

# Hobbes's Practical Politics

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— Draft: not for citation —

— Comments welcome —

**ABSTRACT:** Hobbes scholars have written much about whether individuals could escape the state of nature. Hobbes himself wrote far more about how to avoid returning to it. This paper examines Hobbes's prescriptions for avoiding disobedience and disorder, which is provoked by three types of corruption: corruption of the people, corruption of the sovereign's counsellors, and corruption of legal processes. New insights are gained by viewing Hobbes through modern conceptual lenses. By reworking and extending Steven Lukes's account of the three faces of power, I explore Hobbes's advice to monarchs on exercising power by targeting preferences, opportunities and incentives. Applying this framework shows how Hobbes seeks to avert the three types of corruption, and highlights Hobbes's rich and wide-ranging practical proposals for avoiding a return to a state of nature.

**ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS:** For comments and criticisms on earlier versions of some parts of this paper, I thank Keith Dowding, Alistair Edwards, Luc Foisneau, Alan Hamlin, Iain Hampsher-Monk, Noel Malcolm, John Meadowcroft, Geraint Parry, Mark Philp, Jonathan Quong, Quentin Skinner, Hillel Steiner, Harriet Thompson, and Mark Warren. I thank Richard McCabe and Llewellyn Morgan for help with translation, and Edwin Curley for help with the Latin *Leviathan*.

## 1. INTRODUCTION

Hobbes scholars have written much about whether individuals could escape the state of nature. Hobbes himself wrote far more about how to avoid returning to it. This paper examines Hobbes's prescriptions for avoiding corruption, disobedience and disorder. New insights are gained by viewing Hobbes through modern conceptual lenses.

This paper's main aim is to highlight Hobbes's practical side, since his abstract thought is usually emphasised more. Hobbes has a rich array of practical proposals for averting disorder: he tackles institutions, education and background conditions, and targets preferences, opportunities and incentives. This breadth has not been appreciated before, even by theorists who address Hobbes's practical side, such as Deborah Baumgold (1988), Sharon Lloyd (1992) and Geoffrey Vaughan (2002).

I start by outlining the cognitive basis of Hobbes's political theory: correct judgement leads to peace, corrupt judgement leads to disorder, disorder leads to the state of nature. I then briefly examine three types of corrupt judgement: popular corruption, corruption of the sovereign's counsellors, and legal corruption. I explain the cognitive underpinnings of each type of corruption, and how they lead to a state of nature (section 2). Next, I revise and extend Steven Lukes's (1974) classic account of power, developing a three-part framework for analysing Hobbes's advice to sovereigns (section 3). Finally, I apply this framework to examine Hobbes's many practical proposals for averting the three forms of corruption. Hobbes tries to stop popular corruption by targeting preferences and incentives, corrupt counsel by targeting opportunities, and legal corruption by targeting all three of preferences, incentives and opportunities (section 4). Note that while I touch on certain problems in Hobbes's account, this paper is not primarily trying to *evaluate* Hobbes's claims.<sup>1</sup>

Overall, this paper casts new light on Hobbes's account of corruption and disorder, new light on the practical side of his theory, and new light on the different ways in which power can be exercised – each of which is addressed in Hobbes's impressively wide-ranging proposals for avoiding a descent to the state of nature.

<sup>1</sup> I take a more critical approach in Adrian Blau, *Hobbes's Failed Political Science and the Problem of Disorder* (book in progress).

## 2. CORRECT JUDGEMENT AND CORRUPT JUDGEMENT

Hobbes believes that correct judgement leads to peace, corrupt judgement leads to disorder, disorder leads to the state of nature. After exploring how Hobbes sees correct judgement, I will examine three aspects of corruption and explain their link to disorder and the state of nature.<sup>2</sup>

Hobbes discusses two types of judgement: reason and deliberation. Reason involves clear concepts and deductive logic; it is objective, and applies mainly to theory. Deliberation involves emotion and inductive inferences about future consequences; it is subjective, and applies mainly to practice. These two forms of judgement should be seen as partly separate: we can reason correctly but deliberate incorrectly, for example by breaking a law that we know we should keep.

‘Reasoning correctly’ requires clear concepts and valid deductions (DCO 1.2, 3; 4.1-4, 44-54; 6.15-17, 84-7; L 4, 28; 5, 36). In Hobbes’s view, anyone who reasoned correctly would reach the same, correct political conclusions. But ‘appetite perturbs and impedes the operation of reason’ (DH 12.1, 55). This, along with the fact that we ‘very seldome’ see to the end of the ‘long chain of consequences’ (L 6, 46; DH 11.5, 48), means that we often choose apparent rather than real goods (DH 11.5, 48).

This last point is crucial to understanding Hobbes in general and this paper in particular. Some theorists see Hobbes as a champion of *subjective* self-interest (for example Raphael 1977, 42-7, 65-8). True, Hobbes writes that ‘the proper object of every mans Will, is some Good to himselfe’ (L 25, 176). But what must not be forgotten is that Hobbes makes a distinction between real and apparent goods. Often, he writes, the ‘good’ that we choose is not our greatest real good, self-preservation (DH 11.6, 48). Rather, it is only an *apparent* good – a good which will eventually turn out to be bad. In short, Hobbes knows that we are often motivated by subjective self-interest, but a key part of his political project is to make us motivated by our objective self-interest. Hobbes’s distinction between subjective and objective goods is central to this paper.

Reason is thus essentially objective. But deliberation is subjective. Deliberation is ‘the alternat succession of appetite and fear’ that arises when we consider external objects; the last

<sup>2</sup> Abbreviations used in the text: **AW:** *Anti-White* (Hobbes 1976). **BH:** *Behemoth* (Hobbes 1990). **DC:** *De Cive* (Hobbes 1998). **DCL:** original Latin version of *De Cive* (Hobbes 1983). **DCO:** *De Corpore* (Hobbes 1839). **DH:** *De Homine* (Hobbes 1991b). **DP:** *A Dialogue Between a Philosopher and a Student of the Common Laws of England* (Hobbes 1971). **EL:** *The Elements of Law* (Hobbes 1994b). (Users of the Tönnies edition of the *Elements* should note that Part II ch. 1 onwards is ch. 20 onwards in the edition used here.) **EW:** Molesworth’s edition of Hobbes’s *English Works*, in 11 volumes (1839-45). **L:** *Leviathan* (Hobbes 1991a); **L R/C** is the ‘Review and Conclusion’ of *Leviathan*. **LLC:** Curley’s edition of *Leviathan* with variants from the Latin edition (Hobbes 1994a). **LLM:** Molesworth’s edition of the Latin *Leviathan* (Hobbes 1841). I do not use the *Three Discourses* (Hobbes 1995) as their authorship is unresolved. I follow Hobbes’s gender-language, but I have removed his italics.

appetite before action is called will (EL 12.2, 71; DC 13.16, 152; L 6, 44-5; also DCO 25.13, 408). For example, if I see something which I want to steal, I may alternate between desire and fear. In the latter case, my train of thoughts is ‘The Crime, the Officer, the Prison, the Judge, and the Gallows’ (L 3, 22). If I choose to steal, my will is desire; if I choose not to, my will is fear.

Implicitly, Hobbes rests deliberation on the broader ‘dispositions’ and ‘manners’ of citizens, including attitudes like rebelliousness. In the above example, rebellious citizens will be more likely than peaceful citizens to commit the crime (DH 13, 63-70). But deliberation is not purely emotional: the emotions must work on some expectation of the consequences of one’s actions. This involves two faculties: prudence and experience. Prudence is the ability to extrapolate to what may happen. Experience provides the factual basis for these extrapolations (EL 4.9-11, 33-4; DC 13.17, 152; L 3, 22-3; 8, 52-3).

So, deliberation involves past facts, extrapolation, and emotional evaluation of those inferences, or in Hobbes’s terms, experience, prudence, and appetite. We might say that for Hobbes, deliberation is good when it leads to advice or actions which support the sovereign. Reason is always good, when exercised correctly.

Although Hobbes does not put it like this, we could summarise his position as follows: correct political judgement requires reasoning which produces correct conclusions about obeying the sovereign and the law, and/or deliberation which leads one to act obediently. Ultimately, deliberation is pivotal: we can reason incorrectly about the sovereign’s rights but still act obediently through fear – just as we can reason correctly about the sovereign’s rights but still act disobediently through greed. As section 4 shows, Hobbes thinks that good deliberation is more likely when citizens reason correctly too, or at least if they are taught the conclusions that correct reasoning produces. Nonetheless, Hobbes ideally wants a political system where citizens reason and deliberate in ways conducive to civil peace.

I now turn to corrupt judgement.<sup>3</sup> Hobbes does not define this (though see AW 5.4, 58-9 for his definition of physical corruption). I will define Hobbes’s concept of political corruption (henceforth just ‘corruption’) as *incorrect judgement, by faulty reason or by deliberation, which does or could lead to actions which undermine civic peace; or the desires, dispositions or opinions which could lead to such incorrect judgement*. Usually, Hobbes depicts corruption as essentially cognitive: it is a mental error that could lead to disorder, not the disorder itself, which Hobbes usually calls ‘sedition’ (for example EL 27.1, 162-3).

<sup>3</sup> This account of corruption is condensed from Adrian Blau, ‘Hobbes on Corruption’ (Mancept working paper, available from [www.socialsciences.manchester.ac.uk/disciplines/politics/researchgroups/mancept/workingpapers](http://www.socialsciences.manchester.ac.uk/disciplines/politics/researchgroups/mancept/workingpapers)).

Leaving aside one comment on constitutional corruption (EL 27.7, 167), Hobbes talks about political corruption in three ways:

- (a) corruption of the people;
- (b) corruption of the sovereign's counsellors;
- (c) corruption of legal processes.

Popular corruption underpins Hobbes's account of civil war. *Behemoth*, Hobbes's history of the civil war, explains that 'the people were corrupted generally' by 'seducers' such as republican MPs nurtured on Aristotle. Consequently, citizens were 'ignorant of their duty' to obey the sovereign or pay taxes (BH 2-4; see also DCO 1.7, 8). So, citizens' judgments had been corrupted because false reasoning meant few citizens knew their duties, a situation cultivated by the king's enemies. Hobbes's oft-neglected treatise *De Homine* notes that the 'good dispositions' which support peace had been 'greatly corrupted' by supporters of ecclesiastic power (DH 13.7, 67-70). The end of the Latin *Leviathan* states that Hobbes's views could have been explained more easily to 'uncorrupted hearts', but men's minds had been 'corrupted by writers of pagan politics and philosophy' (LLC 47, 487-8).

These references to corruption are all cognitive: corruption involves a failure of judgement, or uncivic dispositions. To my knowledge, Geoffrey Vaughan (2001, 470) is the only writer, at least in English, who has adequately grasped Hobbes's cognitive notion of popular corruption.

A similarly cognitive idea of corruption props up Hobbes's cunning barb that any of the monarch's counsellors who use rhetoric over reason are 'corrupt Counsellours ... bribed by their own interest' (L 25, 178). Among other things, Hobbes is here attacking civic humanist ideals of political rhetoric (Skinner 1996, 19-211). Rhetoric aims 'to make the unjust appear Just,' appealing to 'passions' not reason, with decisions thus made 'not on the basis of correct reasoning but on emotional impulse' (DC 10.13, 123). Ill-motivated counsel was the 'sole cause' of the civil war (AW 38.16, 476). Hobbes makes similar claims repeatedly (EW 8, xvi-xvii; EL 19.5, 105; 27.12-15, 169-72; DC 5.5, 71; 12.10, 138; L 17, 119-20; BH 2, 109). *Leviathan* uses rhetoric much more than the *Elements* or *De Cive*, but Hobbes remains deeply concerned about rhetoric's political dangers (Skinner 1996, 345-9), especially in counsel: a counsellor who uses exhortation and dehortation, two key tools of rhetoric, fails to 'tye himselfe ... to the rigour of true reasoning,' producing advice that is 'directed to the Good of him that giveth the Counsell, not of him that asketh it.' This is why 'they that Exhort and Dehort, when they are required to give Counsell, are corrupt Counsellours, and as it were bribed by their own interest' (L 25, 177-

8). Hobbes here treats the corrupted counsellor as his own corruptor. Hobbes's delicious pun fuses cognitive corruption with the more standard idea of corruption as the act of abusing one's office for private gain: the counsellor is bribed mentally by his self-interest/greed (an apparent good, not a real one), and then abuses his office by giving partial rather than impartial counsel.

I turn finally to Hobbes's frequent denunciation of legal corruption. Corruption of judges is one common target, as in his criticism of the 'frequent corruption and partiality of Judges' (L 26, 192; see also EL 28.6, 175; DC 13.17, 152, twice; L 10, 63; L 12, 85; L 30, 236; L 35, 282; LLC 27, 196; DP 70; DP 85; BH 37). Hobbes also attacks corruption in other parts of the legal process, such as juries whose decisions are 'corrupted by reward' (L 26, 195; see also L 7, 48; L 14, 98; L 27, 204-5; L 30, 236; LLC 27, 196; DC 2.19, 40; DCL 106; EW 4, 443).

Hobbes fears legal corruption because it can lead to a state of nature. Liberty and property are threatened by the 'false judgements, robberies and theft [that] occur when judges are corrupt,' meaning that miscreants will go unpunished and 'good citizens will be beset by murderers, robbers and swindlers,' until 'the commonwealth itself is dissolved' (DC 13.17, 152; see also EL 28.6, 175; L 27, 212). Hobbes even makes judicial impartiality a law of nature (L 15, 108; see also DC 3.15, 50; LLM 203), and refers specifically to judicial corruption in discussing the law of nature by which no one can arbitrate where he has a personal stake in the matter: 'such an arbiter is corrupted by human nature' (LLM 120), 'for hee hath taken (though an unavoydable bribe, yet) a bribe; and no man can be obliged to trust him' (L 15, 109; see also DC 3.21-2, 52).

This is similar to the counsellor's self-corruption, a link Hobbes makes explicit when he writes that a corrupt counsellor who happens to give good advice is 'no more a good Counsellour, than he that giveth a Just Sentence for a reward, is a Just Judge' (L 25, 178). The cognitive essence of corrupt counsellors and judges is again clear: what is corrupt is the counsellor's or judge's self-seeking motivation, even if he gives the right advice/ruling. (This is one reason why I defined corruption as faulty judgement that does *or could* lead to civil disorder. But counsellors and judges who reason correctly are more likely to find the right advice/ruling.) While some of Hobbes's comments on corruption may use the standard legal connotation – the misuse of public office/duty for personal gain – this comment is purely cognitive. Corruption here is a mental fault, before the official ruling, due to self-interest weakening impartial reason.

Interestingly, each of Hobbes's main political treatises relates deliberation to legal processes. Deliberation involves one's emotional assessment of the consequences that one predicts on the basis of past experience; Hobbes's examples of expected consequences twice involve law-breaking and punishment (EL 4.7, 32; L 3, 22), and he states that corrupt judges 'give wicked

men the expectation that they will not be punished’, such that ‘good citizens will be beset by murderers, robbers and swindlers’ until ‘the commonwealth itself is dissolved’ (DC 13.17, 152).

So, there is a strong cognitive component to each of popular corruption, corruption of counsellors, and legal corruption. This is unsurprising, given Hobbes’s broader cognitive account of the good judgement underpinning stable politics. Those who reason and deliberate properly will place their long-term, real good over short-term, apparent goods. But corrupt judgement may lead to actions injurious to civil peace, and a state of nature will arise if enough people take such actions. The above quotations show that Hobbes certainly saw popular corruption and corrupt counsel as having helped cause the civil war, and that he clearly links legal corruption to a state of nature. If civil war is one form of a state of nature – and the form that most worried Hobbes in practice – then there is a strong link from corrupt judgement to a state of nature, just as there is between correct judgement and civil peace.

Here, then, is Hobbes’s task. If his political theory is to move beyond abstract philosophising and present useful advice to sovereigns, he needs practical suggestions for avoiding corrupt judgement and fostering correct judgement. In short, Hobbes’s practical politics must get political actors to reason and deliberate in ways that support the sovereign.

### **3. A NEW TYPOLOGY OF POWER**

It would not be theoretically interesting simply to list Hobbes’s many prescriptions for averting these different types of corruption. I propose to apply a threefold typology of power, covering different ways that sovereigns can try to stop corruption and disorder.

I will correct, rephrase and extend Steven Lukes’s classic account of the ‘three faces’ of power (Lukes 1974). Lukes has been criticised on many fronts (see for example the essays in *Political Studies Review* 4.2, 2006), and now rejects some of his original views (Lukes 2005, 11-12). Two problems are especially important in the present context. One is that the first ‘face’ of power, which Lukes does not fully define, is not really a type of power. It is an approach to the analysis of power taken by some writers in the 1950s and 1960s. That may be a helpful place to start when discussing the history of the study of power, but it is less useful when producing a *typology* of power. So I suggest that we drop Lukes’s first face of power.

The other problem is that the second and third faces are actually subsets of broader categories which Lukes did not identify adequately. Lukes’s second face, ‘non-decision-making’, involves taking items off the agenda so that one’s opponents cannot vote on them. This is clearly

a subset of a broader way of exercising power, by making certain actions impossible. Taking items off the agenda is only one way of making actions impossible.

Similarly, Lukes's third face of power, 'false consciousness', involves altering people's preferences so that they come to want something which is not really in their interest. But there are many other ways of exercising power via preferences. Power can be exercised by converting false to true preferences; by converting preference X to preference Y; by making someone realise that even though they prefer X itself to Y itself, the overall effects of choosing X would be worse than the overall effects of choosing Y; and so on. I will expand on this shortly but once more we can see that this face of power is a subset of a broader category.

So, a more exhaustive typology of social power would be power as the ability to get desired outcomes by tackling (a) preferences, (b) opportunities, and (c) incentives. I am ignoring Lukes's first face of power, which is not really a category of power. I am broadening his second and third faces into genuine categories rather than particular subsets of those categories. And I am adding a category for incentives. This is closer to Bertrand Russell (1986, 19) and Keith Dowding (1996, 5) than to Lukes.

I will now briefly examine these three types of power in more detail before applying them to Hobbes.

Tackling preferences involves (i) altering preferences or (ii) clarifying preferences. I will consider two ways of altering preferences. The most obvious, and the hardest, is to change someone's preference for X to a preference for Y. Although many rational choice theorists take preferences as fixed, some rational choice theorists recognise that preferences can change over time. Clearly, our taste in food changes considerably over our lives, and in many cases we exhibit 'adaptive preferences'. Still, it is hard to exercise power by changing preferences in this way.

The second way of altering preferences is to change the people themselves – removing people with preference X and/or adding people with preference Y. One way of winning a committee vote is to pack the committee with one's supporters. This takes preferences as fixed but changes the players, so to speak.

Historically, dictators often combine these methods, killing recalcitrant citizens, and educating children (whose preferences are more malleable or even undetermined), so that over time the citizen body becomes more supportive.

*Clarifying* preferences is often easier and less radical. This is not a standard idea in rational choice, because many rational choice theorists assume (if only for modelling purposes) that individuals are instrumentally rational. Hobbes starts from the assumption that most individuals are not instrumentally rational, at least in an objective sense. Clarifying preferences, I will show,

is crucial for Hobbes. As section 2 explained, Hobbes knows that people often choose apparent goods instead of real goods. If we are not to alter preferences, then there are at least two ways of clarifying their situation so that they choose real goods over apparent ones.

One is simply that they may not be aware of what their real good is. Here the solution is to tell people what their real good is. A second reason why people often choose apparent over real goods is that they may not notice when choosing the former undermines the latter. Here the solution is to inform that their choice is not instrumentally rational. Imagine that I go into a restaurant and face a choice between a small table and a big table; I choose the big table because I like lots of room when I eat. But just before I sit down, someone tells me that the big table is reserved for the local crime boss, and if I sit there I will be shot. Now, I still *prefer* the big table over the small one – I would pick the big table if my choice were unconstrained – but I also have a very strong preference for life over death. And overall I prefer being alive at a small table to being dead at a big table. Before I knew about the crime boss, I thought that I was simply weighing up my preference for big or small tables. Now I see that I am also weighing up my preference for life or death, which is a more important issue for me. Once I realised the full extent of the preferences at stake, my choice changed.

As we will see, something similar is going on with Hobbes. Some people do not realise just how disastrous a state of nature would be, and some do not realise that their disobedient actions could eventually lead to a state of nature. Hobbes must therefore remind people about their real interest in avoiding a state of nature, and must also explain that some apparent goods (for example, avoiding taxes) can undermine their real interest. Hobbes is not trying to change preferences but choices, by clarifying the preferences that exist and how they interrelate. Rational choice theorists often neglect such situations because they tend not to work with the distinction between objective and subjective goods, but that distinction is crucial for understanding Hobbes, I have shown.

Clarifying preferences is not enough for Hobbes, though. Clearly we sometimes choose short-term subjective goods even though we know that our choice will be bad in the long-term. One reason is what Kant calls ‘weakness of will’. Perhaps eating fatty food is just too tempting. This brings me onto the last two categories of exercising power, by targeting opportunities and incentives.

An opportunity can be defined as ‘an action which it is possible for an actor to take’. Power can thus be exercised by changing the opportunity set – adding or removing possible actions. Lukes’s second face of power, ‘non-decision-making’, sits in this category: an option is taken off the agenda so others cannot make decisions on it, and the agenda-setter gets her way by default

(Bachrach and Baratz, 1962). For example, if there is no fatty food to eat, there is no opportunity to eat it. Power can also be exercised by changing people's *perceptions* of opportunities, for example by wrongly convincing them that there is no fatty food to eat; but that is not relevant to this paper.

The third and last category involves incentives – ‘the benefits or costs of an action’ – carrots and sticks. I might be less inclined to eat fatty foods if a tax is placed on them, or if I am given a reward for avoiding them. Lukes does not theorise this adequately but it is a basic staple of economics. So, changing opportunities alters what we can do, changing incentives alters the costs and benefits of actions within the opportunity set.

Note that the distinction between opportunities and incentives may be arbitrary or uncertain. In practice we may not be able to discern the difference between an action which is impossible and an action which is prohibitively expensive. If the government places a huge tax on fatty foods, does this make it impossible or simply very unlikely that someone could save enough money to buy fatty foods again? As with many analytical categories, the opportunities/incentives distinction is imperfect; but it is not a problem for this paper.

Note too that given Hobbes's focus, I only discuss power exercised by *changing* aspects of preferences, opportunities and incentives, but of course power can also be exercised by *maintaining* preference, opportunity or incentive structures that are already advantageous – for example, inheriting a system which already incentivizes citizens to obey the government.

Note, finally, that we should also distinguish power as a property from the exercise of power. Peter Morriss criticises the ‘exercise fallacy’ – talking about something as power only when it is exercised (Morriss 2002, 14-18). Morriss accuses Hobbes of ignoring this distinction in *De Corpore* (Morriss 2002, 15). Hobbes writes, ambiguously: ‘Correspondent to cause and effect, are power and act; nay, those and these are the same things’ (DCO 10.1, 127). As the ensuing discussion makes clear, Hobbes is only equating cause and power, not power and act, which would require him – absurdly – to equate cause and effect. But Morriss's criticism might still apply if Hobbes does not distinguish actual and potential causes. We should talk about something as power not only when it *does* cause X, but also when it *could* cause X. Hobbes writes that ‘whensoever any agent has all those accidents which are necessarily requisite for the production of some effect ... then we say that agent has power to produce that effect’ (DCO 10.1, 127). But he adds that these powers are ‘conditional’ on being exercised, and they are not properly called power if they are not exercised but remain ‘accidents’ only (DCO 10.3, 129). This implies, fallaciously, that salt's ability to dissolve in water is not a power unless salt dissolves.

*Leviathan* also dances between fallacious and non-fallacious reasoning. Hobbes initially defines power as one's *means* to obtain future goods, before listing numerous means or resources (L 10, 62-6; see also Morriss 2002, 143). This appears to avoid the exercise fallacy. Thus 'Naturall Powers' like strength and prudence are powers whether or not one uses them to achieve desired effects. But Hobbes also suggests that wealth is not power if one does not spend it (L 10, 62), which quicksteps back to the exercise fallacy. Hobbes's understanding of power, then, is not fully satisfactory, and I would stress that when I talk about Hobbes's account of power, this is really my account of power applied to things that Hobbes does not always see as power. 'Hobbes's account of power' sounds better than 'my account of Hobbes's accidents'.

This is not the place for a full exposition of my expanded typology of power, which remains incomplete. My aim is simply to produce a workable set of distinctions, improving on Lukes's, which help us uncover the breadth of Hobbes's practical proposals for averting corruption, disorder, and civil war.

#### 4. HOBBS'S PRACTICAL POLITICS

Gregory Kavka (1986, 25, 358-9) depicts Hobbesian moral theory as rule-egoistic: adherence to a law of nature 'best promotes each agent's interests,' even if the agent believes that breaking the rule on a given occasion will bring more short-term benefit than adhering to it. Clearly, rule-egoistic principles may falter if people reason act-egoistically, and even if Hobbes's laws of nature are best read in rule-egoistic terms, we have seen that Hobbes unquestionably accepts that many people *do* act on their short-term interests. Hobbes's normative rules will thus fail unless individuals also have incentives to act rule-egoistically (see for example Kavka 1986, 379), or preferences which amount to the same.

I therefore 'descend to particulars' (L 30, 233), examining Hobbes's practical proposals for limiting corruption of the people, of counsellors and of legal processes. The breadth of Hobbes's approach is often understated. Lloyd (1992) and Vaughan (2002) instructively explore Hobbes's educational proposals, but largely overlook his institutional prescriptions for altering opportunities and payoffs; Vaughan (1997, 10) even refers to Hobbes's 'lack of institutional recommendations'. Baumgold (1988, 82) takes the opposite stance, concluding that 'Hobbes treats the problem of generating and maintaining coercive authority as a constitutional problem'. This is true, but it is also an educational one, involving clarification and occasionally alteration of preferences. So, the three leading analysts of Hobbes's practical politics have significantly broadened our understanding of Hobbes, but we need to read them together to understand just

how widely he ranged. I thus seek to build on the work of Baumgold, Lloyd and Vaughan, and I provide further insights by relating Hobbes's proposals to the categories of preferences, opportunities and incentives.

#### 4.1 Preventing popular corruption

Hobbes tries to avert popular corruption in two main ways: punishment and education, primarily involving incentives and preferences respectively. He pays little attention to opportunities in this area.

Punishment's aim is 'not to force a man's will but to form it, and to make it what he who fixed the penalty desires it to be,' which is 'the disposing of men to obey the Law' (DC 13.16, 152; L 28, 214-5). Is this comment about shaping preferences or shaping incentives? The latter, I will suggest, is a better interpretation.

Hobbes's reference to 'disposing' men to obey the law might sound as if he is talking about shaping preferences, or to be more precise, shaping dispositions. Dispositions are 'men's inclinations toward certain things' (DH 13.1, 63). Roughly, a disposition is a bundle of preferences: peaceful and warlike dispositions involve different orderings of preferences (compare the Humean account in Hamlin 2006). If citizens were habituated to like the law, they would obey it almost without thinking. Hobbes does indeed write that those with 'generous natures' obey the law even when they would profit from breaking it (L 27, 206). But this is not about the effects of punishment, indeed given Hobbes's account of psychology it is difficult to see how punishment could itself alter dispositions.

So, Hobbes's comment about 'disposing' men to obey the law is probably not about dispositions. Punishment is mainly about incentives. Hobbes's reference to forming a man's *will* implies that Hobbes wants to ensure that the last appetite in deliberation is an appetite that leads potential malefactors to keep the law – fear, not desire, in the example from section 2. Even if someone has a strong liking for his neighbour's ox, fear should stop him from stealing it. Someone who does not think of consequences may steal the ox, so Hobbes wants consequences – here, punishment – to be foremost in the potential malefactor's mind, such that his preference for not being punished trumps his preference for the ox.

Punishment is thus a deterrent: 'the end of punishing is not revenge ... but correction, either of the offender, or of others by his example' (L 30, 240). Lawbreakers and onlookers must know that the cons outweigh the pros, so that the next time a similar situation arises, their last deliberative appetite should be fear, and their will thus leads them to respect the law. 'Fear' is 'the

only thing' that leads to obedience for those who are not well disposed to the law (L 27, 206). The aim of punishment is thus 'terror' (L 28, 215-6).

For extreme cases of disobedience, Hobbes recommends exile (L 15, 106) or even execution (BH 95). This could be seen as altering opportunities: lawbreakers would have no opportunity to be disobedient if they are in another country, or dead. Or it could be seen as altering preferences among the population as a whole, removing people whose preferences lead them to be very disobedient. However we conceptualise this, Hobbes places little weight on it.

For deterrents to work, citizens must expect that penalties will actually be applied. This is why Hobbes repeatedly criticises judicial corruption: as discussed earlier, if judges are known to take bribes so as not to punish miscreants, a state of nature will result, so sovereigns must punish corrupt judges to deter other judges from doing the same (DC 13.17, 152).

Perhaps unsurprisingly, Hobbes says little about an important aspect of the incentive structure: the likelihood of being caught after a crime. Kavka writes that Hobbes 'ignores the problem of identifying and apprehending lawbreakers', failing to consider that 'a predominantly self-interested rational agent considering a possible violation will take into account the *probability* of being apprehended and punished for violation as well as the severity of the penalty' (Kavka 1986, 250-1). This is not entirely fair: Hobbes's discussion of deliberating about a crime refers to the 'Officer', and as noted below, Hobbes addresses the probability of being caught for legal corruption. Nonetheless, Kavka is right that as regards popular disobedience, Hobbes does not say enough about this aspect of incentives.

Importantly, Hobbes recognises that punishment is not enough. For citizens who reject the sovereign's right to rule, punishment will appear as a hostile act to be countered by greater hostility later on (L 30, 232). And since 'mens actions are derived from the opinions they have of the Good, or Evill, which from those actions redound unto themselves,' they will disobey laws if they think that 'their obedience to the Sovereign Power, will bee more hurtfull to them, than their disobedience' (L 42, 372; see also DC 6.11, 80).<sup>4</sup> The sovereign must therefore *educate* citizens to understand the sovereign's right to punish them. This shows that Hobbes does not seek obedience through fear alone – a common claim which Lloyd (1992) has convincingly refuted.

Hobbes's attempt to stop popular corruption thus places great weight on education – 'the key to the maintenance of social order' (Lloyd 1992, 219). I will consider education of reason, of opinions, and of emotions. As regards educating reason, Hobbes always believed that correct

reasoning led to true, Hobbesian conclusions. It follows implicitly that he could help to fight popular corruption by teaching individuals to reason properly. The *Elements* rejects education of the passions: Hobbes prioritizes reason over emotion and teaching over persuading (EL 13.2, 73; 13.7, 76). Reason could be educated in three ways. First, *De Corpore* was a direct instruction manual in clear reasoning. Second, Hobbes's political texts could improve his readers' political thinking indirectly, by exemplifying clear reasoning. Third, even more indirectly, citizens should reason better by default if humanist training were reworked and religious superstition removed (Johnston 1986).

To some extent, then, we can read Hobbes as trying to clarify preferences by helping citizens to think more clearly. Citizens themselves can work out what their true, long-term interests are, they will understand that some apparent goods could eventually undercut those true interests, and they will conclude that obedience is better than law-breaking.

But Hobbes gives much more explicit and extensive emphasis to educating opinions. His focus here is not on teaching people to *work out* the above answers for themselves. Rather, he is just *giving* them the answers. He could not have expected many citizens to work out the answers for themselves – after all, he thought that he himself was the first person to have worked all of the answers out, and he recognised that learning to reason well takes much work (L 5, 35). This surely explains why he writes much more about directly teaching citizens their true preferences. While it would be good if some citizens can work out the answer themselves, a more realistic solution is to teach the bulk of citizens what their incentive structure really looks like so that they will choose real over apparent goods.

Yet Hobbes is well aware that this will be a struggle. He writes that 'many Opinions, contrary to the peace of Man-kind' have become 'deeply rooted' despite resting on 'weak and false Principles' (L 30, 236). How should these opinions be dealt with? Opinions cannot be changed by commands or threat of penalties; rather, we must expose men over time to 'true doctrines conforming to their own understanding' (DC 13.9, 146-7; EL 28.8, 176; DP 57). This point is worth emphasising: an incentive to do X rather than Y does not itself change one's deeper liking for Y over X (unless one's preferences adapt over time). In section 3's restaurant example, I still have a preference for the big table even when I realise that acting on this preference would lead to my death. Ideally, though, citizens should not only obey the sovereign through gritted teeth: they should genuinely like supporting the sovereign. Hobbes clearly thinks that an incentive-based approach is too narrow, and thus places much weight on changing those

<sup>4</sup> See Rogers and Schuhmann 2003, 118, for reading 'than', not 'that', at this point.

deeper preferences. Interestingly, the discussion of the sovereign's duties in *Leviathan* is mostly devoted to the sovereign's role in educating opinion, as Johnston (1986, 78-80) notes.

Hobbes is fairly optimistic about teaching citizens who are not yet corrupt: 'the Common-people's minds, unless they be tainted with dependance on the Potent, or scribbled over with the opinions of their Doctors, are like clean paper, fit to receive whatsoever by Publique Authority shall be imprinted in them' (L 30, 233). If only citizens can avoid being contaminated by the elite, to be discussed shortly, they can easily be educated, averting popular corruption.

However, Hobbes is not clear about how to treat citizens who are already corrupted. Should they be re-educated, or simply frightened into obedience until they die and are replaced by new generations of dutiful citizens? At times Hobbes implies that we cannot re-educate corrupted citizens: 'those imbued with no matter what opinions from boyhood retain them even in old age' (DH 13.3, 65; see also EL 10.8, 62-3; L 32, 256). *De Corpore* is less pessimistic: it is 'hard,' but (implicitly) not impossible, 'to weed out of men's minds such inveterate opinions as have taken root there' (DCO 1.1, 2). And the *Elements*, often more optimistic in its rationalism (Skinner 1996, 299-301), states that faulty opinions 'which are gotten by education, and in length of time made habitual' can still be 'taken away ... by time and education' (EL 28.8, 176). So, Hobbes offers contrasting views about re-educating corrupted citizens.

Hobbes is much more precise about which opinions to censor (EL 27.4-10, 164-9; DC 12.1-8, 131-7; L 29, 223-6; though compare BH 62). He seems to want both direct and indirect education – education of citizens themselves, and of their teachers. Direct education involves the sovereign teaching the last five Commandments and instructing citizens about the sovereign's rights (L 30, 232, 236; see also L 30, 235; 46, 462; BH 16, 64). They must also learn precepts such as not doing to others what one would not like to be done to oneself (EL 17.9, 96). Indirect education involves the universities of Oxford and Cambridge, the 'Fountains' of civil and moral ideas (L R/C, 491). In Hobbes's 'trickle-down theory of education' (Lloyd 1992, 197), most citizens learn civic duty from preachers, who learn it at university (DC 13.9, 146-7). But the universities use classical texts which equate democracy with liberty and monarchy with tyranny, and reading these books is like 'the biting of a mad Dogge' producing rabies (BH 3; L 29, 226). Thus the universities 'have been to this nation, as the wooden horse was to the Trojans', 'infecting' students and citizens – the 'core of rebellion' before 1642 (BH 40; DC 12.13, 140; BH 58). These 'fits of rebellion ... may be easily mended, by mending the Universities,' keeping university doctrines 'pure ... from the Venime of Heathen Politicians,' meaning Greeks and Romans (BH 71; L R/C:491). Teaching 'absolute obedience to the laws of the King' should bring 'lasting peace' (BH 56). 'Therefore, before all else the universities are to be reformed' (LLC

30, 225). The reformed universities will teach *Leviathan*, or a more accessible version of it, perhaps using the curriculum outlined in *Behemoth* (L R/C, 491; EW 7, 335-6; BH 58). It should be remembered that in Hobbes's day, boys would often go to university at age 14 or 15, as had Hobbes; reforming the universities would thus affect younger people than it would today.

Educating opinions can be read partly as an attempt to alter preferences. Someone is more likely to have a liking for monarchy if he is not taught that it is bad, and if he is told that democracy or aristocracy will threaten his good in the longer-term. The sovereign should thus teach true conclusions and ban the teaching of contrary opinions. Ultimately, though, Hobbes's emphasis on educating opinions is best read as about clarifying, not altering, preferences. He wants people to understand their objective good, and to see that their subjective goods can undermine their objective goods.

I now turn to the question of whether Hobbes sought to educate the passions themselves. According to Richard Tuck (2004), Hobbes seeks a wholesale 'purging' of disruptive passions. Tuck is best read as implying a purging *over time*: older citizens with disruptive passions will die and be replaced by new citizens educated more appropriately, as discussed above. Certainly, Hobbes's psychology does not work by removing passions, but by controlling them. He once suggests rectifying the passions with reason (L 27, 210) but elsewhere depicts reason as too weak to control passion (EL 24.4, 139; L 19, 131), preferring to fight passion with passion, especially with fear (L 27, 206), discussed above. The sovereign should also temper unruly passions by conjoining them with doctrines favouring peace rather than disobedience, especially by altering the religious views which had so unsettled England (Lloyd 1992, 99-157, 220-1). Faulty religious doctrines were certainly a central cause of popular corruption.

Although Hobbes mainly addresses punishment and education, I will briefly consider background conditions. Incentivising obedience is not just about fear: citizens should also like the status quo. Economic prosperity is thus helpful. Poverty 'grieves and discontents the human spirit more than anything,' and since the poor always blame the government for their plight, the sovereign should foster economic productivity, provide benefits in situations where many men find themselves unemployed through no fault of their own, and avoid inequitable taxation by taxing consumption rather than income (DC 12.9, 137-8; 13.10, 147; L 30, 238-9). Contented citizens are less likely to want to change the status quo. They may still be tempted to break certain laws but they will not be generally angry and blame the monarch. Hobbes's comments might also be read as criticising Charles I's policies such as the inequitable Ship Money tax, whose agitating effect on citizens Hobbes had seen at first hand.

## 4.2 Preventing corruption of counsellors

While averting popular corruption primarily involves changing/clarifying preferences and changing incentives, averting corrupt counsel is almost entirely a matter of changing opportunities. Hobbes is trying to ensure that there is little opportunity for corrupt counsel ever to arise.

Baumgold writes that Hobbes wishes to avoid ‘institutional arrangements that give encouragement to political ambition’ (Baumgold 1988, 78). One solution involves the type of polity itself. Corrupt counsel occurs less in monarchies, where most citizens cannot participate in assembly politics such that they ‘lose the opportunity’ for eloquent speeches of counsel (DC 10.9, 122). Hobbes here takes unruly passions as a given: ‘Ambition and longing for honours cannot be removed from men’s minds, and sovereigns have no duty to attempt to do so’ (DC 13.12, 148). If these passions exist, they should not be given a political outlet.

But even monarchies have opportunities for corrupt counsel. Hobbes has four main proposals here. First, he addresses the institutional structure within a monarchy, banning assemblies’ counselling role and giving it to a new body. According to Hobbes, ‘the passions of individual men are more moderate taken separately than in an assembly, where they sometimes inflame one another by the hot air of their rhetoric till they set the commonwealth afire’ (LLC 25, 171). Counsellors should advise the monarch one by one, and monarchs should receive no counsel at all rather than hear it from an assembly of jarring opinions, which Hobbes likens to playing tennis while being carried around in a wheelbarrow (L 25, 182). He pointedly depicts deliberation in individual terms: it is the decision-maker’s own reasoning process, not a discussion between many politicians. In such communal discussions, counsellors do not deliberate but merely furnish the monarch ‘with arguments whereupon to deliberate within himself’ (EL 13.6 76). That is not strictly correct, since each counsellor must still deliberate about what advice to give – Hobbes does not fully conceptualise the link between reason and deliberation – but perhaps Hobbes is dropping philosophical accuracy for the more important political point of subverting the language of group deliberation. He clearly dislikes large assemblies discussing important issues (DC 10.10-19, 122-6), a concern which had partly motivated his decision to translate Thucydides in the 1620s.

Second, counsellors must be chosen by the sovereign (DC 6.18, 88; L 30, 242). This was a reference to the controversy over the Duke of Buckingham’s counsel to Charles I, with parliamentarians attempting to oust Buckingham and counsel the King themselves (Gardiner 1906). From the point of view of theory, Hobbes is trying to ensure that the monarch retains the key resource of appointing the people whose counsel could enflame others.

Third, once counsel is banned in assemblies, the risk of corruption can be cut further by getting counsellors to avoid rhetoric: advice should be dispassionate and impartial, helping the sovereign rather than promoting the speaker's own interests, which would foster faction and sedition (EW 8, xvi-xvii; EL 17.8, 96; 21.5, 120; 24.8, 140; 27.14-15, 171-2; DC 10.10-15, 122-5; L 19, 130-2; 25, 177-82; 30, 242-3). Again, clear reasoning leads to peace, while rhetoric can foster corrupt reasoning and hence disorder. Even *Leviathan*, more open to rhetoric than Hobbes's first two political treatises, is concerned about the destabilising effects of parliamentary rhetoric. As regards opportunities, note Hobbes's language when advocating the use of deductive logic in counsel: deductive reason *ties* – binds – the thinker to seek the truth (see section 2). Rhetoric, by contrast, gives counsellors too much freedom to pursue their own interest, potentially threatening peace.

Fourth, and more generally, Hobbes attacks the very ideal of active citizenship, arguing in the subversively entitled *De Cive* ('On The Citizen') that good citizens need not enter public affairs. If there are fewer people driven by self-love who seek to advise the monarch, corrupt counsel will be less common. Presumably, this attempt to narrow the opportunity for disorder also requires clarifying preferences: citizens convinced by Hobbes's arguments would see that they had been lied to by those who claim that good citizens are active, rhetorical counsellors. They might still have a liking for this kind of rhetorical speech, but they would now see that such activities do not further their real ends, since their real ends do include active citizenship.

It is worth noting that since passionate rhetoric in assemblies can foster civil strife, the above proposals for preventing corrupt counsel will also reduce popular corruption. So, while I said that Hobbes's efforts to stop popular corruption mainly tackled preferences and incentives, he also targets opportunities indirectly, insofar as this is part of stopping corrupt counsel which in turn stops popular corruption.

#### **4.3 Preventing legal corruption**

To stop legal corruption, Hobbes targets all three of preferences, opportunities and incentives. As regards preferences, 'every Sovereign Ought to cause Justice to be taught,' showing citizens 'the evill consequences of false Judgement, by corruption either of Judges or Witnesses,' which erodes property rights and dissolves justice (L 30, 235-6). In other words, many citizens do not see that legal corruption places their apparent, short-term interest over their real, long-term interest: bribing judges or witnesses helps to create a state of nature. Explaining this to citizens – clarifying their preferences – will cut legal corruption just as teaching similar doctrines cuts popular corruption.

Note that Hobbes's reasoning would not work with criminals facing the death penalty: their interest really does lie in trying to corrupt legal processes, because in the short-term they will all be dead (to paraphrase Keynes). Clarifying preferences would not work here. It is also difficult to incentivise such criminals, short of promising that that they would be tortured before being killed, an un-Hobbesian solution. Hobbes must presumably rely here on altering incentives for judges.

As regards incentives, sovereigns must let citizens complain about corrupt judges in a 'free and open way,' so sovereigns must 'lend an ear' to these complaints, appoint a special court of inquiry if needed, and 'use penalties to compel the judges they have appointed' to practise justice (DC 13.17, 152; EL 28.6, 175). Such transparency makes it more likely that judicial corruption will be uncovered after the event, hence affecting the incentive structure. (Kavka's complaint, noted above, is not relevant here.) Meanwhile, 'penalties' raise the cost of being caught – after all, there is no point being caught if there is no penalty (or vice versa). Hobbes focuses on judges' incentives here, although presumably he would also want to punish citizens who had corrupted or tried to corrupt the legal process.

Hobbes addresses opportunities with the rule that no one may judge a dispute that concerns his own interests, or if he has a contractual bond with any parties in the case, or if he will benefit from a particular decision (EL 17.7, 95; DC 3.21, 52; L 15, 109). These rules are even given the status of laws of nature.

## 5. CONCLUSION

Hobbes scholars have mainly emphasised Hobbes's abstract arguments, and rightly so. But to appreciate Hobbes's whole political theory, we must examine his practical politics, and scholars focusing here have not fully captured Hobbes's breadth. He pays much attention to institutional questions, including the type of polity itself as well as lower-level issues of structures, procedures and powers. He places great weight on education, partly of reason but mainly of opinion. He sometimes takes dangerous passions as givens, countering them with stronger passions like fear; but he also he seeks to reconstitute the citizen body over time, producing more compliance. He also touches on background conditions, incentivising citizens to like the status quo through economic prosperity.

My revised typology of power further highlights Hobbes's wide-ranging practical proposals. Hobbes advises monarchs to exercise power through changing or clarifying preferences, opportunities and incentives. To stop popular corruption, Hobbes primarily targets preferences

and incentives; to stop corrupt counsel, he tackles opportunities; to stop legal corruption, he deals with all three. My exegesis of Hobbes's account of corruption is also new; its cognitive status, and its link to disorder and the state of nature, have not been fully recognised before.

There are thus benefits for Hobbes scholars in studying his practical proposals. Currently, the academic division of labour between political philosophy and political science means that most work on Hobbes treats him from a highly theoretical viewpoint. But we can still learn much about Hobbes by taking a more concrete approach.

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Furthermore, Hobbes's deductive science of politics could have no use for appeals to historical or genetic accounts of sovereignty as founded in past relations. First, sovereignty by institution is deeply implausible if understood as a practical proposition about how men might ever actually erect common power. Hobbes's moral philosophy has been less influential than his political philosophy, in part because that theory is too ambiguous to have garnered any general consensus as to its content. Most scholars have taken Hobbes to have affirmed some sort of personal relativism or subjectivism; but views that Hobbes espoused divine command theory, virtue ethics, rule egoism, or a form of projectivism also find support in Hobbes's texts and among scholars.