'a man which receiveth benefit from another of mere grace endeavor that he which giveth it have no reasonable cause to repent of his good will' (L xv.16; 95). A gift of mere grace, or 'free-gift', is a non-mutual transfer (unlike a contract). Hobbes notes that all such gifts are out of self-interest since 'of all voluntary acts the object is to every man his own good' (*Ibid.*). If this end is frustrated through ingratitude, benevolence and mutual aid are undermined and war ensues, contrary to the first law of nature, to *seek peace*. The ninth law, against Pride, states that 'that every man acknowledge all other for his equal by nature' (L xvi.21; 97). Hobbes specifically castigates Aristotle for arguing otherwise in his infamous 'natural slaves' doctrine, which Hobbes finds contrary to both reason and experience. More importantly, from a moral point of view, Hobbes claims that whether or not men are by nature equal they 'will not enter into conditions of peace but upon equal terms, such equality must be admitted' (*Ibid.*).

These laws of nature are clearly consistent with Hobbes's egoism: they assume that men are motivated by their own good and assert that this good warrants gratitude and acknowledgment of equality. Furthermore, unlike the private appetites that measure good and evil in the state of war, the laws are alleged to be objective. It does not depend on this or that man's appetite or background, nor on the arbitrary will of the sovereign, whether ingratitude weakens social cohesion or whether voluntary covenants require the parties admit one another as natural equals.

These are rather scientific facts about what conduces to peace in the 'conversation and society of mankind'. Hobbes puts the point more strongly: 'The laws of nature are eternal and immutable, for injustice, ingratitude, arrogance. pride . . . and the rest can never be made lawful. For it can never be that war shall preserve life, and peace destroy it' (L xv. 38; 99–100). Indeed, the term 'law' is somewhat misleading, Hobbes concedes, since their truth is not derived from the will of any law-giver, but from reason and the 'science of virtue and vice': 'These dictates of reason men used to call by the name of laws, but improperly, for they are but conclusions or theorems concerning what conduceth to the conservation and defense of themselves whereas law properly is the word of him that hath by right command over others' (L xv.41; 100. See also L xxvi.8; 174).

But what role does this leave for the sovereign in justice and morality? Hobbes says, after all, that in a commonwealth 'the common rule of good and evil' is taken 'not from the objects themselves but from the person that representeth it' (L vi.7; 29). The role of the sovereign, or the judges and arbitrators he appoints, is not to make the rules of good and evil, but to apply and (especially) to enforce them. That is to say, the sovereign converts the laws of nature, which in themselves are not strictly laws but rather theorems of reason, into binding civil laws. 'When a commonwealth is once settled then they are actually laws, and not before, as being then the commands of the commonwealth, and therefore also civil laws; for it is the sovereign power that obliges men to obey them' (L xxvi.8; 174. See also EL i.xvii.12; 72). And the sovereign obliges by virtue of the rights and powers we've given him. So while we are immediately obliged to follow the laws of nature because of the covenant we freely made to pursue peace and transfer our rights of nature to the sovereign, these covenants are valid only if they are coercively enforced under the threat of punishment. This is one of the sovereign's jobs. Hobbes emphasizes this especially with respect to the third law of nature, justice: 'the nature of justice consists in keeping of valid covenants but the validity of covenants begins not but with the constitution of a civil power sufficient to compel men to keep them' (L xv.3; 89). So morality is objective in itself, but becomes binding when enforced by an overawing sovereign.

Finally, it should be emphasized that this theory of morality is merely an extension of, rather than super-addition to, Hobbes's minimalist account of good and evil. In the state of nature, good and evil are what we individually perceive, through our desires and aversions, as preserving or threatening us. In the commonwealth, good and evil are what general laws, grounded on reason but enforced by the sword, more reliably promote and prohibit by securing social peace and security. Morality – the conditions of virtue and vice – is the natural law brought under civil authority: 'the ways or means of peace (which I have shewed before are justice, gratitude, modesty, equity, mercy and the rest of the laws of nature) are good (that is to say moral virtues) and their contrary vices, evil' (L xv.40; 100). And a person is good or evil in proportion to their tendency to uphold these laws: 'fulfilling of all these laws is good in reason; and the breaking of them evil. And so also the habit, or disposition, or intention to fulfill them good; and the neglect of them evil' (EL i.17.14; 72–3; EW iv, 110).

Since power and motion are fundamental goods for humans, and weakness and stillness (ultimately death) are fundamental evils, it follows that liberty or freedom is good. For Hobbes defines liberty as the absence of 'external impediments of motion' (L xxxi.1; 136). Combined with the absence of internal impediments to motion (such as sickness) we have the conditions for a 'free man': 'he that in those things by his strength and wit he is able to do is not hindered to do what he has a will to do' (*Ibid.*). Hobbes concedes that men have 'absolute freedom' only in the state of war and in this sense the commonwealth is a (necessary) evil. But this conclusion should be tempered by several considerations. First, even in the commonwealth one acts freely, even if from fear of punishment, 'as a man throweth his goods into the sea for fear the ship should sink' (L xxi.3; 136). Second, many liberties are specifically retained under a commonwealth since the fundamental good of self-preservation requires them, such as self-defense and freedom from unnecessary conscription. Freedoms about which the law is typically silent, such

as association for pleasure, are also preserved. Third, Hobbes points out that many important freedoms are only possible with a commonwealth in place – such as 'liberty to buy and sell, and otherwise contract with one another, to choose their own abode, their own diet, their own trade of life', etc. (L xxxi.6; 138) – while the freedoms reserved for war, to do and say and write whatever one wishes, are short-lived. The Hobbesian state is neither absolutely free nor absolutely tyrannical, but a mix aimed at maximizing the goods of life: power and motion. And as Hobbes says, 'when in the whole chain the greater part is good the whole is called good' (EL i.7.1; 23).

The kingdom of God and the kingdom of darkness

Questions about evil arise in a number of ways in Hobbes's philosophy of religion. While the question whether Hobbes himself was sincerely religious has been hotly disputed since his own day (with Hobbes testifying in his own defense), it is clear that he took great interest in religion and considered it a force for good if properly administered. Religion focuses and quells our fears of the unknown and answers to our natural curiosity about the ultimate causes of things (L xi.1–11; 63–7). Furthermore, religion provides ultimate normative force to the laws of nature discussed above, since those laws are conceived both as 'dictates of reason' and 'as delivered in the word of God, that by right commandeth all things' (L xv.4; 100; See also L xxxi.17; 237). So civil law coincides, at least in part, with divine law. It is controversial whether Hobbes himself regarded the laws of nature as ultimately dependent on God's commands, or merely on reason supported by civil force, but it is clear that God commands the laws and that he applies them equally to subject and sovereign (L xxvi.7; 138).

To one of the most obvious and pressing questions about evil and religion, namely why evil exists at all in a world fully ordained and controlled by a benevolent God, Hobbes's answer is not surprising. In *Leviathan* he says that God justifies the afflictions of Job by 'arguments drawn from his power' (L xxxi.6; 236). In other words, there is no question of 'justifying' God's actions since they depend on his incomprehensible power not our reason. Even so, Hobbes does express confidence in an early commentary that God's promises 'will be fulfilled in a future world where every one will gain his deserts' (*De Motu* xxxviii.3; 462). It may be wondered how anyone deserves credit or blame for their actions, given Hobbes's view that everything that happens, including our own wills, follows necessarily from God's will. As he puts this necessitarian doctrine in the exchange with Bramhall, 'all external causes depend necessarily on the first eternal cause, God Almighty, who works in us both to will and to do' (EW v, 450). But, as discussed above, Hobbes finds freedom and responsibility to be perfectly compatible with such necessity. So, in response to Bramhall's suggestion that if the will is necessitated 'it will no longer be evil', Hobbes answers that 'the nature of sin consists in this, that the action done proceed from our will and be against the law' (EW v, 229).[4] Indeed, he attempts to turn the tables against Bramhall's more libertarian

conception of freedom: 'His Lordship, by exempting the will of man from being subject to the necessity of God's will or decree, denies by consequence the divine prescience, which will also amount to atheism by consequence' (EW iv, 384).

According to Hobbes's genealogy of religion, God is originally conceived as a king who rules and ordains either directly or by covenant with a mortal representative such Abraham or Moses. Immortal God (a civil sovereign is at best a 'mortal god') commands absolute authority of judgment and punishment as the invisible sovereign of all creation. So the putative representatives of God, such as priests and churches, have considerable power either to reinforce or to undermine peace and unity within the commonwealth, as Hobbes knew well from first-hand experience of the English civil wars. Hobbes therefore distinguishes between proper 'religion' – 'fear of power invisible, feigned by the mind, or imagined from tales publicly allowed' – and 'superstition' – the same 'not allowed' (L vi.36; 31). As these definitions make clear, religious doctrine (including God's attributes), the meaning of the Bible and its canonical texts, and the correct modes of worship, are all determined and authorized by the civil sovereign (albeit with the 'counsel' of duly appointed church officials). As the effective head of the church, Hobbes compares the authority of the sovereign within the 'Christian Commonwealth' he envisions to Moses: 'whosoever in a Christian Commonwealth upholdeth the place of Moses is the sole messenger of God, and interpreter of his commandments. And according hereunto no man ought in the interpretation of the Scripture to proceed further than the bounds which are set by their several sovereigns' (L xl.40; 321). Conversely, since the civil laws of the commonwealth are simply the laws of nature commanded by God (and dictated by reason), 'the distinction between temporal and spiritual domination hath there no place' (L xii. 22; C 71).

Religion, or rather superstition and false doctrine, unregulated by the sovereign is a major source of evil for Hobbes. Very early in *Leviathan*, he emphasizes that the difficulty we have of distinguishing imagination from sensation, and dreaming from waking, fosters superstitious belief in ghosts and witches, which 'are either taught, or not confuted, to keep in credit the uses of exorcism, of crosses, of holy water, and other such inventions of ghostly men' (L ii.8; 11). This implicit attack on Catholic religious ceremony as superstition becomes much more frontal and elaborate in later parts of the *Leviathan*, particularly Part IV, 'The Kingdom of Darkness', a caustic broadside against the Catholic Church. We will restrict our attention to one significant way in which religion can be a force of evil, i.e. against civil peace and unity, and therefore superstitious, i.e. unworthy of state sanction: by the promulgation of 'vain philosophy'.

One way religions can become dangerous is by 'the enjoining of a belief of contradictories' (L xii.25; 71). On the one hand, the proffering of absurd or contradictory doctrines discredits a religion and its ministers and brings suspicion upon doctrines and revelations that are not contradictory (L xii.25; 72). On the other hand, 'the frivolous distinctions, barbarous terms, and obscure language of the Schoolmen' cause men to 'mistake the *ignis fatuus* of vain philosophy for the light of the Gospel' (L xlvii.14; 480). But most importantly the sovereign himself

is either weakened by his sponsorship of obscure religions or forced to repudiate it and thereby sacrifice an important source of authority. Thus, he asserts that the Roman church was abolished in England

> partly from the bringing of the philosophy of Aristotle into religion by the Schoolmen, from whence there arose so many contradictions and absurdities as brought the clergy into a reputation both of ignorance and of fraudulent intention, and inclined people to revolt from them, either against the will of their own princes, as in France and Holland, or with their will, as in England.
> (L xii 31, C, 73)

A particularly pervasive and damaging religious doctrine is that of *incorporeal substance*, which he maintains is logically impossible because the terms or names employed in the concept are 'contradictory and inconsistent', just as much as 'incorporeal body' (L iv.21; 20. See also EL i.xi.4; 42; EW iv, 61). Thus, sincere and sensible theists 'choose rather to confess he is incomprehensible, and above their understanding, than define his nature by *spirit incorporeal*, and then confess their definition to be unintelligible' (L xii.7; 6). Hobbes traces numerous egregious religious dogma to this source, such as transubstantiation (L viii.27; 46–7), as well as 'dark doctrines' like eternal torment and purgatory, which lend support to policies like indulgences that discredit the church while unduly empowering its officials and weakening the sovereign (L xliv.16; 420).

Not even God is exempted from Hobbes's prohibition against incorporeal substance. While he usually prefers to assert only that God is 'incomprehensible', late in his life Hobbes makes his true view explicit in response to his longtime nemesis Bishop Bramhall. Since Hobbes considers 'incorporeal substance' contradictory, Bramhall asks, what then does he 'leave God himself to be?' (WB iv, 525). Hobbes replies frankly: 'To his lordship's question here: *what I leave God to be?* I answer: I leave him to be a most pure, simple, invisible spirit corporeal' (EW iv, 313. See also L Appendix.iii; 540). One might wonder how such a god can serve the normative function Hobbes assigns him: commanding the laws of nature or morality, punishing the wicked, etc. Unlike the better-known heterodoxy of Spinoza's deus-sive-natura, Hobbes does not altogether dispense with teleology. In *Leviathan* he observes that 'by the visible things of this world, and their admirable order, a man may conceive there is a cause of them, which men call God' (L xi.25; 62).[5] Furthermore, Hobbes explicitly attributes 'intelligence' to the operation of his corporeal God: 'Can it then be doubted that God, who is infinitely fine spirit, and withal intelligence, can make and change all species and kinds of bodies as he pleaseth?' (EW iv, 310).

Hobbes's God is reminiscent of, and possibly inspired by, the god of the Stoics, which is also corporeal and thoroughly interspersed with ordinary bodies.[6] Despite this, their God understood and acted for the good of the world and even with a mind to the interests of humans. Thus, Diogenes observed that the Stoic God is 'provident towards the world and all its occupants but not anthropomorphic'.[7]

But in what sense is the power of either god directed to ends that are good? For the Stoics, the greatest human good is virtue, which is the same as 'living in accordance with nature'.[8] Insofar as God produces and directs all bodies he cannot fail to live in accordance with nature and insofar as he acts in a regular and intelligible manner he makes it possible for us to know and achieve human virtue.[9] The situation is not so different with Hobbes. As we have noted, 'whatsoever is the object of any man's appetite or desire that is it for his part which he calleth *good*' (L iv.7; 24). But 'when we ascribe to God a will, it is not to be understood as that of man, for a rational appetite, but as the power by which he effecteth everything' (L xxi.26; 240). So God's operation is directed at and achieves the 'good' simply because he wills and produces the successive states of the world. Since we have reason, which enables us to understand how our own good, i.e. power and motion, is facilitated by living in accordance with the laws of nature, which are the same as the divine laws, the corporeal God can be said to reveal and direct us towards good and away from evil (so long as we are not ensnared by vain philosophy).

Notes

1 See also *De Corpore* 4.24.1–2; EW i 389–90; *De Corpore* 2.10.6; EW i 131.
2 (i) all physical interaction is between contiguous moving bodies; (ii) whatever is in rest or motion remains in that state unless acted on mechanically by another body. *De Corpore* 2.9.7; EW i 124.
3 Cf. Watkins 1965: 124.
4 For selections from the long Bramhall-Hobbes debate about free will, see *Hobbes and Bramhall on Liberty and Necessity*.
5 On 'teleological' reasoning in Hobbes, see Brown 1962: 341–2.
6 See for example Diogenes Laertius *Lives of the Philosophers* Bk. 7, 134, LS 268–9, 275.
7 *Lives of the Philosophers* 7, 147; LS 323. See also Plutarch, *On Common Conceptions* 175E; LS 327.
8 Stobaeus LS 394.
9 See further Baltzly 2003: 18.

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13 Descartes on evil

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Looking for a theory of evil in Descartes can be considered to be paradoxical or even futile. Descartes' philosophical preoccupation was epistemology or theory of knowledge, which he needed to build a *New* or *Modern* science to replace the Aristotelian science of the Mediaevals. His writings are almost completely devoid of moral or ethical considerations, and no consistent account of evil is to be found in them. Even the most meticulous interpretative labor is not very likely to yield a *theory* of evil that is as distinct as that one finds in, for example, Plato, the Stoics, the Cynics, St. Thomas Aquinas, or Spinoza and Leibniz among Descartes' most immediate Cartesian successors. One needs to add, however, that Descartes' silence on the subject of evil was partly premeditated and dictated by prudence. He wanted to stay clear from any theological controversies that occupied Catholic Church in his times.

In the Synopsis to the *Meditations* (1641), Descartes even took the trouble to put in parenthesis, to make it more visible, the following disclaimer as to why he does not treat the subject of evil in his work:

> (But it is to be noticed, however, that sin – or error that is committed in the pursuit of good and evil – is in no way dealt with there; rather only that occurs in the judging of the true and false is dealt there. And there is no discussion of matters pertaining to faith or the conduct of life, but simply speculative truths that are known by means of the natural light.)

The theological controversies, or rather the controversy to which Descartes refers, concerns the growing conflict over such questions as the nature and scope of human freedom, predestination and salvation between the Augustinians and the followers of the Spanish theologian Louis Molina (1535–1600) (predominantly the Jesuits) who in 1588 published a work entitled *Liberi arbitrii cum gratiae donis* . . . The conflict reached its peak in 1653 when on the instigation of the Jesuits, Pope Innocent X in the bull *Cum occasione* condemned the teaching of Cornelius Jansenius (1585–1638), the author of monumental work *Augustinus* (published posthumously in 1640, in Amsterdam, and 641, in Paris). With that 1653 bull, the Church abandoned St. Augustine's teaching on freedom in favor of the semi-Pelagian doctrine, according to which man is free to do both good and evil without God's grace.