

HOBBS'S *BEHEMOTH* ON AMBITION, GREED, AND FEAR

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Can *Behemoth* be interpreted as an attempt by Hobbes to apply to an historical event the criteria and categories first introduced in his theoretical works? Scholarship is divided on this issue. The terms of this long-standing debate can be encapsulated in the contrasting ways in which two Hobbesian interpreters have introduced recent editions of *Behemoth*, Maurice Goldsmith in 1968 and Stephen Holmes in 1990. On one side of the argument, Goldsmith in his brief but poignant Introduction puts forward a dual claim, namely that (i) Hobbes's intention in writing *Behemoth* was to provide a "scientific" explanation of the phenomena leading to the English Civil War, i.e., *Behemoth* should be regarded as an application of Hobbes's "science of politics" to history¹ and that in this application lies its greatness and importance for the understanding of Hobbes's theory; and (ii) that this approach led Hobbes to believe that "the causes of the rebellion were neither economic nor social; they were ideological"² and resided ultimately in "men's passions"³.

On the other side, Stephen Holmes, in his in-depth Introduction to the 1990 reprint of *Behemoth*, indirectly but firmly challenges Goldsmith's view that *Behemoth* is a mere application of scientific principles to historical events. While agreeing with the latter part of Goldsmith's claim, namely that for Hobbes "[t]he causes of the upheaval were not economic and legal [...] but rather psychological and ideological"⁴, and accepting that "the psychological

¹ Maurice Goldsmith, "Introduction", in Thomas Hobbes, *Behemoth or the Long Parliament*, ed. Ferdinand Tönnies (London: Frank Cass, 1969), ix-xi.

² Goldsmith, *op.cit.*, xiii; "Unlike Harrington, he [Hobbes] perceived no shift in the balance of property [...] for Hobbes, history was not class war", xii.

³ Goldsmith, *op.cit.*, xi.

⁴ Stephen Holmes, "Introduction", in Thomas Hobbes, *Behemoth or the Long Parliament*, ed. Ferdinand Tönnies (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 1990), viii. All quotations from *Behemoth* are from this reprint of the 1889 edition.

assumptions inspiring its historical narrative are ultimately indistinguishable from those expounded [...] in *Leviathan*", Holmes nevertheless maintains that in *Behemoth* Hobbes introduces new concepts and ideas and in particular a "fine-grained account of human motivation" that gives a "realistic" tone to the narrative. For Holmes in his Dialogues on the Civil War Hobbes shows "that many human beings are, first of all, incapable of calculative reasoning and, second, stupidly indifferent to self-preservation". Holmes contends that a greater "concreteness and color" are *Behemoth's* distinctive features and that this realism "makes an invaluable contribution to our understanding of Hobbes".⁵

The aim of this paper is to make a contribution to this debate by exploring in some detail whether and to what extent the account of human motivation offered by Hobbes in *Leviathan* provides an insight into, and a theoretical key to unlock, the narrative of *Behemoth*. More specifically, the paper takes as its point of departure Hobbes's well-known view, epigrammatically expressed in Chapter 13 of *Leviathan*, that "in the nature of man, we find three principall causes of quarrel [...] First, Competition; Secondly, Diffidence; Thirdly, Glory. The first, maketh men invade for Gain; the second, for Safety; and the third, for Reputation". The paper then examines the role that these three passions (desire of gain, fear for safety, and ambition) play in the account of the Civil War offered by Hobbes in *Behemoth*. Section 1 argues that in *Behemoth* Hobbes identifies ambition as the passion motivating the leaders of the rebellion, but adds the crucial proviso that this passion alone, without generalised ignorance about the meaning and value of civil obedience, would have found "no hands". Section 2 argues that (i) gain and money have a double function in *Behemoth* as motivation and opportunity of action and (ii) greed alone would have not led people to rebel, had it not been for widespread ignorance about the function of the military, the need for taxation, and the essence of sovereignty. Section 3 argues that regarding the third greatest human motivation, namely fear, we witness a major change in the transition from *Leviathan* to *Behemoth* in so far as Hobbes abandons the idea that fear is the passion to be "reckoned upon". He now believes that fear alone without knowledge of the "true science" of political obligation cannot protect from civil disorder. Section 4 draws some tentative conclusions.

1. On Ambition

The view that ambition was seen by Hobbes as a major cause of the English Civil War is hardly contentious and can be supported by a wealth of tex-

⁵ Holmes, op. cit., xlix.

tual evidence in *Behemoth* where Hobbes often reiterates his belief that ambition was the motivation of "those that [...] were set upon the enterprize of changing the government"⁶ and that "the chief leaders [of the rebellion] were ambitious ministers and ambitious gentlemen, the ministers envying the authority of bishops whom they thought less learned and the gentlemen envying the privy-council and principal courtiers whom they thought less wise than themselves".⁷

In this section my aim is to examine the *meaning* and *significance* of ambition in *Behemoth*, to study the type of people that according to Hobbes were prone to being ambitious, and to explore the *means* whereby ambitious people tried to attain their objective.

Although, of course, in *Behemoth* Hobbes does not offer a definition of ambition, its meaning is easy to re-construct as it is consistent with the use of this word in all his political works. As it can be recalled, in the *Elements of Law*, *de Cive*, and *Leviathan*, when listing the internal causes that bring about the dissolution of government,⁸ Hobbes never fails to include ambition among the "seditious attitudes of the mind". Although ambition motivates people to surpass each other and thus is linked to the Hobbesian concept of glory, the two passions do not coincide. Glory in its various forms (vain glory, false glory, just esteem, pride) is discussed by Hobbes in his account of human nature and of the *natural conditions* of mankind and is described as the *generic* desire and pleasure of superiority. Ambition, instead, makes an appearance mainly in Hobbes's accounts of the *political state* and is used to signify the desire of a *specific* form of superiority and power: the political power of the ruler over the ruled — a definition that Hobbes endorses also in *de Homine*. In *Behemoth*, glory is hardly mentioned as a motivational force, in contrast to ambition which instead looms large over the whole text. In *Behemoth*, when Hobbes does mention glory, the context is quite revealing, in so far as Hobbes ascribes glory-seeking behaviour either to states or nations⁹ or to individuals

⁶ *Behemoth*, 115-16.

⁷ *Behemoth*, 23.

⁸ Thomas Hobbes, *De Cive*, ed. Howard Warrander (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1983), Chapter 12; Thomas Hobbes, *Elements of Law*, ed. Ferdinand Tönnies (London: Frank Cass, 1969), 270; Thomas Hobbes, *Leviathan*, ed. Richard Tuck (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991), Chapter 29.

⁹ For example, Hobbes explains the politics of the gentry and nobility of Scotland as motivated by "emulation of glory between the nations" and desire "to acquire some power over the English", *Behemoth*, 30; he points out that "that nation [the Scots] [...] always esteemed the glory of England for an abatement of their own", *Behemoth*, 32, and that "it is commonly seen that neighbour nations envy one another's honour", *ibid.*

whose aim is not political power, but economic superiority, e.g., the merchants.¹⁰

Ambition is the central passion in Dialogues 1 and 2 where the seed and growth of the rebellion are examined, and in Dialogues 3 and 4 it shares centre stage with another "greatest thing", the desire of gain. In the narration, ambition is linked by Hobbes to a very long list of passions such as stubbornness and contumacy,¹¹ pride,¹² insolence and licentiousness,¹³ impudence, envy,¹⁴ vain glory,¹⁵ presumption,¹⁶ hypocrisy and revenge,¹⁷ cruelty and finally to all sorts of "follies", "vices" and "crimes".¹⁸

To sum up: in *Behemoth* ambition is a sub-category of the desire of glory, meaning desire to rule, and its significance is central in so far as it is the major drive of the leaders of the rebellion.

As to the type of people who developed this passion at the time of the English Civil War, Hobbes is slightly ambiguous. On the one hand, in the concluding Dialogue, teacher A remarks to pupil B: "I believe it is the desire of most men to bear rule".¹⁹ This remark might suggest that *Behemoth* marks no change in this respect compared with *Elements of Law* and *De Cive* where desire of superiority, or glory, is seen by Hobbes as the greatest motivation of most, if not all, individuals. On the other hand, it can be argued that the above claim of a generalised desire to rule does not furnish a fully accurate account of the narrative in *Behemoth*, in so far as Hobbes stresses the point

¹⁰ "[The merchants'] only glory being to grow excessively rich by the wisdom of buying and selling", *Behemoth*, 126; according to Hobbes the merchants supported the rebellion only because, as private gain is their main motivation, "they are naturally mortal enemies to taxes".

¹¹ "[T]his stubbornness and contumacy towards the king and his laws is nothing but pride of heart and ambition, or else imposture", *Behemoth*, 53. Elsewhere Hobbes claims that stubbornness, motivated by ambition, hinders ambitious people to attain their aims and gives the example of Lord Strafford: "I have observed often that such as seek preferment by their stubbornness have missed of their aim", *Behemoth*, 72.

^{12a} "[A]ll, such as had a great opinion of their sufficiency in politics, which they thought was not sufficiently taken notice of by the King", *Behemoth*, 27.

¹³ Very often Hobbes describes the clergy as ambitious and insolent, for example, *Behemoth*, 18-19.

¹⁴ *Behemoth*, 23.

¹⁵ "I might add the folly of those fine men, which out of their reading of Tully, Seneca or other anti-monarchics, think themselves sufficient politics, and show their discontent when they are not called to the management of the state", *Behemoth*, 155-56.

¹⁶ "[the two Houses] had always pretended to greater than ordinary wisdom and godliness", *Behemoth*, 203.

¹⁷ "[P]ower to undo all men that admired not their wisdom", *Behemoth*, 159.

¹⁸ *Behemoth*, 155.

¹⁹ *Behemoth*, 193.

that the common people were the victims of ambitious individuals rather than being ambitious themselves. "The common people" are described as not understanding the "reasons of either party".²⁰ According to Hobbes, merchants and tradesmen were also not interested in political ambition, absorbed as they were in the activity of buying and selling.²¹

Hobbes identifies five sets of agents whom he describes as prone to ambition: the clergy, the Parliamentarians, the well-educated, the army, and the nobility. I will examine these groups briefly in turn, bearing in mind that their membership is not mutually exclusive, so that, for example, according to Hobbes, the most active and influential members of Parliament come from the group of the well-educated.

As far as the clergy is concerned, Hobbes regards it as unreservedly ambitious, irrespective of time, of hierarchical status²² and of denominational affiliation ("[Do] not believe that the Independents were worse than the Presbyterians: both the one and the other were resolved to destroy whatsoever should stand in the way to their ambition").²³

In Hobbes's account, ambition is all-pervasive also among the parliamentarians. Writes Hobbes: "as for the men that did this [attempted to change the government] it is enough to say that [...] most of them were members of the House of Commons; some few also, of the Lords; but all had a great opinion of their sufficiency in politics which they thought was not sufficiently taken notice of by the King".²⁴ To the Parliamentarians Hobbes attributes "unconscionable and sottish ambition" that often obstructs "the way to their ends".²⁵ Their ambition takes the form of "impudence" in democratic assemblies²⁶ and can lead to cruelty and perfidy.²⁷ Admittedly, not all parliamentarians are for Hobbes impudent or ambitious: in Dialogue 3 he suggests that many were simply deceived by their colleagues' motives and that it took them a long time to discover "the hypocrisy and private aims of their fellows".²⁸

²⁰ *Behemoth*, 115.

²¹ *Behemoth*, 126.

²² Hobbes consistently attributes insolence, avarice and hypocrisy to the clergy, not only during the Civil War but earlier too, from top ministers and bishops down to ordinary priests, monks, and friars (see, for example, *Behemoth*, 18-19).

²³ *Behemoth*, 165.

²⁴ *Behemoth*, 27.

²⁵ *Behemoth*, 145.

²⁶ *Behemoth*, 68. "Impudence in democratic assemblies does almost all that's done; 'tis the goddess of rhetoric and carries proof with it. For what ordinary man will not, from so great boldness of affirmation, conclude there is great probability in the thing affirmed?", *Behemoth*, 68-69.

²⁷ *Behemoth*, 138.

²⁸ *Behemoth*, 139.

The group of the highly educated, in Hobbes's view, also yields to the temptation of political ambition: "out of these men were chosen the greatest part of the House of Commons, or if they were not the greatest part, yet, by advantage of their eloquence, were always able to sway the rest".²⁹ Later in the *Dialogue* he explains: "For it is a hard matter for men, who do all think highly of their own wits, when they have also acquired the learning of the university, to be persuaded that they want any ability requisite for the government of a commonwealth".³⁰

In the army ambition appears to be correlated to rank, in so far as Hobbes sees it as the motivation only of the top leaders and generals, whereas the rest are more interested in economic rewards. Hobbes speaks of the "ambition of the great commanders"³¹ and resorts often to ambition to explain Cromwell's behaviour³² as well as that of other generals. Even among the generals, however, not all desire to rule. If ambition is Cromwell's main hidden motivation, and the open drive of General Lambert, who always "thought so well of himself",³³ the same cannot be said of General Monk who is described as having a different inclination, a different type of ambition.³⁴

Ambition and pride are also the key concepts used by Hobbes to explain the behaviour of the Scottish nobility and gentry who "in their lives [...] were just as other men are, pursuers of their own interests and preferments".³⁵ He adds that they, as "men of ancient wealth and nobility [were] not apt to brook, that poor scholars should (as they must, when they are made bishops) be their fellows".³⁶

Having examined briefly the groups of individuals who according to Hobbes were more tempted by ambition, the next step is to see how they managed to get a hold on the whole population, since, as Hobbes points out, "ambition can do little without hands".³⁷ In view of the observation that "from the beginning of the rebellion, the method of ambition was constantly this: first to destroy and then to consider what they should set up",³⁸ the question to address is how did ambitious people manage to convince the

²⁹ *Behemoth*, 3.

³⁰ *Behemoth*, 23.

³¹ *Behemoth*, 186.

³² *Behemoth*, 138-39, 143, 179.

³³ *Behemoth*, 197, see also 198, 201.

³⁴ "His ambition had not appeared here in the contentions for the government", *Behemoth*, 198.

³⁵ *Behemoth*, 29.

³⁶ *Behemoth*, 29-30.

³⁷ *Behemoth*, 70.

³⁸ *Behemoth*, 192.

rest to "destroy" the political order? The answer provided by Hobbes to this question is best understood if broken down in three separate parts: (i) ambition is difficult to detect; (ii) ambitious individuals take advantage of people's ignorance about the meaning and function of civil obedience; (iii) ambitious individuals sabotage the very signification of language and thus confuse people.

As to (i) in *Behemoth* Hobbes claims not only that "it is a hard matter or rather impossible to know what other men mean especially if they be crafty",³⁹ but also that even when people are not consciously misleading, "we cannot safely judge of men's intentions".⁴⁰ In other words, in *Behemoth* Hobbes is less convinced than he was in earlier works that it be possible to understand human motivation even though he does not renounce altogether the notion of human nature.⁴¹

As to (ii), Hobbes reminds the reader repeatedly in *Behemoth* that people's ignorance had been the cause of all rebellions and seditions throughout human history.⁴² Although he often attributes ignorance to "the people in general"⁴³ and to the "common people"⁴⁴, he contends that ignorance about the principles of political obligation is widespread also among educated people, among the Lords, and even among lawyers.⁴⁵ For Hobbes, "it is not want of wit, but want of the science of justice, that brought [the English people] into these troubles".⁴⁶ We have seen above that "the common people" could not understand the "reasons of either party", and yet they

³⁹ *Behemoth*, 37.

⁴⁰ *Behemoth*, 72.

⁴¹ "I cannot enter into other men's thoughts farther than I am led by the consideration of human nature in general", *Behemoth*, 29.

⁴² Hobbes mentions the seditions that afflicted ancient Greece and remarks that they materialised "all for want of rules of justice for the common people to take notice of which if the people had known in the beginning of every of these traditions the ambitious persons could never had the hope to disturb their government after it had been once settled", *Behemoth*, 70.

⁴³ "The people in general were so ignorant of their duty as that not one perhaps of ten thousand knew what right any man had to command him, or what necessity there was of king or Commonwealth", *Behemoth*, 4.

⁴⁴ "Common people know nothing of right or wrong by their own meditation; they must therefore be taught the grounds of their duty and the reasons why calamities ever follow disobedience to their lawful sovereigns", *Behemoth*, 144.

⁴⁵ *Behemoth*, 155.

⁴⁶ *Behemoth*, 159; "they wanted not wit but the knowledge of the causes and grounds upon which one person has a right to govern and the rest an obligation to obey which grounds are necessary to be taught the people who without them cannot live long in peace amongst themselves", *Behemoth*, 160.

were extremely important, in so far as “their hands were to decide the controversy”.⁴⁷ This ignorance, Hobbes tells us, was exploited for example by the Parliamentarians who aimed at increasing the “people’s disaffection” towards the King in order to enhance their own chances of becoming more powerful.⁴⁸

As to (iii), namely the question of how the ambitious managed to take advantage of people’s ignorance, Hobbes’s answer is that the main weapon used to trick people into rebellion was language itself. Words were deployed to deceive and confuse. For example, we are told that the Rump “meant that neither the king, nor any king nor any single person but only they themselves would be the people’s masters and *would have set it down in those plain words if the people could have been cozened with words intelligible as easily as with words non intelligible*”.⁴⁹

Language is used to manipulate, and indoctrinate the common people. The received meaning of words, the very signification of language is put in question. Hobbes tells us that “disobedient persons [were] esteemed the best patriots”,⁵⁰ and that “by delinquent they meant only a man to whom they would do all the hurt they could”.⁵¹ In this situation, civil disobedience is praised and civil obedience is labelled as pride: “The Papists claim that to disobey the pope is pride and deserves death”.⁵²

In many ways this reminds us of Thucydides’ description of the progressive disintegration of common values, standards, and beliefs in Corcyra during the stasis. In the vibrant words of Hobbes’s own translation of Thucydides’ *History*: “inconsiderate boldness, was counted true-hearted manliness: provident deliberation, a handsome fear: modesty, the cloak of cowardice: to be wise in everything, to be lazy in everything”.⁵³

Although both Hobbes and Thucydides are reporting the crisis of signification of language during a state of civil war, Hobbes goes further. He is suggesting that those who manage to convince the common people that disobedient people are “the best patriots”, that “wisdom” or “gallantry” are in fact “folly”,⁵⁴ that “private opinion” can be treated as “heresy”,⁵⁵ in effect do ac-

⁴⁷ *Behemoth*, 115.

⁴⁸ *Behemoth*, 60.

⁴⁹ *Behemoth*, 164, emphasis added.

⁵⁰ *Behemoth*, 2.

⁵¹ *Behemoth*, 69.

⁵² *Behemoth*, 5.

⁵³ Thomas Hobbes, *The History of the Grecian War written by Thucydides*, vol. 8 of *The English Works of Thomas Hobbes*, ed. William Molesworth (London: John Bohn, 1843), 348.

⁵⁴ *Behemoth*, 38.

⁵⁵ *Behemoth*, 9.

quire power over them. In Hobbes's narrative, the giving of names is not only arbitrary,⁵⁶ but a sign of power. The power to decide who is a spy,⁵⁷ who a traitor or a murderer⁵⁸ remains unchallenged where there is ignorance. Linguistic skills and techniques are used to control people so that "a man unacquainted with such art could never suspect any ambitious plot in them to raise sedition against the state".⁵⁹

Not only public speakers but also writers are part of the conspiracy aimed at getting "the hands" of the common people working for their own ambition: "the schoolmen [...] learnt the trick of imposing what they list upon their readers and declining the force of true reason by verbal forks; I mean distinctions that signify nothing, but serve only to astonish the multitude of ignorant men".⁶⁰

In closing this section, we can conclude that in *Behemoth* ambition, or desire to rule, grows among those circles of people who because of their social status (clergy) or their education (i) on the one hand develop more "insolence" than the rest about their own wisdom and ability to rule, and (ii) on the other hand can take advantage for their own ends of the ignorance of the people about the dangers of civil disobedience. Hobbes's message is that during the English Civil War ambition alone could not ruin a whole nation; but the ambition of some combined with the ignorance of most could and did.

2. On Greed and Money

In *Behemoth* we can find a plethora of references to money and to money-related terms, such as booty, plunder, pay, tax, subsidies, coffers, etc. A better understanding of the role played by money and greed can be gained by distinguishing the two main forms under which money enters Hobbes's narrative, namely: (i) *as objective or motivation of action*; and (ii) *as means or opportunity for action*. In this section I am going to consider these two functions in turn.

⁵⁶ "[M]en may give to their assembly what name they please, what signification soever such name might formerly have had; and the Rump took the name of Parliament, as most suitable to their purpose, and such a name, as being venerable amongst the people, had for many hundreds years countenanced and sweetened subsidies and other levies of money, otherwise very unpleasant to the subject", *Behemoth*, 155.

⁵⁷ *Behemoth*, 128.

⁵⁸ *Behemoth*, 154; the King is called "tyrant, traitor, murderer" by the "wicked Parliament", *Behemoth*, 149.

⁵⁹ *Behemoth*, 24.

⁶⁰ *Behemoth*, 41.

We may begin by examining in what sense in *Behemoth* money can be regarded as *motivation of action*. This function is particularly clear in Dialogues 1 and 2, where desire of money, plunder, monetary rewards, and relief from taxation are concepts used by Hobbes to explain why many agents behaved in the way they did.

As ambition is attributed by Hobbes to different types of agents, from single individuals, to social groups, to entire nations, so are desire of gain and greed.⁶¹ However, there is a difference between the role of these two passions in the dynamics of the rebellion: whereas ambition (or desire to rule) is reckoned by Hobbes to be the main drive in the leaders of the rebellion, greed instead is singled out as the strongest passion in their followers. In the Dialogues, greed is ascribed to the common people⁶², to the army (be it led by the King, the Parliamentarians, or Cromwell⁶³), to the "most part of rich subjects",⁶⁴ to the merchants⁶⁵ and tradesmen (who see taxes as "grievances"), to the "men of ancient wealth and nobility of Scotland"⁶⁶, to the Scots in general,⁶⁷ to the clergy, to the Rump,⁶⁸ to big cities (such as London), and to even entire nations.⁶⁹

⁶¹ In Dialogue 1 Hobbes writes: "there were a very great number that had either wasted their fortunes or thought them too mean for the good parts which they thought were in themselves; and more there were, that had able bodies, but saw no means how honestly to get their bread. These longed for a war and hoped to maintain themselves hereafter by the lucky choosing of a party to side with, and consequently did for the most part serve under them that had greatest plenty of money", *Behemoth*, 4.

⁶² "[T]here were few of the common people that cared much for either of the causes but would have taken any side for pay or plunder", *Behemoth*, 2.

⁶³ This applies to all armies, irrespective of their allegiance: for example, in the King's army "the best and forwardest of his soldiers [...] looked for great benefit by their service out of the estates of the rebels in case they could subdue them", *Behemoth*, 115; in Cromwell's army: "there were in the army a great number (if not the greatest part) that aimed only at rapine and sharing the lands and goods of the enemies", *Behemoth*, 136.

⁶⁴ "I consider the most part of rich subjects that have made themselves so by craft and trade as men that never look upon anything but their present profit and who [...] are amazed at the very thought of plundering", *Behemoth*, 142.

⁶⁵ According to Hobbes for this class of people taxation is a reason for civil disobedience: "Grievances are but taxes, to which citizens, that is merchants, whose profession is their private gain are naturally mortal enemies; their only glory being to grow excessively rich by the wisdom of buying and selling", *Behemoth*, 126.

⁶⁶ What these people hope for in the war is "some great sum of money as a reward of their assistance beside great booty", *Behemoth*, 30.

⁶⁷ Who are said to be "animated [...] with a promise of reward and hope of plunder", *Behemoth*, 31. Not so much as a matter of principle, but "upon the payment of 200,000*l*, the King was put [by the Scots] into the hands of the commissioners" of the English Parliament, *Behemoth*, 134.

⁶⁸ "they [the Rump] give one another money and estates, out of the lands and goods of the loyal party", *Behemoth*, 164.

⁶⁹ On the "greed of the Dutch", see *Behemoth*, 174.

In some agents both ambition and greed are very strong passions. A prime example is provided by the Presbyterians, who were "aiming at seeing politics subservient to religion" so that "they might govern and thereby satisfy not only their covetous humour with riches but also their malice with power to undo all men that admired not their wisdom".⁷⁰

We saw in the previous section that, according to Hobbes, ambition as a motivation is difficult to detect. The same applies to greed. Not surprisingly, some individuals enrich themselves by taking advantage of this and of people's ignorance, vulnerability, and good faith. The behaviour of the clergy provides Hobbes with many examples. In Dialogue 1, the teacher explains: "[preaching friars] privately insinuated themselves with women and men of weak judgment, confirming their adherence to the Pope, and urging them, in the time of their sickness, to be beneficial to the Church".⁷¹ In a similar vein, Hobbes believes that both before and during the rebellion the contents of the sermons of most ministers can be explained in terms of greed, covetousness, or hope of financial gain: "they [ministers] did never in their sermons or but lightly inveigh against the lucrative vices of men of trade or handicraft [...] which was a great ease to the generality of citizens and the inhabitants of market-towns and no little profit to themselves".⁷² It is no coincidence, Hobbes tells us, that in these sermons neither greed nor fraud were condemned but only "carnal lust and vain swearing" and "nothing else was sin".⁷³ By exploiting people's fears of "[t]he estate of man's soul after death, in heaven, hell and purgatory [...] every man knows, how great obedience, and how much money they [the clergy] gain from the common people".⁷⁴

In Hobbes's account, the clergy's attempt to convince people that to be charitable means to be liberal with the Church is not merely motivated by greed but also by the knowledge that in war money is necessary to victory — a sentiment that permeates the whole discussion in *Behemoth*. This hints at the second function of money mentioned in the opening paragraph of this section: in addition to motivating people to action, money opens up *opportunity for action*. This latter function appears particularly clear in Dialogues 3 and 4 where it is shown how in war victory smiles to the richest contender. Even in Dialogue 1, however, we are told that "if the King had had money, he might have had soldiers enough in England" as most of the "common people [...] would have taken any side for pay or plunder". From the very in-

⁷⁰ *Behemoth*, 159.

⁷¹ *Behemoth*, 16.

⁷² *Behemoth*, 25.

⁷³ *Ibid.*

⁷⁴ *Behemoth*, 42.

ception of the rebellion the key concern of the King was how to find revenues to raise and keep an army. His enemies, of course, had the same concern, but they were successful to attract "plentiful contribution" from London and other rich cities with the promise to ease people from taxes.⁷⁵ In Hobbes's account of the civil war, the main reason why the King was unable to suppress the rebellion when it first started was his lack of money and conversely the motivation why a large number of people joined the parliamentary cause was their reluctance or resistance to pay subsidies or taxes to the King. Both circumstances, the speaker tells us, materialised because of people's ignorance. Hobbes argues that all agents (from the common people to the Lords, from the merchants and the tradesmen to the nobility and the King himself) were unaware of the link between sovereignty and the command of the military. Because of widespread ignorance, representatives in Parliament were selected on the ground of their commitment to protect people from taxation: the general trend was "to choose as near as they can such as are most repugnant to the giving of subsidies"⁷⁶ as if taxation was a royal caprice and the ultimate control of the military irrelevant to the order and peace of the commonwealth. Hobbes attributes short-sightedness to the merchants, who "are said to be of all callings the most beneficial to the commonwealth",⁷⁷ but in fact do not realise that without commonwealth there is no trade and to all tradesmen who failed to understand "what virtue there is to preserve their wealth in obedience to their lawful sovereign".⁷⁸ More generally, Hobbes decries the ignorance of anybody who, while thinking they were pursuing their own self-interest, in fact were not, in so far as, by neglecting the beneficial effects of living in the safety of the commonwealth, they failed to consider their own long-term advantage.⁷⁹

To conclude, when speaking of greed as a motivation for civil disobedience, Hobbes makes clear that greed alone could have not led people to ruin. It was because of widespread ignorance about the value of peace and the function of subsidies and taxation that greed contributed to the collapse into civil war.

⁷⁵ *Behemoth*, 2.

⁷⁶ *Behemoth*, 121.

⁷⁷ *Behemoth*, 126.

⁷⁸ *Behemoth*, 142.

⁷⁹ *Behemoth*, 54; "[every man] reads that covetousness is the root of all evil; but he thinks, and sometimes finds, it is the root of his estate", *ibid.*

3. On fear

Having examined the role played by ambition and greed in Hobbes's account of the English Civil War, the next step is to examine how important is in *Behemoth* the remaining greatest motivation of human behaviour listed in *Leviathan*, namely fear. My aim in this section is to show that the transition from *Leviathan* to *Behemoth* witnesses a major change about the *significance* of fear in Hobbes's political theory. We may begin by considering the different *object* of fear in *Leviathan* and *Behemoth*. In Chapter 13 of *Leviathan* Hobbes puts across the view that in natural conditions the greatest object of fear is violent death by the hand of others; in Chapter 14 he adds two further objects of fear — one natural the other artificial — facing individuals who live within political associations, namely, fear of "Spirits Invisible", and fear of punishment, and he suggests that the latter is usually stronger than the former. In his words:

"[Fear has] two very general Objects : one, The Power of Spirits Invisible; the other, The Power of those men they shall therein Offend. Of these two, though the former be the greater Power, yet the fear of the later is commonly the greater Feare. The Feare of the former is in every man, his own Religion: which hath place in the nature of man before Civill Society. The later hath not so. (Emphasis added.)

In *Behemoth* we are told a different story. On the one hand, fear of violent death and fear of punishment are hardly mentioned in the four Dialogues; on the other hand and in contrast with the view expressed in *Leviathan*, fear of religion turns out to be "the greater fear" at the time of the Civil War. As one of the speakers explains "as much as eternal torture is more terrible than death, so much they would fear the clergy more than the king".⁸⁰ A qualification, though, is in order. Whereas in *Leviathan* Hobbes suggests that in the state of nature fear was universal, in *Behemoth* he eschews any claim of universality. On the contrary, he points out that "common people" did not care much about the dispute and were willing to take either side for hope of plunder.⁸¹ This would suggest either that fear of damnation was less common than common people or that it was not equally strong in everyone.

As the object of fear is different in *Leviathan* and *Behemoth*, so is its role. As a first step, we can concentrate on the *explanatory function* of fear. Both in *Behemoth* and in *Leviathan* Hobbes resorts to the notion of fear to explain the causes of conflict. However, whereas in *Leviathan* fear explains not only (i)

⁸⁰ *Behemoth*, 14-15.

⁸¹ *Behemoth*, 2.

the dynamic of the state of nature and the escalation from diffidence to anticipation and first strike, but also (ii) why subjects refrain from breaking the laws within the political state, in *Behemoth* Hobbes pays attention to fear only to show how this passion led to civil disobedience and disorder.

Next, we can consider the *descriptive function* of fear. It can be argued that in *Leviathan* "continual fear" is the passion that according to Hobbes describes most accurately the relationship between individuals in the state of war "where every man is enemy to every man". Not so in Hobbes's account of the English Civil War. Although in *Behemoth*, too, we are told that "no man was so blind as not to see they were in an estate of war one against another",⁸² Hobbes does not pinpoint fear as the dominant passion during the rebellion. Instead, we are told that the enemy aroused spite,⁸³ or scorn,⁸⁴ or even hatred, but not fear. In Dialogue 3, one of the speakers remarks that the Parliament's army "had that in them, which in time of battle is more conducing to victory than valour and experience both together; and that was spite".⁸⁵ Even when describing the war between the Rump and the Dutch, Hobbes does not mention fear as playing any role in the conflict.⁸⁶

A further function played by fear in *Leviathan* can be referred to as *heuristic*, in the sense that it enables individuals to understand the benefits of peace and eventually to create the social contract. As Hobbes puts it in Chapter 13: "Feare of Death" is one of the passions that "encline men to Peace". Although in *Behemoth* Hobbes on occasions does mention that it was fear of safety that eventually led some (e.g., the tradesmen) to see sense, on the whole he does not suggest that people were enlightened by fear as to the benefits of living in a peaceful commonwealth. He suggests that nothing, neither painful experience,⁸⁷ nor reflection,⁸⁸ "neither wit nor prudence nor diligence",⁸⁹ nor "natural reason"⁹⁰ can make individuals understand their duties as subjects. Only knowledge of "the true science of equity and justice"⁹¹ can: "They wanted not wit, but the knowledge of the causes and

⁸² *Behemoth*, 117.

⁸³ *Behemoth*, 169, 110.

⁸⁴ *Behemoth*, 180, 174.

⁸⁵ *Behemoth*, 110.

⁸⁶ "The true quarrel, on the English part, was that the proffered friendship was scorned, and their ambassadors affronted; on the Dutch part, was the greediness to engross all traffic, and a false estimate of our and their own strength", *Behemoth*, 174.

⁸⁷ *Behemoth*, 39.

⁸⁸ *Behemoth*, 41.

⁸⁹ *Behemoth*, 70, 158-59.

⁹⁰ *Behemoth*, 144.

⁹¹ *Behemoth*, 70.

grounds upon which one person has a right to govern, and the rest an obligation to obey; which grounds are necessary to be taught the people, who without them cannot live long in peace amongst themselves".⁹²

It is difficult to over-emphasise the significance of fear in *Leviathan* in so far as this passion is the cornerstone of Hobbes's political construct. As Hobbes himself unambiguously states in Chapter 14, "the Passion to be reckoned upon, is Fear", as it leads Hobbesian individuals to be afraid of punishment and to obey the laws. In contrast, the significance of fear in *Behemoth* is much more modest. It is, of course, true that Hobbes makes a number of remarks that are consistent with his earlier views. For example, he claims that "all the kingdoms of the world [...] proceed from the consent of people, either for *fear* or hope".⁹³ He explains that "it happens many times that men live honestly for *fear* who if they had power would live according to their own opinions",⁹⁴ and, not unlike Machiavelli, he points to "coffers and early severity"⁹⁵ as the most reliable cures for commonwealths. However, although there is room for debate, the balance of evidence suggests that in *Behemoth* fear is no longer the passion that Hobbes "reckons upon". On the contrary, Hobbes is at pains at making his readers realise that people are easily deceived, not simply by experienced speakers but also by vulgar "fortune-tellers," "astrologers" and "prophets"⁹⁶ and induced to fear the 'wrong things' or fear the rights things in the 'wrong order'.

Sometimes because of malice and bad faith, sometimes because of mere ignorance, people are led to fear the 'wrong things' as when members of the two Houses fear "absolute obedience"⁹⁷ because they are unclear about the meaning and function of political obligation, or when the merchants and tradesmen abhor taxation⁹⁸ because they are ignorant about the long-term utility of living in a peaceful commonwealth; or when men and women "of weak judgement" are afraid of obeying the King because they are misguided about their duties as Christians.⁹⁹

So whereas in *Leviathan* Hobbes relies on fear to deliver individuals from destruction and civil war, in *Behemoth* he stresses the view that unless ignorance is replaced with knowledge about the principles of political obligation,

⁹² *Behemoth*, 160.

⁹³ *Behemoth*, 12 (emphasis added).

⁹⁴ *Behemoth*, 47.

⁹⁵ *Behemoth*, 57.

⁹⁶ *Behemoth*, 187-88.

⁹⁷ *Behemoth*, 125.

⁹⁸ *Behemoth*, 126.

⁹⁹ *Behemoth*, 46, 50-51.

fear alone can offer no salvation. For the State to rely on fear is not only ineffective, but also dangerous in so far as for example “[s]uppression of doctrine does but unite and exasperate, that is, increase both the malice and power of them that have already believed them”.¹⁰⁰

To conclude, in *Behemoth* fear is no longer the building block of the political order in so far as Hobbes makes clear that fear alone without knowledge of the “true science” of political obligation cannot protect from civil disorder and therefore cannot be relied upon for the maintenance of future peace.

4. A Conclusion

In the *Elements of Law* and *de Cive* Hobbes singles out uncontrolled ambition and greed as the passions that can lead people to sedition and civil war and sees fear as the passion that can lead individuals out of the state of nature and induce them to follow the law within political associations. In these earlier works Hobbes puts across the image of a political state where the sovereign is not unlike a puppeteer who controls the movements of his puppets by means of rewards and punishments, taking advantage of their natural passions and directing them in a way that is conducive to peace and order. This view of the State is still present in *Leviathan*, even though it is now complemented by numerous remarks that stress the importance of the divulgation of the principles of true political science.

In this paper I have tried to show that in *Behemoth* the image of the state as puppeteer vanishes. The main reason seems to be that Hobbes no longer believes that the passions alone can either damn or save people from civil war.

In section 1 I have tried to show that according to Hobbes, ambitious people would have been unable to “find hands” and would have failed to challenge the political order, had it not been for widespread ignorance about the foundations of political obligation. In section 2 I have argued that greed alone, too, could not have led people to civil disobedience. It was because of generalised ignorance about the role of the military, of the importance of the link between sovereignty and ultimate control of the military, and of the long-term utility of subsidies and taxation that greed contributed to the collapse into civil war. In section 3 I have argued that in *Behemoth* Hobbes’s message is that fear alone without a sound knowledge of the principles of political obligation cannot and does not deliver us from the evil of civil war. I have suggested that this view that fear is no longer the passion to be “reckoned upon” marks a particularly important change in the transition from *Leviathan* to *Behemoth*.

¹⁰⁰ *Behemoth*, 62.