

# As Pleasantly as the Human Condition Will Allow

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# **As Pleasantly as the Human Condition Will Allow**

*Thomas Hobbes on Happiness and Sovereign Duty*

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## Introduction

For those familiar with Hobbes' *Leviathan* (1651), the thirteenth chapter of his prior work, *De Cive* (1642), puts forth a startling series of statements. In this passage, Hobbes tells the reader that the ultimate duty of the sovereign is to provide for the citizens "a happy life so far as that is possible."<sup>1</sup> This claim is at odds with what most readers of *Leviathan*, with its infamously dark account of natural man and its emphasis on the absolute authority of the sovereign, would expect of Hobbes. Further, the claim that the sovereign has a duty to provide for the happiness of the citizens also seems to contradict earlier assertions to the same effect in *De Cive*. *Leviathan*, Hobbes' masterwork, has no account of happiness in civil society, and is famously among the bleakest accounts of society in all of political thought. Why, then, does an earlier version of Hobbes' thought contain so strong an impetus for the happiness of the collective populace?

The declaration that the sovereign has a duty to promote the happiness of the people calls into question Hobbes' reputation as a hard-nosed absolutist concerned only with the preservation of peace at any cost. It seems possible, in this light, that Hobbes has an ulterior agenda in his promotion of unquestionable sovereignty, perhaps even a more liberal one. This is not the case, though. Over the course of this paper I will show that happiness, for Hobbes, is merely another implement in the sovereign's peacekeeping arsenal. On the other hand, the absolutist end of civic happiness does not denigrate the idea itself. Hobbes does not mean for the sovereign to simply to pacify the people with placid contentment. Ultimately, I argue that the call for civic happiness in *De Cive* is part of a larger attempt to address the problem of ambition by introducing hierarchy and wealth in order to control

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<sup>1</sup> *De Cive*, XIII.4

factionous men and eliminate faction. This clarification of the sovereign duty to Happiness also explains the difference between *De Cive* and *Leviathan* on the duty question. In *Leviathan*, Hobbes' focus is on the danger posed to the commonwealth by popular reception of seditious opinion. Because of this shift in focus *Leviathan's* elaboration of sovereign duty is directed towards the education of the subjects, rather than the management of the ambitious.

Surprisingly, this interpretive problem has received little treatment in the scholarship. This lack of examination is the result of a larger gap in Hobbes Studies: *De Cive* itself is mostly ignored, except in service of points regarding *Leviathan* or Hobbes generally. Many students of Hobbes' work have reached the conclusion that *Leviathan* has a particular rhetorical purpose that distinguishes it from the two earlier delineations of his political thought. Some scholars, like Leo Strauss, Michael Oakeshott and M. M. Goldsmith, claim that this rhetorical character obscures some of the thought in *Leviathan* and that Hobbes' earlier work would be more revealing.<sup>2</sup> David Johnston, on the other hand, claims that the development in form is connected to a change in Hobbes' thought, and therefore that *Leviathan* is the only work capable of fully communicating Hobbes' meditations on politics.<sup>3</sup> Fortunately, I can set aside the rhetoric problem and take it up later, in the specific context of my interpretive project, because both of these schools stand to benefit from a thorough reading of Hobbes' earlier works. Hobbes' project was to build a new moral and civil philosophy from the ground up, and considering that in *De Corpore*, published after *Leviathan*, he claims that *De Cive* is the first work of civil philosophy, the latter ought to be afforded

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<sup>2</sup> Strauss, Leo. 1952. *The Political Philosophy of Hobbes: Its Basis and its Genesis*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press. pg. 170; Oakeshott, Michael. 1975. *Hobbes on Civil Association*. Indianapolis: Liberty Fund. pg. 15; Goldsmith, M. M., "Introduction to the Second Edition." In *Hobbes' The Elements of Law, Natural and Politic*, trans. Ferdinand Tönnies. London: Frank Cass & Co. pp. xx-xxi

<sup>3</sup> Johnston, David. 1986. *The Rhetoric of Leviathan*. Princeton: Princeton University Press. pg. 68.

more weight in scholarship. In developing this interpretation of earlier Hobbes, *De Cive* stands out as the richer text to mine when compared to the *Elements of Law*. While Goldsmith holds that the *Elements* is the purest expression of Hobbes' thought, Richard Tuck claims that *Elements of Law* is in fact a manuscript English summary of *De Homine* and *De Cive*. If it is in fact the final product of a philosophical project begun with the *Elements*, one would expect *De Cive* to present a more refined form of the same pre-*Leviathan* argument.<sup>4</sup>

More recent Hobbes scholarship has largely formed around several key concepts in Hobbes' thought and, more broadly, placing Hobbes in the history of political thought. Most prominent in this latter vein is the debate over Hobbes' liberality. The liberality debate bears only slightly upon my project, as it examines Hobbes' understanding of the relationship between sovereign and citizen, which relationship in itself helps to explain how one is to take the demand that the sovereign provide for the happiness of the citizen. J. Judd Owen and John Tralau take different, though not diametrically opposed, positions on the question of tolerance in Hobbes. Eleanor Curran and Amnon Lev address the question of rights in Hobbes, while Debrah Baumgold draws upon the oft-neglected trust involved in the sovereign-subject relationship to show a sort of limitation on the sovereign.

Owen and Tralau, in their respective articles, "The Tolerant Leviathan" and "Hobbes Contra Liberty of Conscience," both address tolerance in Hobbes' work. Owen argues that Hobbes' *Leviathan*, often accused by liberals of being illiberal over claims of intolerance, is in fact tolerant in a paradoxical manner that very much mirrors the paradox of absolutist tendencies in liberal toleration.<sup>5</sup> Tralau, on the other hand, writes that the liberty of

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<sup>4</sup> Tuck, *Hobbes' Moral Philosophy*, pg. 183

<sup>5</sup> Owen, J. Judd. 2005. "The Tolerant Leviathan: Hobbes and the Paradox of Liberalism." *Polity* 37(1): 130–48.

conscience in Hobbes is really liberty of private conscience, as opposed to public conscience, which makes the ostensible liberty of dissent impossible to realize in any meaningful way.<sup>6</sup> This conclusion seems to be supported, at least in part, by Hobbes' repeated claim that a right to a thing is utterly meaningless without the means to the acquisition of that thing. These views do not preclude each other: the faux-tolerance that Tralau identifies is compatible with Owen's Hobbes-Liberal paradoxes. The key difference is that Owen identifies Hobbes as a liberal, whereas Tralau argues that Hobbes' intolerance is at the very least impalatable to modern liberal sensibilities.

Curran and Lev make similar points about Hobbes' stance on rights. In "An Immodest Proposal" Curran argues that, because Hobbes' conception of natural right is divorced from theology whereas Locke's is not merely entwined with but inseparable from theological premises, Hobbes' natural right provides a better basis for the modern secular understanding of natural right than Locke's.<sup>7</sup> Lev, in like fashion, argues in his "The Unlikely Claimant" that, though certainly not republican in nature, Hobbes' project creates a conception of sovereignty that draws upon republican themes and that republican conceptions of government can enter into argument with. This argument, impossible when the sovereign does not assert its authority based upon right, elaborates upon the nature of rights and liberties until republican principles can be found at their hearts. Thereby Hobbes' limited liberties can be discursively transformed into modern liberal self-evident truths.

Baumgold takes a different tack altogether, arguing that "the trust relationship between subjects and their sovereign involves defined roles, limited absolutism, and

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<sup>6</sup> Tralau, Johan. 2010. "Hobbes Contra Liberty of Conscience." *Political Theory* 39(1): 58–84.

<sup>7</sup> Curran, Eleanor. 2012. "An Immodest Proposal: Hobbes Rather than Locke Provides a Forerunner for Modern Rights Theory." *Law and Philosophy* 32(4): 515–38.

accountability in the early-modern form of licensing subjects to switch political allegiance should a regime fail.”<sup>8</sup> Her explanation for this claim rests on the analogy between the conquered servant, as distinct from slave, and the subject. The servant, she argues, holds the master under obligation because he consents to servitude, whereas the slave is held in his inferior position by force. The subject, then, is understood not simply as slave to the sovereign’s absolute will where natural man is free of that slavery, but as servant, monitoring the sovereign and capable of defecting in the case of regime failure.

More closely related to the concepts of happiness and duty in contemporary studies of Hobbes is resistance to sovereign authority. Arguments on this subject offer an approach to understanding the mechanisms by which the failure of the sovereign to do its duty or to make citizens happy translates into a sovereign crisis. Elijah Weber, in his 2012 article “Rebels with a Cause,” writes that Hobbes’ paired claims that for the purpose of peace the sovereign must be absolute and that subjects have inalienable rights as natural men to defend their lives, even from the sovereign, are not inconsistent with each other because the right of self-preservation does not place any authority above the sovereign, and therefore does not limit its absolutism.<sup>9</sup> Lee Ward, in “Thomas Hobbes and John Locke on a Liberal Right of Secession,” takes the argument a step further and shows that Hobbes had a conception of groups of degenerates banding together by right to resist their deaths at the hands of the sovereign. He goes on to interrogate the validity of expanding this conception by applying it to a politically disenfranchised group in a liberal system.<sup>10</sup>

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<sup>8</sup> Baumgold, Deborah. 2013. “‘Trust’ in Hobbes’s Political Thought.” *Political Theory* 41(6): 838–55.

<sup>9</sup> Weber, Elijah. 2012. “Rebels With a Cause: Self-Preservation and Absolute Sovereignty in Hobbes’s *Leviathan*.” *History of Philosophy Quarterly* 29(3): 227–46.

<sup>10</sup> Ward, Lee. 2017. “Thomas Hobbes and John Locke on a Liberal Right of Secession.” *Political Research Quarterly* 70(4): 876–88.

Rhetoric remains a significant part of Hobbes scholarship and gets at the heart of my claims about *De Cive*. The danger to civil peace posed by skilled rhetoricians is clear in Hobbes' mind, and potential solutions to the problem of rhetoric are key to grasping his project. Daniel Kapust uses the lens of group psychology and flattery in an attempt to resolve tensions between portrayals of Hobbes as anti-republican and anti-rhetorical. He argues that Hobbes believes republics are actually more at risk from flatterers than monarchies, as opposed to the received opinion to the contrary.<sup>11</sup> Also attempting to resolve an apparent contradiction in Hobbes, Don Paul Abbot claims that Hobbes' stance on rhetoric is not inconsistent, as many believe, but rather nuanced, and that he distinguished between public and private rhetoric on a normative basis.<sup>12</sup> This distinction may well play into Kapust's argument on republican rhetoric and monarchical flattery.

The most recent attempt at a comprehensive interpretation of Hobbes' political, theological, and natural-philosophic thought is Devin Stauffer's *Hobbes' Kingdom of Light*. Stauffer examines Hobbes' project, with particular emphasis on the *Leviathan*, from the apprehensive perspective of a student of the ancients, and particularly of Plato.<sup>13</sup> The book contains six chapters, each focusing on a particular aspect of Hobbes' enterprise. Each chapter is treated with a weight befitting its status as a major concern of Hobbes in what Hobbes considers to be the founding of true civil philosophy. Perhaps the most useful contribution of Stauffer's book to Hobbes scholarship is its examination the oft neglected relationship between Hobbes' natural philosophy and his political thought. Stauffer argues

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<sup>11</sup> Kapust, Daniel J. 2011. "The Problem of Flattery and Hobbes's Institutional Defense of Monarchy." *Journal of Politics* 73(3): 680–91.

<sup>12</sup> Abbot, Don Paul. 2014. "'Eloquence Is Power': Hobbes on the Use and Abuse of Rhetoric." *Rhetorica: A Journal for the History of Rhetoric* 32(4): 386–411.

<sup>13</sup> Stauffer, Devin. 2018. *Hobbes's Kingdom of Light: A Study of the Foundations of Modern Political Philosophy*. Chicago ; London: The University of Chicago Press.



that, while it is a methodological and substantial nonstarter to claim that Hobbes' political philosophy is simply derived from his natural philosophy, the two are nevertheless connected in key ways. Most notable among these connections are Hobbes' Galilean methodology and the mechanistic nature of passions as motions.

Perhaps most relevant to my subject, though, is Patrick Giamario's "The Laughing Body Politic." Giamario argues that laughter is an important part of understanding the formation of the commonwealth and that the "laughing body politic" is a counter-sovereign pseudo-entity formed coevally with the commonwealth.<sup>14</sup> According to Giamario's account, the vainglorious nature of laughter reveals it to be a sign of weakness, rather than superiority, which disrupts the sovereign narrative of proper perception. He goes on to claim that the sudden glory inherent in laughter is also inherent to the formation of the commonwealth, as a necessary facet of that formation is the belief in the new body's superiority to all others around it. This new body politic itself is understood by Giamario to "laugh" whenever the faith of the subjects in the sovereignty of the sovereign wavers. The loss of faith causes the sovereign's assertions of superiority to belie a deeper weakness, which makes the enactment a counter-sovereign act in the same vein as laughter. This account of something at least approximating happiness in tension with the civic authority of the sovereign casts in even sharper relief the strangeness of Hobbes' command that the sovereign provide for the happiness of the citizens.

All of the aforementioned arguments, like the original set I treated, proceed from either questions about potential inconsistencies in Hobbes' thought in general or questions about *Leviathan* in particular. In both cases, *De Cive* is relegated to a supplementary position,

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<sup>14</sup> Giamario, Patrick T. 2016. "The Laughing Body Politic: The Counter-Sovereign Politics of Hobbes' Theory of Laughter." *Political Research Quarterly* 69(2): 309–19.

if it is included at all. Yet, as before, nearly all would benefit from a thorough interpretation of *De Cive*, and the gap only begs once more to be filled.

The second reason I have chosen to focus on *De Cive* is that it and it alone presents an opportunity to seriously undertake the study of happiness in Hobbes. While some scholars have attempted to draw conclusions about happiness from *Leviathan*, these conclusions are unable to provide a satisfactory explanation of the role Hobbes assigns to happiness in civil society, outside of nature, because *Leviathan* itself does not provide a basis for such claims. Take, for example, Peter Hayes' discussion of happiness in "Hobbes's Bourgeois Moderation," wherein he argues that because the continual striving for power after power in *Leviathan's* sixth chapter is an incomplete definition which, when combined with the descriptions of religious belief, laughter, and pity in the same chapter should really be understood as a passion necessarily moderated in society. This argument holds little water. For one, while several of the passions Hobbes addresses in chapter six are passions that arise in relation to others, the claim that Hobbes is using these descriptions to further a particular understanding of how passions *ought* to be handled in civil society requires considerably more support than it receives here. More important, though, is the seemingly arbitrary nature of the pairings Hayes provides. One could just as easily point to the descriptions of glory, anger, and courage in the same chapter to claim that happiness ought to be unbounded in all instances because there are passions (and these are particularly those relating to power) which are concordant with the striving. By contrast, Gerald Mara claims in "Hobbes's Counsel to Sovereigns" that civic happiness and effective government are mutually beneficial, which is taken from the same passage of *De Cive* that I focus on in this paper.

*De Cive* is the only one of Hobbes' texts that contains a significant mention of happiness in the context of civil society. *De Cive* is therefore situated in a unique position in Hobbes' account by its granting to happiness a meaningful role in the commonwealth. Whether the *Leviathan* represents an intellectual shift away from this position or a rhetorical need to obscure it, a serious consideration of this moment is necessary for a fuller understanding of Hobbes.

### A Prelude on Happiness in the City

Before turning to *De Cive* and the problem of happiness, it is first necessary to recall Hobbes' presentation of his own project with respect to the ancients, particularly Aristotle. Hobbes, in his work, is generally responding to a tradition which takes happiness to be a central conceit of the political order. Hobbes claims that the moral philosophers of the past had erred in choosing common opinion as the basis for their work.<sup>15</sup> In particular, Hobbes took aim at the works of Aristotle, which Hobbes claimed had adversely affected contemporary universities by way of the universities' reverence for the works, and which featured prominently in the Christian Scholasticism movement. So hostile was Hobbes to what he called "Aristotelity" that he famously declared in the concluding Chapter of *Leviathan* that "scarce anything can be more absurdly said in natural philosophy than that which is now called *Aristotle's Metaphysics*; nor more repugnant to government than much of that he hath said in his *Politics*; nor more ignorantly than a great part of his *Ethics*."<sup>16</sup> Hobbes' great enterprise, as he saw it, was to build moral and civil philosophy on a new, more solid

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<sup>15</sup> *De Cive*, Epistle dedicatory, pg. 5. See also Stauffer, Devin, 'Of Darkness from Vain Philosophy' in *Hobbes' Kingdom of Light*

<sup>16</sup> *Leviathan*, XLVI.11

foundation. However, in his move away from Aristotle, Hobbes leaves unanswered a question of political happiness which arises in Aristotle.

In Aristotle's account, two claims in the *Ethics* call into question the role of happiness in the city of the *Politics*. The first of these is happiness' self-sufficiency. Aristotle claims that happiness, inasmuch as it is a self-sufficient activity, must be a kind of contemplation, the most self-sufficient of activities. He somewhat abrogates the problem with the claim that a happy man is still human, and therefore still has external needs, but acknowledges that these are exceedingly few.<sup>17</sup> The problem here arises, predictably, when one tries to convince the happy man to join the city. The friendship that man seeks in his aim to be happy holds no political character. Why should a man with few needs, whose greatest satisfaction comes from the solitary act of contemplation, care to take part in a political apparatus? It is possible for the happy man to find more friends in the city than he would outside of it, but it is more likely that the city will restrain him from some actions and command of him others that would impede the happiness he aims towards. Similarly, but even more important, why would a newly happy man continue to live in the city, even if he had done so in the past? If he cannot be convinced to stay, then it turns out happiness is a threat to the city, even if the pursuit of happiness is not.

Further, Aristotle claims that happiness, by virtue of its self-sufficiency, is its own end, and it requires no other good thing to complete it, since it is itself the completion of contemplation. However, in the *Politics*, Aristotle also states that

It is clear that all communities aim at some good, and that the community that is most authoritative of all and embraces all the others does so

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<sup>17</sup> *Ethics*, 1178b-1179a

particularly, and aims at the most authoritative good of all. This is what is called the city or the political community.<sup>18</sup>

This means that happiness being its own end is also a problematic claim, since the city does not obviously aim at happiness. The happy man's indifference toward all goods except happiness fundamentally misaligns his goals and those of his city, which is supposed to be a macrocosm of its citizens.<sup>19</sup> The man cannot simply join a city that aims at happiness, since we have already seen that happiness is a solitary quality. For these and other reasons, the question of the happy man's place in the city has long been a puzzle in the study of Aristotle.

These questions about Aristotle bear on the present discussion. Hobbes' new political science brings with it a new happiness problem. Hobbes ties happiness or *felicitas* in Hobbes' Latin, to glory, honor, and power. In *Leviathan*, contra Aristotle, he initially defines felicity as "continuing prosperity,"<sup>20</sup> but later expands the definition to "continual progress of the desire, from one object to another, the attaining of the former being still but the way to the latter,"<sup>21</sup> which he simplifies to create the famous statement of a universal inclination to "a perpetual and restless desire for power after power, that ceaseth only in death."<sup>22</sup> It is unclear in *Leviathan* how happiness is accounted for, dealt with, or eliminated in the commonwealth, but the question still seems worth answering. If the civil society is full of men striving continually for power after power until they die, then it seems possible that some men, attaining each power they reach for with ease, will continually glory in their successes and seek ever greater heights. Moreover, the more success they find, and the more glorying they do, the more vainglory they will also develop. Eventually, the vainglory that

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<sup>18</sup> *Politics*, 1252a

<sup>19</sup> Ibid. 1260b. Aristotle's mention of looking to "the virtue of a part in relation to the virtue of the whole" regards the household, but there is no reason not to extend that to citizens, as Aristotle does in the same passage by way of children and women.

<sup>20</sup> *Leviathan*, VI.58

<sup>21</sup> Ibid. XI.1

<sup>22</sup> Ibid. XI.2. It is also important to note here that the case is not so harsh in *De Cive*.

they project onto the world will only have one object in civil society: the sovereign. Seeing themselves the better of everyone else in the commonwealth, these men will judge themselves greater than the sovereign and perhaps even more capable of rule. These men may be a threat to the commonwealth and may even come to cause its dissolution, which is the worst possible outcome for everyone involved. *Leviathan* has no account of happiness in civil society, which leaves us with the same question we had in Aristotle. It is this question, what the role of happiness is in Hobbes' civil society, that I now seek to answer.

### **Happiness in *De Cive***

Hobbes' happiness looks nothing like Aristotle's. Rather than the completion of a quiet and solitary contemplation, happiness here seems both brutal and social. In his argument against Aristotle's famous "man is a political animal" claim, Hobbes claims that all meetings between men are for "honor or advantage," and that

If they meet for entertainment and fun, everyone usually takes most pleasure in the kind of amusing incident from which (such is the nature of the ridiculous) he may come away with a better idea of himself in comparison with someone else's embarrassment or weakness... it is still evident that what they primarily enjoy is their own glory, and not society.<sup>23</sup>

The point here is fairly straightforward. Human beings, by Hobbes' account, derive happiness from those things which allow them to perceive their own superiority to those around them. However, it also raises several questions. Most prominently among these, in the light of Chapter XIII, is "How does this version of happiness fit into civil society?" However, that question can be refined even further when one considers a wrench Hobbes throws into the works. Later in the same passage, Hobbes states that "All society, therefore, exists for the sake either of advantage or glory... However, no large or lasting society can be

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<sup>23</sup> *De Cive* I.2

based on the passion for glory.”<sup>24</sup> Now the question becomes “How can the sovereign bring happiness, which is derived from glory, into the society of advantage without dissolving it?” To answer this, we must turn to Chapter XIII of *De Cive*.<sup>25</sup>

Chapter XIII throws several curveballs at the reader. First, we learn that the sovereign has duties, which seems to conflict with the idea of absolute sovereignty.<sup>26</sup> Then we find that these duties are essentially contained in the provision that the citizens live “as pleasantly as the human condition allows,” which has not been an apparent factor in other chapters of the text.<sup>27</sup> Most of this chapter is dedicated to the establishment and maintenance of that happiness, and we find out that in the service of happiness, the sovereign is somehow obligated to provide both wealth and liberty to the greatest extent possible without compromising public safety.<sup>28</sup> The chapter has a direct equivalent in the *Elements of Law*, but there the citizens’ happiness is replaced with their benefit.<sup>29</sup> *Leviathan*, on the other hand, roughly translates the content of Chapter XIII of *De Cive* into two chapters: one on the liberty of subjects (XXI) and one on the office of the sovereign (XXX). Neither of these make any mention of civil happiness. Given that this account of happiness is in

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<sup>24</sup> Ibid.

<sup>25</sup> In the discussion that follows, my work faces a major limitation: language. *De Cive* is a work translated from Latin, and Hobbes is very specific in his diction. Of particular relevance to my project is the fact that, at least in *Leviathan*, when Hobbes writes of pleasure, joy, and happiness, he is speaking about three distinct things. The extent to which this schema was already developed in full in *De Cive* is unclear to me, and is made more so by the fact that *De Homine*, the book of the *Elements of Philosophy* which treats the subject of natural psychology as it appears in the first section of *Leviathan*, has no complete English translation. Based on Gert’s partial translation, I would tentatively say that the distinctions between these terms are already present. What remains unclear, however, is the connection of terms such as “enjoy” and “live pleasantly” to their counterparts within that schema. As such, I will be proceeding here by treating these and other similar phrases as though they relate back to the same general concept, that of the happy life.

<sup>26</sup> *De Cive*, Cap. XIII.1

<sup>27</sup> Ibid. XIII.4

<sup>28</sup> Ibid. XIII.6

<sup>29</sup> *Elements*, II.ix.1

some way a set of guiding principles for the operation of sovereignty, we must attempt to understand Hobbes' meaning when he speaks about the happy life of the citizen.

In Chapter XIII, Hobbes writes that

“The good things the citizens may enjoy can be put into four categories: 1) defence from external enemies; 2) preservation of internal peace; 3) acquisition of wealth, so far as this is consistent with public security; 4) full enjoyment of innocent liberty. Sovereigns can do no more for the citizens' happiness than to enable them to enjoy the possessions their industry has won them, safe from foreign and civil war.”<sup>30</sup>

In its immediate context, this line reads like an exhortation. Hobbes has just told the reader that the sovereign's duty amounts to the maximizing of the happiness of the citizens, and so the sovereign should do all it can to ensure such happy lives. If the sovereign can do no more than offer peace, tranquility, wealth, and liberty, then these are the things it ought to offer. However, after the admonishment about the glory-based society, this may sound more like a warning about the limits of this happiness. The categories, as outlined below, are strict guidelines. Peace and defense are inviolable because they provide an atmosphere in which innocent liberty can thrive; wealth allows competition, glory, and happiness to reënter life in civil society; and innocent liberty itself is required for the transformation of imagined glory into real glory, without which there cannot be happiness in civil society, even if the prerequisite framework exists.

Going beyond these four categories, or being too liberal with the latter two, could end with the total dissolution of society after honor and glory become too large a part of it. If happiness in the commonwealth is in such a precarious position, it would likely help to put it into perspective. Unfortunately, Hobbes offers nothing at all in the way of explaining this paragraph. The four categories he chose are not connected, directly or indirectly, to any

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<sup>30</sup> *De Cive*, XIII.6



account of happiness, and they certainly were not self-evident to Hobbes.<sup>31</sup> In an effort to contextualize civil happiness, I will examine the four categories and sort out what it is they contribute to the happiness of the citizen as Hobbes understands it.

The first two are simple enough to understand. Defence from enemies and the preservation of internal peace are standard components of Hobbes' definition of civil society. Without these, we would see a return to the state of nature. The state of nature, inasmuch as it is a state of liberty, is actually a catalyst for happiness understood as glory or the perception of one's own superiority over others. The man who "suppose[es] himself superior to others... and demands more honour for himself than others have,"<sup>32</sup> is the very aggressor and cause of the state of war that humans spend so much effort attempting to escape from. In order to preserve the commonwealth and prevent a return to that state, it is imperative that these two categories not be violated. The joy of the citizen in his commonwealth's peace and security comes from his knowledge of the certainty of violent death without his commonwealth. The inviolability of peace and security, by virtue of its equal application to all citizens, leaves little room for honor or glory, and therefore for civic happiness. However, they also provide the civic context in which wealth and liberty can come together to enable happiness.

A discussion of Chapter XIII's third requirement, wealth, requires a preface on rights. Hobbes' system is among the earliest accounts of a political schema based upon natural rights and laws. Hobbes' entire apparatus is derived from a single natural right: "that

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<sup>31</sup> That the categories were not self-evident is apparent when one considers the fact that in the corresponding chapter of *Elements of Law*, Hobbes identifies four points in which "the temporal good of the people" consists as multitude; commodity of living; peace within; and defence against foreign power (*Elements*, II.ix.3). That commodity is composed of liberty and wealth combined does not change the fact that the construction here is unfinished and required additional thought to refine into what is shown above.

<sup>32</sup> *De Cive*, I.4

*each man protect his life and limbs as much as he can.*<sup>33</sup> The first two derivations from this are the other three rights: those to the means for self-preservation and to the judgment of those means,<sup>34</sup> and that of all men to all things.<sup>35</sup> This last right is the most problematic for peace, and one of several causes for the state of perpetual war of all against all. In an attempt to ameliorate the issues that arise from it, Hobbes claims that in the search for peace, men must relinquish the natural right to all things.<sup>36</sup> As such, when the commonwealth is created, the citizen grants to the sovereign “*the Right to his strength and resources.*”<sup>37</sup> The sovereign’s universal right to all things within the commonwealth means that, when we discuss the acquisition of wealth by the citizens, we are discussing the fruits of their industry, but only such as the sovereign allows them, since the fruits of their labor are all, by definition, the property of the sovereign.

The introduction of personal wealth amounts to the reintroduction of glory and happiness into society without the requirement of violence, thereby making them compatible with the commonwealth. If the sovereign allows members to retain the fruits of their labor, then the expansion of labor means the expansion of possessions, which in turn begs comparison. My ability to look at my barrels of apples and know that they are fuller than my neighbor’s is identical to my ability to display for myself my superiority to my neighbor. That sense of superiority is directly tied to how much I enjoy my life, if my enjoyment of life is identical to my perception of my own superiority. It is important to note here that Hobbes’ account of happiness totally precludes redistribution. As Hobbes says of the society based on glory, “glorying, like honour, is nothing if everybody has it, since it consists in

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<sup>33</sup> Ibid. I.7

<sup>34</sup> Ibid. I.8-9

<sup>35</sup> Ibid. I.10

<sup>36</sup> Ibid. II.3

<sup>37</sup> Ibid. V.8

comparison and preëminence.”<sup>38</sup> The acquisition of wealth, therefore, is a means of stratification into classes, which creates a contented superiority for those who want it most, bringing happiness into the commonwealth at last. However, the stratification caused by wealth also creates a venue for the most ambitious men among the citizenry, who seek real power rather than superiority, to climb the social ladder and potentially spread seditious doctrine to those below them. The sovereign’s response to ambition and seditious doctrine will be discussed in the next section, on sovereign duty, but it is imperative to understand that the danger posed to the commonwealth by the reintroduction of happiness finds soil for its seeds here, in wealth, rather than in the more extensively discussed innocent liberty.

Now we come to the fourth and final requirement, innocent liberty. Liberty is a necessary component in the translation of wealth into personal glory. For Hobbes, liberty consists in “that part of natural right which is allowed and left to the citizens by the civil laws.”<sup>39</sup> It manifests as the ability to act at one’s discretion in those areas where the law is silent. This ability is key in the wealth acquisition process. Because all wealth is effectively “on loan” from the sovereign (who has a right to all resources of the commonwealth), liberty is the only way to carve out any personal glory in one’s endeavors. In the absence of liberty, my actions are wholly dictated by the sovereign, who also retains the right to the fruit of those actions. In this scenario, I have no hand in my own production. Whatever wealth I might have enjoyed is due not, as I would have it, to my superiority of strength or wit, but to the grace of the sovereign. I cannot revel in my superiority to my neighbor because there is no evidence of superiority. At most, I can imagine vaingloriously the possibility of my besting him in some other way. In the sovereign, who is responsible for all action in an

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<sup>38</sup> Ibid. I.2

<sup>39</sup> Ibid. XIII.15

unfree commonwealth, lies all of such a commonwealth's glory. Therefore, I can never be happy in the absence of liberty, even if I am a well-off slave.

But liberty is also dangerous. While Hobbes never calls it such explicitly in *De Cive*, the state of war is a state of perfect liberty. The fact follows from his definition of liberty as the absence of legal impediment, but more importantly from the fact that Hobbes titles the pre-political section of *De Cive* "Liberty." Like happiness, liberty seems to be a force dangerous to the commonwealth. Too much of it weakens the sovereign and returns man to his natural state. To address concerns about liberty gone too far, Hobbes identifies two lines not to be crossed, one criminal and the other civil. The first is the clear presentation of the commonwealth's laws, and especially their penalties. "A major part of the liberty," writes Hobbes, "which is harmless to the commonwealth and essential to happy lives for the citizens, is that they have nothing to fear but penalties they can anticipate or expect."<sup>40</sup> The other essential liberty is the preservation of agreed upon property rights. These are necessary in the civil sphere so that one may acquire wealth, confident that disputes over mine and thine will be settled justly. Without acquisition, there can be no glory and no happiness. Importantly, this preservation is only necessary in the case civil disputes. Because of the aforementioned sovereign right to all things, eminent domain is not a problem for Hobbes. These two innocent liberties, just punishment and property protection, are the most crucial to the happiness of citizens, and therefore the ones a sovereign should never curtail, even in potential crisis.

Having treated happiness as it immediately appears in *De Cive*, and having examined the context and requirements for civil happiness in Hobbes' only account of such in the

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<sup>40</sup> Ibid. XIII.16

commonwealth, one remaining question is “why?” Why would Hobbes, who seems to care only about bare preservation as the be-all-end-all of civil society, concern himself with something as open-ended and divisive as happiness? Happiness may lie in my ability to judge myself the better of my neighbor, and peace, tranquility, wealth, and liberty may be the four categories of things which contribute to my happiness within civil society, but to what end? Why is it the duty of the sovereign to establish the conditions necessary for civic happiness? What about sovereignty or the commonwealth necessitates happiness? In order to answer this, I have to expand my scope and discuss duty in *De Cive* in order to see how that duty brings the reader to civic happiness. This is the subject of my next section.

### Sovereign Duty

The duty of the sovereign is a concept closely related to happiness in *De Cive*. Chapter XIII introduces both as concepts, and both are rather unexplained in the chapter. Hobbes’ duty, while not binding, is a set of guidelines for how the sovereign ought to act if it is to follow right reason, and that alone is worth study. However, even as Hobbes places the happiness of the citizens at the forefront of duty, he makes another bizarre and shocking move that calls even more attention to it. In this section, I will first examine duty in *De Cive* to show how it is derived from right reason. Having done this, I will show that the happiness of the citizens is necessary for the sovereign to carry out its duty.

The key to reconciling the idea of duty with the absolute sovereign is to realize that Hobbes’ sovereign does not necessarily understand the commonwealth in the same way that the citizens do. In fact, it explicitly cannot. Hobbes writes in Chapter XIII that “All the duties of sovereigns are implicit in this one phrase: *the safety of the people is the supreme law.*”<sup>41</sup>

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<sup>41</sup> Ibid. XIII.2

This statement is comfortable and sounds very classically Hobbesian. However, he follows up with the statement that

By *safety* one should understand not mere survival in any condition, but a happy life so far as that is possible. For men willingly entered commonwealths *which they had formed by design* in order to be able to live as pleasantly as the human condition allows.<sup>42</sup>

This claim is much more shocking to the reader, and this last sentence seems utterly contrary to everything Hobbes writes about the transition from natural state into civil society. I will focus for now on this contradiction in order to display the disconnect between the sovereign and the founders of the commonwealth regarding the commonwealth's purpose.

Hobbes provides a very straightforward account of the creation of the commonwealth in Chapter V of *De Cive*. The account proceeds as follows: men wish to practice the natural law (the first of which, and the one from which all others are derived, is that they preserve themselves), but the existence of the war of all against all prevents this, as "*laws are silent among arms.*" Therefore, in order to preserve themselves, they band together into crowds to deter attack with sheer strength. In order to do so, they must agree upon the right way of banding together. In order to enforce the agreement which creates the *socii* and in order to prevent faction and sedition within the *socii*, the commonwealth is created and granted such absolute power that to move against its will would be ludicrous.<sup>43</sup> Nowhere in this account are happiness, enjoyment, or the pleasantness of life tied to the outcome. The first and only goal of the creation of the commonwealth is the cessation of the state of war. What's more, at the end of the chapter Hobbes describes the enterprise he has just laid out as "how and by what stages, in the passion for self-preservation, *a number of persons* from fear of each other have coalesced into *one civil person* to which we have given the name of

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<sup>42</sup> Ibid. XIII.4

<sup>43</sup> Ibid. V.2-9

*commonwealth*.”<sup>44</sup> The only passions involved in this creation are self-preservation and fear. It is virtually impossible for anyone to read this chapter and naturally come to the conclusion that the commonwealth was “*formed by design* in order to be able to live as pleasantly as the human condition allows.” The clear distinction between citizens forming a commonwealth out of mutual fear and the sovereign’s understanding that the end of the commonwealth is to allow the citizens to live pleasantly means that the sovereign’s understanding of its own position and ends as a civil person must represent a break with the understanding of Chapter V’s founders of the commonwealth if we are to take the duty of the sovereign seriously.

The sovereign’s independent understanding established, the idea of sovereign as civil person is noteworthy. Particularly in the context of duty, which is apparently also “to obey right reason in all things so far as they can,” the sovereign’s self-understanding is crucial to the carrying out of that duty. If we think of the sovereign as a single civil person capable of reasoning *as a civil person*, then its motivations become clearer. The first dictate of right reason, which is not limited to individuals in nature, is the first foundation of natural right, “*that each man protect his life and limbs as much as he can.*” The sovereign is not only guided by right reason, but is guided by it *in the exact same way* as an individual. The difference is scale. The sovereign does not rightly fear the individual any more than the individual fears an organ or a limb of her own body, but the sovereign is at all times on the lookout for its own preservation.

Further support for the claim that the sovereign is self-preserving comes from corresponding chapter in *Elements of Law*, wherein Hobbes declares that “Having hitherto set forth how a body politic is made, and how it may be destroyed, this place requireth to say

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<sup>44</sup> Ibid. V.12

something concerning the preservation of the same.”<sup>45</sup> I will remind the reader that the *Elements of Law* is an early draft of both *De Homine* and *De Cive*, and as such certain ideas are at play in the *Elements* that make their way into the latter works. It may seem trivial to argue that the sovereign is motivated by the preservation of the commonwealth, but it opens up an entirely new understanding of Chapter XIII. If duty is a matter of self-preservation, the particular duties of Chapter XIII take on a new character.

However, before analyzing these, it is important to point out that there are two duties, though not called duties, that appear before Chapter XIII. Both of these appear in Chapter VI, which covers the *rights*, not duties, of the sovereign. The rights to regulate and to censor doctrine, combined with Hobbes’ concern for the existence of seditious opinion, amount to a duty to ensure that *only* proper doctrine finds footing in the commonwealth. The first is “the responsibility of the same sovereign power to come up with rules or measures that will be common to all, and to publish them openly...”<sup>46</sup> This requirement anticipates Hobbes’ discussion of innocent liberty in XIII, but goes deeper than that, requiring legislation about “*just and unjust, honorable and dishonorable, good and bad.*” In other words, Hobbes is requiring the sovereign to institute civil doctrine. This requirement leads us to the second duty in Chapter VI, the “right both to decide which opinions and doctrines are inimical to peace and to forbid their being taught.” The language here is that of a right rather than the language regarding laws, but just above Hobbes claimed that “it is utterly essential to the common peace that certain opinions or doctrines not be put before the citizens.”<sup>47</sup> The stress placed on the necessity of the prevention of bad doctrines from

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<sup>45</sup> *Elements*, II.ix.1

<sup>46</sup> *De Cive*. VI.9

<sup>47</sup> *Ibid.* VI.11



entering the commonwealth turns this from a right into a duty, but the language of right remains because Hobbes is still writing from the perspective of the citizens acquiescence to the power of the sovereign, not that of the sovereign's exercise of power over the citizens.

These doctrinal duties are pivotal in determining the correct action for the sovereign. If we understand the sovereign to be acting in the interest of self-preservation, these are his most important duties. The entirety of Chapter XII, which covers the causes of dissolution of the commonwealth, is dedicated to problematic doctrine. If the coverage is taken to be comprehensive, then the regulation of doctrine is the only thing the sovereign can do so poorly as to endanger himself and the commonwealth. The sovereign's power is absolute, and even poor wielding of that power is not enough to dissolve the commonwealth unless there are doctrines in the commonwealth which might lead the citizens to believe that power is not being exercised by right.

The doctrinal duties also help to explain another puzzling section of Chapter XIII, which turns out to be important for understanding Hobbes' motivations in the way that he delineates duties. Just between the command that the sovereign ought to aim at the citizens' happiness and the enumeration of the four categories, Hobbes writes a strange paragraph about religion. "And in the first place," He writes,

All princes believe that the kind of opinions people hold about God and the kind of worship they offer him are of the highest significance for their *eternal salvation*. On this assumption, one may question whether sovereigns ... are not offending against the law of nature, if they do not ensure instruction in the doctrine and practice of the worship which they themselves believe is indispensable to the citizens' *eternal salvation*, or if they permit a contrary teaching or practice.<sup>48</sup>

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<sup>48</sup> Ibid. XIII.5

At first glance, the declaration that the sovereign ought not to allow false religion would seem to be the introduction to a new duty to the establishment of a state religion, but Hobbes instead abandons it almost immediately. In my view, this is a warning from Hobbes. Religion that contradicts the state is the ultimate form of dangerous and seditious doctrine, and belief *cannot be eradicated*. The only right the sovereign has in the realm of the doctrinal regards teaching, because belief cannot be adequately judged and persecuted and, as Hobbes writes, “a right to an end is meaningless, if the *right* to the means necessary to that end is denied.”<sup>49</sup> This means that religion, and by extension seditious doctrine, will always be a threat to the commonwealth. It is in this context that we can make sense of happiness as a duty of the sovereign.

Those duties of the sovereign which promote civic happiness, particularly the duty to promote wealth, introduce disparity and class hierarchy into the commonwealth. The danger posed by disparity, however, has not yet been adequately explained. Now that the importance of doctrine is clear, the time has come to elaborate upon that danger. This stratification necessarily engenders competition between men for the honors society and sovereign can bestow, as according to Hobbes “Ambition and longing for honours cannot be removed from men’s minds.” The most useful part of this permanent aspect of human nature is that, unlike religious sentiment, ambition can be aroused and directed “by a consistent employment of rewards and punishments.”<sup>50</sup> Where the inability to control thought is problematic for the sovereign because beliefs are the bedrock of rebellion, ambition assuages the trouble by granting an avenue for the control of actions. By manipulating praise and blame, the sovereign is able to ensure that ambitious men see more

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<sup>49</sup> Ibid. I.8

<sup>50</sup> Ibid. XIII.12

honor in service of the commonwealth than in inciting rebellion against it. The self-perpetuating mechanism of happiness, then, moves as follows: the sovereign seeks to preserve itself, so it engenders competition among the citizenry, which arouses their ambitions, which are fulfilled by the pursuit of possessions and power; this innocuous ambition is praised by the sovereign, bringing honor and glory to the proud and entwining their pride with the commonwealth; finally, the joy of honor precludes any discontent from the ambitious, and the lack of ambition quells the threat their factiousness poses to the commonwealth, which incentivizes the sovereign to keep competition in place out of its continued desire to self-preserve.

Happiness is a tool by which the sovereign can create good men who respect its own power out of men who might, in other circumstances, attempt to violate that sovereignty. The sovereign duty to engender happiness in the citizens is a direct result of the sovereign's need for self-preservation combined with the inability to extinguish problematic religious doctrines.<sup>51</sup> In the absence of an adequate method for the control of citizens' minds, the sovereign must institute a series of policies that allow him to render dangerous individuals happy servants of the state. The tool the sovereign must use to overcome sedition is competition. If the citizens are continually striving against one another for the greatest honor the state may offer, they will never think to dismantle the apparatus that offers the honor.<sup>52</sup> Without the state providing security and tranquility, civic happiness cannot exist, and so the sovereign becomes sacrosanct even to those who have forgotten the horrors of nature. Happiness and duty come together to create a new kind of necessity, insisting upon

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<sup>51</sup> On the use of duty, and therefore happiness, for sovereign self-preservation, see pp. 20-22 above.

<sup>52</sup> This statement represents the intersection of wealth and ambition as I read them in *De Cive's* Chapter 13 (pp. 16-17 & pp. 24-25 above).

the continuation of the commonwealth when the reason for its establishment has long since been lost.<sup>53</sup>

### A Potential Objection

A less radical reading of Hobbes might argue that Hobbes would always view ambition and competition with intense skepticism and that Hobbes' introduction of happiness in Chapter XIII is really an introduction of contentedness, and that the essential thrust of the argument is that if you make citizens wealthy and give them a reasonable amount of liberty, they will stop seeking glory because they are so well endowed with advantage. The argument here, then, would be that Hobbes introduces the concept of happiness understood more as a civil contentedness than as individual joy as a way to assuage ambition and eliminate faction. While I admit that this argument is more in line with Hobbes' thought as it is broadly understood, this is only because Hobbes' thought as it is broadly understood is based largely on the Hobbes of *Leviathan*. *De Cive* itself offers little support for claims that Hobbes is wholly against competition, but it is still possible to extrapolate a distaste for civil competition from his damnation of the society based on glory. However, the argument is undermined by two claims Hobbes makes, both in Chapter XIII. The first, already mentioned, is that "ambition and longing for honors cannot be removed from men's minds."<sup>54</sup> Happiness cannot truly act to eliminate ambition, as the challenge

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<sup>53</sup> A potential response to this argument is that it makes Hobbes into a sort of Connecticut Yankee, trying and likely failing to turn knights into stockbrokers. The more appropriate allusion, in this view, is to Gordon Gekko: this new competition may reduce the desire to kill each other, but the aroused ambition for money is still problematic for the sovereign. An immediate, though perhaps only auxiliary defense is that ambition for wealth does not hold nearly the same problems for Hobbes that ambition for domination does because of Hobbes' concept of rights. Where the citizen cannot relinquish the right to self-defense, and therefore control of such disputes requires the use of violence, the right to property is not inalienable, and is entirely in the hands of the sovereign. Money can be regulated and wealthy men can be rebuffed without the necessity of execution, which makes it a form of civic competition more palatable to a sovereign who both wishes not to be challenged and wishes not to use the sword of punishment in excess.

<sup>54</sup> Ibid. XIII.12

would have it, because ambition is a constant. Either happiness is a way to treat the symptoms rather than the disease, or it must operate in some other way to make the pathogen into an antigen, actively seeking to preserve the city. The latter case seems more probable, as otherwise there would be no reason for Hobbes to claim that the sovereign has a duty not only to provide for, but also to maximize happiness. No doctor would prescribe that a diabetic take as much insulin as possible as long as they don't overdose.

Moreover, just after this Hobbes writes of the especially ambitious that “the sovereign has a duty to control factious individuals,” and that

Much more it is their duty to break up and disperse the factions themselves. By FACTION I mean a crowd of citizens, united either by *agreements* with each other or by the power of one man, without authority from the holder or holders of sovereign power.<sup>55</sup>

In these brief passages, Hobbes has given the reader several parameters of operation in dealing with faction. Faction is a result of ambition and agreement. A comparison to *The Federalist's* treatment of the same subject, faction, is apt. Ambition exists in all men and cannot be extricated from them, so, as in *The Federalist* No. 10, the elimination of the oxygen that gives life to faction is not an option. However, the spark that incites the flame of collusion against the sovereign can be manipulated and stopped. Factious individuals are rarities and must be controlled. Factions themselves, such as they exist, must also be dispersed. In all this, Hobbes never recommends violence against either the members of a faction, the one man whose power holds a faction together, or the factious individual. The dispersal of faction must involve the dissolution of agreement or the negation of power. The ambitious man and his followers must be separated, and both must be made to respect sovereign authority in order to remove the threat that both pose. Neither separation nor

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<sup>55</sup> Ibid. XIII.13

reconciliation are achievable by happiness understood as contentment, but happiness as a sort of civic glory, by engendering competition, makes factious agreements nearly impossible while forcing the potentially powerful to squabble amongst themselves, reminiscent of *Federalist's* solution to the problem of faction. The proliferation of small, competing factions which are not hostile to the sovereign reduces the capacity of the ambitious and of the followers to create what Hobbes calls a “commonwealth within the commonwealth.”<sup>56</sup> Civic happiness, then, seems to be tied to glory rather than to advantage so that the sovereign can adequately self-preserve and the ambitious can earn their glory within the confines of the commonwealth.

### **Duty outside of *De Cive***

Some skeptics may remain unconvinced that Hobbes introduces happiness as competition into the framework of *De Cive*. Fortunately, even these readers, in holding to their interpretation of happiness, benefit from my project. My larger purpose in examining happiness and duty in *De Cive*, aside from honing my particular interpretation, is to show that *De Cive* is crucial to the study of Hobbes on its own merit, rather than simply as a prelude to *Leviathan*. The idea that civic happiness is introduced to content the body politic, and that Hobbes merely means to instruct the sovereign in the pacification of the citizens, remains an interpretation unique to *De Cive*. As stated previously, the combination of happiness and sovereign duty is absent from *Leviathan's* account of civil society, and its place in *Leviathan* cannot reasonably be extrapolated without the aid of *De Cive* (in the event that one holds *Leviathan* to grant the same place to these concepts). In the period between *De Cive's* completion in 1641 and *Leviathan's* publication in 1651, the English Civil War has

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<sup>56</sup> Ibid.

reshaped Hobbes' concerns and his attitude towards the commonwealth's preservation. The *Elements of Law's* account of sovereign duty is directed at ambition in a more primitive way than *De Cive's* more refined argument, but the intervening period has seen a shift in focus, and duty in *Leviathan* is singularly directed at the threat of popular sources of discontent. Where the *Elements of Law* offers an incomplete foundation that *De Cive* solidifies and builds upon, *Leviathan* expands the scope of the project and builds something new which overlaps with the old while reorienting it. The reorientation includes an abandonment of the account of happiness in civil society because that happiness was explicitly tied to the ambition of factious men, which is no longer the problem Hobbes wants to tackle. There can therefore be no reading of civic happiness in Hobbes that does not draw on *De Cive*. Furthermore, the idea of civic happiness is central to and inextricable from *De Cive's* broader development of the commonwealth, and as such requires of the reader an interpretation that is as independent as possible from the influence of the rest of Hobbes' work.

Having shown in the preceding discussion the process by which a thoroughgoing interpretation of the argument of *De Cive* approaches the problem posed by Hobbes' account of sovereign duty and happiness, it now falls to the remainder of this paper to illustrate the difficulty of finding this answer elsewhere in Hobbes' political thought and to explain why it appears in *De Cive* rather than in the other presentations. In order to do this, I will take on separately the arguments of *The Elements of Law, Natural and Politic* and *Leviathan*. Both works run parallel to *De Cive* in parts of the argument I have made above, but each presents the argument in a different way, and these differences sever some of the ties between sovereign duty, happiness, and ambition that emerge in *De Cive*. The *Elements* provides an account of the commonwealth's causes, generation, and constitution which is nearly identical to that of *De Cive*, but in the demise of the commonwealth and in the chapter

on sovereign duty, important differences arise which conclude in the *Elements*' account offering no explicit connection between duty and happiness or between duty and ambition. On the other hand, *Leviathan*, in its expanded foundation for a new conception of the commonwealth, provides a basis for the connection between duty and happiness and a clearer statement of sovereign duty itself. However, *Leviathan*'s account abandons this thread soon after the establishment of the commonwealth, and man's inherent desire for glory is never taken up as a serious consideration to be handled by the sovereign in civil society.

### Duty in the *Elements of Law*

It is often commented that Hobbes' political writings seem to grow out of one another. Nevertheless, the similarity between the entirety of *The Elements of Law*, barring the earlier psychology chapters, and *De Cive* is extreme. It will suffice, for the purposes of the present discussion, to pull a few passages from parallel chapters to emphasize this similarity. In the chapters on man without civil society:

And that which is not against reason, men call RIGHT, or *jus*, or blameless liberty of using our own natural power and ability. It is therefore a *right of nature*: that every man may preserve his own life and limbs, with all the power he hath.<sup>57</sup>

And what is not contrary to right reason, all agree is done justly and *of Right*. For precisely what is meant by the term *Right* is the liberty each man has of using his natural faculties in accordance with right reason. Therefore the first foundation of natural *Right* is that *each man protect his life and limb as much as he can*.<sup>58</sup>

All of the argumentative beats are the same: everyone agrees that thing not in violation of reason are rightful, right is liberty to use faculties, there is a natural right to self-preservation.

The same parallelism appears in the chapters on the formation of the commonwealth:

The cause in general which moveth a man to become subject to another, is (as I have said already) the fear of not otherwise preserving himself. And a

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<sup>57</sup> *Elements*, I.xiv.6

<sup>58</sup> *De Cive*, I.7



man may subject himself to him that invadeth, or may invade him, for fear of him; or men may join amongst themselves to subject themselves to such as they shall agree upon for fear of others.<sup>59</sup>

What has been said is an adequate demonstration of how and by what stages, in the passion for self-preservation, *a number of natural persons* from fear of each other have coalesced into *one civil person* to which we have given the name *commonwealth*. But those who subject themselves to another through fear either submit to the person they fear or submit to some other whom they trust for protection.<sup>60</sup>

The language here is not as close as the previous selections, but again the outline of the argument is nearly identical. With the possible exception of the option to “invade him, for fear of him,” Hobbes identifies the same exact solutions to the same exact problem, all of which result in civil society. These similarities in the text are largely explained by Tuck’s argument that “[The *Elements of Law* of 1640] was (as we have already seen), essentially an English version of *De Homine* and *De Cive* as they existed at that date.”<sup>61</sup> If we understand these sections of the *Elements* to be drafts of their counterparts in *De Cive*, then the tendency of important passages like these to line up makes sense: Hobbes generally knew from the start what he wanted to say in these chapters, and therefore they come out looking fairly similar to their initial incarnations in the final version of *De Cive*.

However, this explanation only serves to emphasize the differences that appear later in the work. The most notable differences for the purposes of this examination are in the chapter of the *Elements* on rebellion and in the following chapter on sovereign duty. The *Elements*’ chapter on rebellion is roughly divided into three parts. Hobbes first discusses the causes of discontent, fear and ambition, then identifies six false doctrines which might lead to sedition in the commonwealth and four sources of hope for success in rebellion, and finally describes the imprudence and eloquence of the authors of rebellion. In this chapter,

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<sup>59</sup> *Elements*, I.xix.11

<sup>60</sup> *De Cive*, V.12

<sup>61</sup> Tuck, “Hobbes’ Moral Philosophy, pg. 183

Hobbes proceeds along a course from the atmosphere in which rebellion might come about, to the particular paths that rebellion might follow in justifying itself, and rests upon the men who are capable of combining the atmosphere and the path.

Where this differs from *De Cive* is mostly in the first part of the argument, and partly in the last. In *De Cive*, Hobbes largely abandons the roots of discontent in the first part of the discussion, shaving it down and moving it to the middle while attributing atmosphere required for sedition instead to the false doctrines themselves.<sup>62</sup> More than simply changing the order, though, Hobbes changes a significant part of the substance of the argument. The front end of the chapter in *De Cive* describes the process by which sedition occurs as faction, a word which appears only once, offhand, in the corresponding chapter of the *Elements* and expands the sphere of danger for the reader beyond the outright treasonous and into the merely self-interested. *De Cive's* greater emphasis on faction might lead the reader to expect that the leaders of these factions would play a larger role in the *De Cive* chapter, but the inverse is actually true. Ambition is no longer prominently featured as one of two causes for discontent in *De Cive*. Hobbes provides an account of ambition causing rebellion, but it is sandwiched between a discussion of how much citizens hate taxes and the observation that sedition requires hope for success, and it is only threatening in those with excess leisure.<sup>63</sup> The reference to Sallust's description of Cataline from the *Elements* remains in *De Cive*, but its context is both warped and shrunk.<sup>64</sup> The *Elements* moves from Cataline to a discussion of experience and science as the two kinds of knowledge, then moves on into a long section dedicated to eloquence and the chapter concludes with a reiteration that both idiocy and

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<sup>62</sup> *De Cive*, XII.1

<sup>63</sup> *Ibid.* XII.10

<sup>64</sup> *Ibid.* XII.12; Cf. *Elements* II.viii.12-15

eloquence are necessary to rebellion. *De Cive*, on the other hand, discards wisdom altogether and splits eloquence into two, one aimed at truth and the other at agitation, before finishing the chapter with an exhortation that faction is created by the stupidity of those who are loyal. Hobbes even uses the same myth of Pelias in both works, in the *Elements* to describe how subject might be misled into rebelling and in *De Cive* to describe how citizens break the commonwealth into factions.

The emphasis on faction as opposed to authors of rebellion plays into the differences between duty in the *Elements* and duty in *De Cive*. In the *Elements*, the sovereign's duty to preserve the commonwealth is explicit,<sup>65</sup> but the definition of *salus populi* as the people's "benefit and good" does not call to mind the same questions as *De Cive's* call for civic happiness, and there is no claim that the ends of the commonwealth have always been what the chapter professes them to be. The shift in focus from rebellion to faction means that looking to the good of the people is no longer sufficient: the people, in their factiousness, will see to their own benefit. The sovereign's impetus in *De Cive* must be civic happiness for the precise reason that faction cannot be controlled by benefit or threat, but rather by the manipulation of factional leaders. The need for manipulation is further evidenced by the next change: the *Elements* lists temporal goods that differ slightly from those in *De Cive*. The initial goods, "1. Multitude. 2. Commodity of living. 3. Peace amongst ourselves. 4. Defence against foreign power,"<sup>66</sup> become "1) defence against external enemies; 2) preservation of internal peace; 3) acquisition of wealth, so far as this is consistent with public security; 4) full enjoyment of innocent liberty."<sup>67</sup> The order here has changed from a

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<sup>65</sup> *Elements*, II.ix.1

<sup>66</sup> *Ibid.* II.ix.3

<sup>67</sup> *De Cive*, XIII.6

bottom up presentation, emphasizing the things that might appease the crowd, to a top-down account that emphasizes the concern for ambitious. Realizing that by commodity Hobbes intends both wealth and liberty,<sup>68</sup> the only other problematic change between the two texts is the omission of multitude as a good in *De Cive*. There are two reasons for this removal. The first is that the goal of the sovereign is now happiness, rather than benefit, and it is harder to conceive of a way that the citizens may enjoy their multitude than a way in which they might benefit from it. More interesting, though, is that the move from rebellion to faction precludes the viability of multitude as a preservative measure. When rebellion is the primary danger, multitude is a preservative, since only the rebellious faction is dangerous and a larger population means a greater difference between a majority and a minority, in most cases. On the other hand, no matter how populous, some citizens are equally likely to become engaged in faction itself, and so if faction simply is the primary danger, multitude does not act as a preservative.<sup>69</sup> In the *Elements*, Hobbes has in mind the goal of diminishing the hope for successful rebellion, whereas in *De Cive* he sees a need to address faction more broadly, and to this end a reevaluation of sovereign duty is necessary.

These differences between duty in the *Elements* and in *De Cive* culminate in the addition in the latter of the duty to control ambitious men. Because the only relevant faction in *Elements* is the rebellious faction, Hobbes finds it sufficient to address the problem of ambition in the chapter on rebellion by simply granting particularly dangerous men

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<sup>68</sup> *Elements*, II.ix.4

<sup>69</sup> One might, at this juncture, bring up the James Madison's argument of the extended republic *viz.* that the expansion of the republic allows for the creation of many weaker factions rather than a few strong ones, thereby preserving the republic. To this I would submit the principal counterargument that Madison's extended republic was predicated upon the extension of the lands of the United States with the people's growth, while Hobbes is unquestionably writing with England in mind. England's available land for (non-colonial) expansion is basically nonexistent and as such the increase of population would not appreciably weaken factional power as such.

subordinate positions in the government.<sup>70</sup> This is not a feasible answer to ambition as it is understood in *De Cive*. As illustrated in the previous section, nearly all of sovereign duty in *De Cive* is directed at the incentivization and manipulation of factious individuals. As such, the *Elements* account, which is completed with the duty to root out false doctrine, is insufficient. No reading of the *Elements* is likely lead the reader to connect happiness to sovereign duty, as that is wholly absent from the account, and it is difficult to construct an interpretation from the *Elements* that aligns with *De Cive* on the question of glory.

### Duty in *Leviathan*

The case of *Leviathan* is considerably more complicated than that of the *Elements*. While there are several parallels in thought between *Leviathan* and *De Cive*, *Leviathan* is, pardon the wordplay, its own beast. There is a reason *Leviathan* is considered Hobbes' masterwork: much more than *De Cive* before it, *Leviathan* transcends the genre of political treatise and takes on a life as a political text. For years, scholars have noted that *Leviathan* carries significantly more rhetorical flourish than Hobbes' other political philosophy texts, and many have noted that this rhetoric was likely an attempt to direct public sentiment away from the opinions that Hobbes saw as directly responsible for the English Civil War. However, the argument from rhetoric does not fully capture the difference between the two texts. It is clear that in some places, the substance of Hobbes' argument has changed, even if only slightly. The question for my purposes, then, is twofold: first whether the rhetorical direction of *Leviathan* obscures the character of sovereign duty as it relates to the other two; and second whether the changes to the substance of *Leviathan* result in a fundamentally different conception of the relationship between sovereign duty, civic happiness, and glory.

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<sup>70</sup> *Elements*, II.viii.3

In short, the answers are no and yes, respectively. *Leviathan's* early chapters anticipate something like *De Cive's* sovereign duty even more than, *De Cive* does, it addresses the same basic concerns about the commonwealth's survival, and its elaboration of sovereign duty entails more specific actions than general directives. However, *De Cive's* sovereign duty never materializes once the commonwealth is established, primarily because *Leviathan* does not seek to address faction, ambition, or the glorious in any meaningful way. This difference is also not the result of rhetorical necessities in *Leviathan*, though the purpose for which that rhetoric is employed does in part explain the difference.

As discussed previously, the argument for sovereign duty directed at civic happiness comes out of left field in *De Cive*. This is not the case in *Leviathan*. The basis for the sovereign looking after the happiness of the citizens is enshrined in several key sections of *Leviathan*: the chapters on the natural condition of man, on the generation of the commonwealth, on the rights of sovereign authority, and on the liberty of subjects. These chapters all contain accounts of the sorts of things that Hobbes treats in *De Cive's* account of duty, and even go beyond the parallel chapters in the preceding work. For example, in the chapter on the state of nature, Hobbes writes that “the passions that incline men to peace are fear of death, desire of such things as are necessary to commodious living, and a hope by their industry to attain them.”<sup>71</sup> The sentiment that is so conspicuously absent from the same chapter in *De Cive* is explicitly stated here. Hobbes even goes one step further in the discussion of the generation of the commonwealth:

The final cause, end or design of men (who naturally love liberty and dominion over others) in the introduction of that restraint upon themselves in which we see them live in commonwealths is the foresight of their own preservation, and of a more contented life thereby.<sup>72</sup>

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<sup>71</sup> *Leviathan*, XIII.14

<sup>72</sup> *Leviathan*, XVII.1

The desire for self-preservation is here made subordinate to the desire for contented life in the formation of the commonwealth.<sup>73</sup> Though contentment could be treated as a secondary consideration, or even given equal standing to fear with the use of a conjunction alone, e.g. “the foresight of their own preservation and of a more contented life,” the inclusion of “thereby” indicates that the assurance of preservation is itself in service of the contented life. This language, in light of the sovereign duty in *De Cive*, leaves the reader expectant of greater emphasis on civic happiness to come.

Moreover, two of the sovereign’s rights lend credence to the idea that the sovereign faces the same concerns, and therefore has the same sort of duty, as it does in *De Cive*. The first of these is the right of regulating doctrine. Hobbes’ wording of the right here is nearly identical to that in *De Cive*, and the gist of the claim is that men’s actions proceed from their thoughts, and therefore that regulating the things that are taught to men is necessary for the preservation of peace.<sup>74</sup> However, the justification changes. Where in *De Cive* the problematic doctrine was primarily a religious concern, and the problem is that the threat of eternal damnation might cause a good citizen to resist the sovereign, in *Leviathan*, the dual problem is first the existence of dogmatism itself, and second the idea that any man willing to take up arms to defend any particular dogma has not truly left the state of war. This change is likely the result of the English Civil War, which entangled religious and political dogmas inextricably and forces consideration of both anywhere one might formerly have

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<sup>73</sup> An important question is whether Hobbes, who is famously particular in his diction, means the same thing by “contented life” here that he does by “happy life” and “living pleasantly” in *De Cive*. I take them to be at the very least related concepts, if not identical ones, but without access to Latin and the intricacies therein, I cannot take a very convincing swing at this issue.

<sup>74</sup> *Leviathan*, XVIII.9; *De Cive* VI.11

been considered.<sup>75</sup> In the wake of the war's devastation, it would be remiss not to consider the possibility that political and religious doctrine might both be inimical to peace. This change also does not have much effect on the implications of that right on the duty of the sovereign, as the doctrinal duty to manage or to quiet dissent remains largely the same regardless of its principal target.

The other right of sovereignty worth consideration in the context of *De Cive's* sovereign duty is the right, unique to *Leviathan* of designating honors and hierarchy. The right to "give titles of honour, and to appoint what order of place and dignity each man shall hold, and what signs of respect, in public or private meetings, they shall give to one another"<sup>76</sup> recalls exactly the problem of ambition in *De Cive* and the need for good rewards and punishments. In combination with the doctrinal right, this right provides for a method by which the lofty ambitions of men might be corralled into a manageable system that does not endanger the commonwealth.

Hobbes takes more seriously the idea of the liberty of subjects in *Leviathan*, granting it a chapter unto itself where in *De Cive* it is relegated to a section of the chapter on sovereign duty. He still argues that liberty exists only in the silence of the law, but the account is much deeper in *Leviathan*.<sup>77</sup> He claims that demands for more liberty are absurd, as they are directed either towards freedom from literal chains, which citizens already enjoy, or freedom from civil laws, by which men would necessarily be overthrowing the sovereign. He also speaks of true liberty, where subjects may disobey even explicit command, such as in cases

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<sup>75</sup> While it is true that England's Presbyterians and Puritans were almost entirely concentrated in the parliamentary camp, it is not easy to neatly divide the conflict among religious lines, as there were numerous Anglicans on both sides.

<sup>76</sup> *Leviathan*, XVIII.15

<sup>77</sup> *Leviathan*, XXI.



where the sovereign might command them to end their own lives. This new understanding of liberty looks as though it is laying the groundwork for a conception of duty which involves something like “the full enjoyment of innocent liberty.”<sup>78</sup> Between the institution of the commonwealth, the rights of the sovereign, and the liberty of the subjects, Hobbes seems to have laid down the framework of a *De Cive*-esque conception of sovereign duty. This duty, though, never appears. The framework will support a different solution to a different, though similar, problem.

The dangers to the commonwealth that the sovereign must address in *Leviathan* are also extremely similar to those Hobbes brings up in *De Cive*. In *De Cive*, as discussed in the section on the *Elements of Law*, the chapter on dangers to the commonwealth is almost wholly concerned with false doctrine and the malicious factions that result from it. *Leviathan*, once again, expands on *De Cive*. However, much of this expansion is inconsequential. The problems of poverty, monopoly, popularity, greatness of township, multitude of corporations, and liberty to dispute the sovereign are all, by Hobbes’ own words, lesser considerations (and most of these lesser considerations are related in some way to the problem of faction).<sup>79</sup>

The only remaining addition, then, is the danger posed by limits placed on sovereign power.<sup>80</sup> However, for Hobbes, absolutism is annexed to the concept of sovereignty itself. Therefore, the only commonwealths that limited power poses a danger to are commonwealths in which no true sovereign exists, and therefore are not commonwealths at all but crowds.

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<sup>78</sup> *De Cive*, XIII.6

<sup>79</sup> *Leviathan*, XXIX.18-21

<sup>80</sup> *Ibid.* XXIX.3

What remains, therefore, as a clear and deadly threat to sovereignty in *Leviathan* is, as it is in *De Cive*, doctrine. *Leviathan* does not so clearly connect this false doctrine to the rise of factions, but the doctrines themselves are fairly similar. *Leviathan* adds doctrines arising externally (the imitation of neighbors, Greeks, or Romans)<sup>81</sup>, but preserves all of *De Cive*'s seditious opinions as its core dilemmas. The lack of a unified and clear argument from faction in *Leviathan* makes it less clear where the false doctrine is taught (though Hobbes addresses this later—it is taught by well-meaning loyalists), but this does not change the fact that, when we come to *Leviathan*'s account of sovereign duty, the sovereign is addressing the same problems as it was in *De Cive*, and the new foundation *Leviathan* has laid is a more stable one.

The account of sovereign duty, like so much of *Leviathan*, is in several ways more robust than the same in *De Cive*. The duty of the sovereign is once again captured in the phrase “the safety of the people,” and once again, “by safety here is not meant a bare preservation, but also all other contentments of life.”<sup>82</sup> However, in this case Hobbes does not provide a list of temporal goods that might content the citizenry. In *Leviathan*, the contentment of the people is to be achieved “by a general providence, contained in public instruction, both of doctrine and example, and in the making and executing of good laws.”<sup>83</sup> These beginnings are perfectly consistent with *De Cive*. The duty of the sovereign in this case is primarily doctrinal, and consists of educating the people in seven basic tenets: love of the government, resistance to popular men, acquiescence without dispute to the sovereign,

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<sup>81</sup> Ibid. XXIX.13-15. I am not sure how to place section 16, the attack on a concept of mixed government. It is possible that this might constitute a third dire danger, in addition to limited power and false doctrine, but it is also possible that this might be a sort of doctrinal imitation. It is also possible that the multiplicity of sovereigns is in fact a limit on each sovereign and so it would fall under the first class of problem, though I do not know why Hobbes would put such distance between the two in that case.

<sup>82</sup> Ibid, XXX.1

<sup>83</sup> Ibid. XXX.2

reflection on and understanding of civic duty, honoring parents, avoiding harming others, and sincerity of belief in the above. Most of these tenets are themselves direct responses to the false doctrines of Chapter XXIX, and therefore the idea that sovereign duty is connected to the preservation of the commonwealth is also germane to the purposes of *Leviathan's* chapter. Interestingly, the particular instructions *Leviathan* contains, both on the subject of doctrine and regarding the specifics of good lawmaking, from tax code to the proper ends of punishment, add up to a kind of imposed moralism on the sovereign that is absent from *De Cive*. Where *De Cive's* duty directs the sovereign towards ends and largely grants it the latitude of sorting out the means to achieving them for itself, *Leviathan's* duty offers a strict set of guidelines for sovereigns to follow in achieving their more narrowly defined end.

However, one component is missing from *Leviathan's* account of sovereign duty that makes it different from *De Cive's*: ambition. *Leviathan* preserves the duty to punish and reward and even makes mention of ambitious subjects in its discussion of rewards, but it leaves out the extended meditation on the ubiquity and danger of ambition that *De Cive* includes.<sup>84</sup> It also abandons entirely *De Cive's* exhortation that the sovereign ought to manage factional individuals and disperse factions in order to preserve the commonwealth. The absence of both of these concepts, key to Hobbes' account in *De Cive*, leaves *Leviathan* with a sovereign whose duty is no longer to manage those individuals who might promote strife within the commonwealth for their own gain, but rather to drown out factional conflict by promulgating sedative doctrines and suppressing agitative ones. The resultant duty is much more concentrated on the vulgar than on the glory-seeking, and therefore the web of

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<sup>84</sup> Ibid. XXX.24

connections between sovereign duty, happiness, ambition, and faction that exists in *De Cive* breaks down.

The shift in focus between *De Cive* and *Leviathan* makes sense in the context of the latter's purpose. *Leviathan* is, through and through, a response to the English Civil War, and, regardless of the source of factional incitement, Hobbes saw the war as the result of popular misunderstanding. In one of the only direct references to the English Civil War in *Leviathan*, Hobbes writes that the war is a result of "an opinion received of the greatest part of *England*, that [sovereign] powers were divided between the King, and the Lords, and the House of Commons."<sup>85</sup> Clearly, some men promulgated this opinion such that it became a popular one, and likely some of these promulgators did so for ambitious reasons, but Hobbes leaves these out. It is not the ambitious men cynically preaching the false doctrine that Hobbes chooses to emphasize, but the fact that this doctrine finds a footing in "the greatest part of *England*." *Leviathan* displays clearly its particular concern with popular sources of civil strife as opposed to those arising from higher ambition.

Hobbes' masterwork is operating in a new context, different from the situation of those texts that came before it. Therefore, the task of the sovereign in *Leviathan* must be to overcome the sort of popular unrest that might lead to seditious doctrine and upheaval, and not to control influential figures who might mislead good-tempered royalists into staunch belief in bad doctrine. This appears by the text of *Leviathan* to be a serious shift in focus, rather than a mere obscuring of true duty by rhetorical flourish, though it is unclear whether the substance and the rhetoric of *Leviathan* are separable, and therefore whether Hobbes might still believe in the fully rounded version of duty put forth in *De Cive*, but chose to

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<sup>85</sup> Ibid. XVIII.16

emphasize especially the need to promulgate good doctrines in *Leviathan* that would assuage popular sentiment. Nonetheless, the result of the shift is an account of duty that is not commensurate with that put forth in *De Cive*, and importantly one that does not adequately account for the place of glory in civil society. Duty has changed from the necessity of diluting the atmosphere of discontent in the *Elements* into the necessity of managing ambition in *De Cive*, and finally into the necessity of properly indoctrinating the populace in *Leviathan*. In order to answer questions of happiness' role in Hobbes' civil society, then, one must return to *De Cive*, and to a full and thorough appreciation of its singular message.

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