

## Dia-noesis: A Journal of Philosophy

Vol 13 (2022)

Thomas Hobbes: Individualism, Freedom, Sovereignty



### Hobbes' hedonism in front of classical hedonism and the free market's way out

*Elias Vavouras*

doi: [10.12681/dia.37784](https://doi.org/10.12681/dia.37784)

#### To cite this article:

Vavouras, E. (2024). Hobbes' hedonism in front of classical hedonism and the free market's way out. *Dia-Noesis: A Journal of Philosophy*, 13, 85–114. <https://doi.org/10.12681/dia.37784>

## Hobbes' hedonism in front of classical hedonism and the free market 's way out

**Elias Vavouras,**  
*Ph.D., Lecturer,*  
*University of Western Macedonia*  
ilvavouras@gmail.com

**Abstract:** In this inquiry, it becomes evident that Hobbes' hedonism differs essentially from all the theoretical approaches of classical hedonism. The most important differentiation lies in the issue of rationality. Ancient Greek hedonism in all its manifestations cannot be separated from the rational function as a structural feature of the human existence. Any conception of bliss as pleasure presupposes the rational distinction and choice of pleasures. For Hobbes the free market is the equivalent of the natural condition, a space of insatiable fulfillment of one desire after another. Possessive individualism, greedy expansion over the others and continuous transition from one pleasure to another find their justification in this vast economic becoming. The state upholds its founding goal of self-preservation and the safety of its citizens, while the free market gives the prospect of achieving bliss as hedonistic vanity and domination over others.

**Keywords:** hedonism, political philosophy, philosophy of economics, rationalism, human nature, pleasure, moral philosophy.

### The real classic background of hedonism: Democritus

Classical hedonism was born at the same time as classical materialism, i.e. with the atomics and specifically with Democritus. In fact, the primary appearance of hedonism is also the most complete in relation to its later expressions, such as Epicurean or Cyrenaic hedonism. The superiority of the atomic hedonistic theory over later theories is assumed:

1) From its ontological foundation: According to Democritus, every physical inanimate or living natural entity consists of atoms, particles of matter and vacuum, it is a combination of different shape, number, size and quality of atoms. Every form or perception is the reception of the combinations of the void atoms<sup>1</sup>.

2) From its incorporation into a natural philosophy of motion and change: A whirling vortex set in motion an infinite number of unchanged atoms, and since then nature has been in a state of perpetual motion and change. Every movement is due to the causal change of one body from another. Nature is a continuous movement of the atoms-elements of matter in the vacuum under the rule of causality and necessity, the necessary interaction between the elements of matter<sup>2</sup>.

3) From a biological interpretation of the human condition: Man, in turn, is a union of different atoms, he is a composite body of atoms and vacuum, he is a microcosm in analogy to the macrocosm<sup>3</sup>. Every part of his body, every organ is made

<sup>1</sup> Cf. Democr. A. 1, A. 42, A. 47, A. 49, A 58, A. 124, A. 165, B. 9, B.117, B. 125 DK.

<sup>2</sup> Cf. Democr. A. 1, A. 38, A. 69, A. 83, B. 5 DK.

<sup>3</sup> Cf. Democr. B. 34 DK: *καὶ ἐν τῷ ἀνθρώπῳ μικρῷ κόσμῳ ὄντι κατὰ τὸν Δημόκριτον*. "And to "man, who is a small world" according to Democritus". B. 34b: *ἀλλὰ καὶ τὸ ζῶιον οἷον μικρόν τινα κόσμον εἶναι φασιν ἄνδρες παλαιοὶ περὶ φύσιν ἱκανοί*. "But also, every living being seems to constitute a small world, claim the old wise men, skilled connoisseurs of nature". Cf. Arist. *Phys.* 252b.24: *εἰ δ' ἐν ζῳῷ τοῦτο δυνατόν γενέσθαι, τί κωλύει τὸ αὐτὸ συμβῆναι καὶ κατὰ τὸ πᾶν; εἰ γὰρ ἐν μικρῷ κόσμῳ γίγνεται, καὶ ἐν μεγάλῳ· καὶ εἰ ἐν τῷ κόσμῳ, κἂν τῷ ἀπείρῳ*. "If this can happen in a living organism, what can stand in the way of this happening in the entire universe? If this happens in the microcosm, the

up of atoms of different composition and characteristics. Man is a completely material entity, which after death dissolves completely. However, the body-soul dualism continues to exist. The soul consists of higher quality atoms, which are similar to the atoms of fire<sup>4</sup> and move continuously, setting in motion the rest of the body as well as the biological processes<sup>5</sup>. The soul is the moving cause of the body<sup>6</sup>.

4) From the existence of a well-structured gnoseology, which touches the biological and natural view of man: Furthermore, the soul is the human part that determines the cognitive process. All the data of the external world are received by the sensory organs of the body and are transferred through the soul that runs through the body from end to end<sup>7</sup> to the brain, so that cognitive perception is produced<sup>8</sup>. The soul and the mind are identical<sup>9</sup>, as the more qualitatively constituted atoms of the soul allow the rational process<sup>10</sup>. There are two kinds of knowledge, the dark of the senses and the genuine of the rational soul. The soul as a rational mental tool bears the responsibility of the clear interpretation of the reality<sup>11</sup>. Without the senses there could be no intake of data, but without the soul or the mind there could not even be a cognitive process. The rational potential of the soul is what separates man from other living beings.

5) From the formulation of an admirable functionality of moral consideration, which includes all the aforementioned areas: Therefore, the responsibility for any interpretation or performance of any action belongs to the rational soul and not to the irrational body. The body undergoes the decisions of the

---

same can happen in the macrocosm; and if this happens in the world, the same happens in the infinite."

<sup>4</sup> Democr. A. 102 DK.

<sup>5</sup> Democr. A. 106 DK.

<sup>6</sup> Democr. A. 104 DK.

<sup>7</sup> Democr. A. 107 DK.

<sup>8</sup> Democr. A. 105 DK: *ταὐτὸν εἶναι λέγων τὸ νοεῖν τῷ αἰσθάνεσθαι καὶ ἀπὸ μιᾶς ταῦτα προέρχεσθαι δυνάμεως*. "And yet he says that mind and sensation are the same thing, and proceed from the same power".

<sup>9</sup> Democr. A. 106 DK καὶ Democr. A. 135 DK.

<sup>10</sup> Democr. A. 101 DK.

<sup>11</sup> Cf. Democr. B. 159, B. 163, B. 165 DK.

soul and is an instrument of the theoretical or practical directions it sets. Man, like any other living being, seeks pleasure and avoids pain, has a tendency to equate good with pleasant and evil with unpleasant<sup>12</sup>. However, some pleasures, which at first offer satisfaction, may in the end cause maximum pain. The absolute identification of the good with the pleasant cannot be valid, insofar as there are a) long-term and short-term pleasures or b) qualitatively superior and inferior pleasures<sup>13</sup>. Also, c) the correct measure of satisfaction of each pleasure must be taken into account in all of this<sup>14</sup>. A pleasure that lacks or exceeds its proper measure can become harmful<sup>15</sup>.

There are transitory pleasures, while other pleasures are continuous. Long-term pleasures are clearly preferable to short-term ones. The pleasures of the soul or mind belong to the category of long-term pleasures, while those of the body belong to the short-term<sup>16</sup>. Hence, they are qualitatively superior to body ones. In addition, the pleasures of the soul affect the disposition of the atoms of the soul. The choice of harmful pleasures causes the atoms of the soul to move rapidly and disorderly and creates a disharmony, a disorder which is identified with unhappiness. On the contrary, the choice of the right pleasures brings harmony, symmetry and order to the movement of the atoms of the soul, a state defined as bliss<sup>17</sup>.

The choice of the correct measure between excess and lack leads to an analogous blissful state, which corresponds to the

---

<sup>12</sup> Cf. Democr. B. 4 DK: *τέρψις γὰρ καὶ ἀτερπία οὖρος [τῶν συμφέρων καὶ τῶν ἀσυμφέρων].* "Pleasure and lack of pleasure are the limit for determining what is profitable and what is unprofitable".

<sup>13</sup> Democr. B. 207 DK, B. 189 DK, B. 235 DK.

<sup>14</sup> Democr. B. 70 DK: *παιδός, οὐκ ἀνδρός τὸ ἀμέτρως ἐπιθυμεῖν.* "Uncontrolled desire is a characteristic of a child, not a man".

<sup>15</sup> Democr. B. 3 DK: *ἡ γὰρ εὐογκία ἀσφαλέστερον τῆς μεγαλογκίας.* "Because applying the right measure has safer results than exceeding it".

<sup>16</sup> Democr. B. 37 DK: *ὁ τὰ ψυχῆς ἀγαθὰ αἰρεόμενος τὰ θεϊότερα αἰρέεται· ὁ δὲ τὰ σκίητος τὰ ἀνθρωπήϊα.* "One who chooses the goods of the soul chooses the most divine; on the contrary, one who chooses the goods of the body chooses the human"

<sup>17</sup> Democr. A. 167-168 DK. Cf. A. 169, B. 4, B. 215, B. 216. B.223 DK.

correct order of the atoms of the soul<sup>18</sup>. On the contrary, if we choose excess or lack of a pleasure, the measure is circumvented and we are led to a material and kinetic disharmony of the atoms of the soul, an asymmetry that is equivalent to unhappiness in the unfolding of human life<sup>19</sup>. There is a two-way relationship between choosing the right pleasures and the material well-being of the soul<sup>20</sup>. The more disorderly the atoms of the soul move, the more we are led to wrong choices, while the more symmetrically the atoms of the soul move, the more this implies a correct choice of pleasures and their intensity<sup>21</sup>. Conversely, moral choices determine the order of the movement of the soul, right choices lead to right order and therefore to bliss<sup>22</sup>, while wrong choices lead to disorder of the soul and therefore to unhappiness<sup>23</sup>.

Also, the orderliness of the soul is inextricably linked to rationality<sup>24</sup>, while the disorder to the dominance of irrational

---

<sup>18</sup> Democr. B. 4 DK: *Δημόκριτος μὲν ἐν τῷ περὶ τέλους τὴν εὐθυμίαν, ἣν καὶ εὐεστῶ προσηγόρευσεν.* "Defines bliss as the final goal, which he prescribed as the right state of the soul".

<sup>19</sup> Democr. B. 72 DK: *αἱ περὶ τι σφοδραὶ ὀρέξεις τυφλοῦσιν εἰς τᾶλλα τὴν ψυχὴν.* "Strong desires for one particular thing blind the soul to the rest".

<sup>20</sup> Democr. B. 40 DK: *οὔτε σώμασιν οὔτε χρήμασιν εὐδαιμονοῦσιν ἄνθρωποι, ἀλλ' ὀρθοσύνη καὶ πολυφροσύνη.* "People are not happy either with the pleasure of body or with the acquisition of money, but with rationality and prudence".

<sup>21</sup> Democr. B. 174 DK: *ὁ μὲν εὐθυμος εἰς ἔργα ἐπιφερόμενος δίκαια καὶ νόμιμα.* "The man governed by the harmony of the soul is led to righteous and lawful actions".

<sup>22</sup> Democr. B. 61 DK: *οἷσιν ὁ τρόπος ἐστὶν εὐτακτος, τοῦ τοιοῦ καὶ ὁ βίος συντέτακται.* "Whoever has an orderly character, he also has an orderly life (in analogy to his moral behavior)".

<sup>23</sup> Cf. Democr. A. 167 DK, B. 171 DK. Democr. B. 191 DK: *ἀνθρώποισι γὰρ εὐθυμὴ γίνεται μετριότητι τέρψιος καὶ βίου συμμετρῆνι· τὰ δ' ἐλλείποντα καὶ ὑπερβάλλοντα μεταπίπτειν τε φιλεῖ καὶ μεγάλας κινήσας ἐμποιεῖν τῇ ψυχῇ. αἱ δ' ἐκ μεγάλων διαστημάτων κινούμεναι τῶν ψυχῶν οὔτε εὐσταθέες εἰσὶν οὔτε εὐθυμοί.* "Bliss is created in men by measured pleasure and correspondingly measured life. Excess and lack, on the contrary, usually lead to the transition from the balance and create big movements in the soul. After all, souls that are characterized by movements of their atoms over long spaces are neither stable nor blissful".

<sup>24</sup> Democr. A. 135 DK: *περὶ δὲ τοῦ φρονεῖν ἐπὶ τοσοῦτον εἴρηκεν ὅτι γίνεται συμμετρῶς ἐχούσης τῆς ψυχῆς κατὰ τὴν χρῆσιν.* "As far as

passions<sup>25</sup>. Soul and mind are identified, the right movement of the soul leads to the full development of rationality and the removal of irrationality. Hence, bliss is a state of rationality. Only a rational man<sup>26</sup> with a symmetrical soul can make the right choice of beneficial pleasures and diagnose the right measure between the harmful extremes of excess and lack. The ultimate benefit of pleasure can only be obtained by the wise, the fully rational man. The right moral choices presuppose the dominance of rationality, while conversely rationality is structured by the right moral choices that ensure well-being of the soul and therefore rational adequacy<sup>27</sup>.

6) From the political formulation of the atomic theory in terms of dominance and subjection in the context of an inescapable political symbiosis. This unbroken moral motif (choosing the right pleasures under the rule of rationality - creating symmetry and harmonious movement in the material soul - achieving bliss) is also carried over into the field of civil society. According to Democritus, as is also the case with Hobbes, man's transition from the pre-political condition to civil society is artificial and not natural. People are forced by the adversities of the natural environment and their individual existence to form civil societies. The necessity of eventual annihilation and human rationality are responsible for man's political turn. The political community is a small world in analogy to the human organism and the natural universe. The ideal political prospect is concord, where all political parties agree to the common rationality of the state. The condition where all parties participate in the common discourse of the political organization. Unfortunately, however, nature does not create all men equal in rational ability. There are wise men<sup>28</sup>, who establish within their souls harmonious symmetry and are governed by a right predilection regarding beneficial pleasures

---

rationality is concerned, Democritus limited himself to the opinion that it is activated when the soul is in symmetry during the collision of atoms."

<sup>25</sup> Democr. B. 74 DK.

<sup>26</sup> Democr. B. 146 DK.

<sup>27</sup> Cf. Democr. A. 1 DK.

<sup>28</sup> Democr. B. 197 DK.

that lead to bliss. On the opposite side are the unwise<sup>29</sup>, the irrational men, who are plagued by a generalized disorder in the movement of the atoms of their soul and are characterized by wrong irrational choices regarding the utility of pleasures and cling to unhappiness<sup>30</sup>.

Civil society is governed by relations of dominance and subordination. Rational men must govern, because they know human nature and the pleasures that benefit it, on the contrary, unwise are excluded from government, because, immersed in irrationality, they ignore the individual and public good, they are incapable of forming a common political mind, which draws a path to human bliss. Concord<sup>31</sup>, therefore, the formation of this collective rationality belongs to the wise, to those who, after establishing individual moral integrity, are capable of rationally guiding the soul of the state. The state has concord, when rationality prevails and imposes happiness.

We see, then, that the materialism of the atomic theory is reconciled with hedonism and rationalism in a philosophical plan to achieve human bliss on an individual and political level. It is worth mentioning that rationalism plays a dominant role in this moral-political process, so that it constitutes the main characteristic of classical hedonism.

### **Epicurean hedonism: bliss as ataraxia and absence of pain**

Epicurus' hedonism inherits almost entirely the characteristics of the moral scheme of Democritus for pleasure and rationality, but does not seem to fully understand its semantic value and systematic superiority. It accepts the theory of the material soul and its movement, as well as the qualitative separation of pleasures with the decisive intervention of rationality<sup>32</sup>, but it diverts the human ultimate goal (summum

---

<sup>29</sup> Democr. B. 235, Cf. B. 54, 58, 98, 71, 73, 75, 76, 78, 79, 80, 113, 292 DK.

<sup>30</sup> Democr. B. 233 DK.

<sup>31</sup> Democr. B. 250 DK.

<sup>32</sup> Diog. Laert. 10. 132: *νήφων λογισμός*. "The tranquil rationality" - *τὸ μέγιστον ἀγαθὸν φρόνησις*. "The greatest good is rationality".

bonum) to the ataraxia of the soul<sup>33</sup> from the passions and the absence of pain<sup>34</sup> for the body<sup>35</sup>. The Epicureans understand hedonism in a more passive way than Democritus, they believe that the soul should be in a state of ataraxia, while Democritus says that it should move actively and harmoniously through right moral choices. This ataraxia, the withdrawal of the Epicureans, is best seen in the political field, where they choose the path of obscurity, of unimportance or of concealment<sup>36</sup>. Democritus, on the contrary, argues that the right movement of the soul of the wise, the man who has reached bliss, must be transmitted to other people in the form of political government.

### **Cyrenaic hedonism: the pleasure of the moment and rational self-control**

The Cyrenaics, on the other hand, in a decidedly more hedonistic view, prefer the present satisfaction of pleasure, ignoring the past (recollection) and the future (anticipation)<sup>37</sup>. In this perspective they exclude the distinction between short-term and long-term pleasures or higher quality pleasures. They consider that happiness is a continuous movement from one pleasure to another, without any criterion of correctness or usefulness of the pleasures. There can be no quantitative or qualitative gradation of pleasure, no pleasure is differentiated

---

<sup>33</sup> Diog. Laert. 10. 128: *τὴν τῆς ψυχῆς ἀταραξίαν, ἐπεὶ τοῦτο τοῦ μακαρίως ζῆν ἔστι τέλος.* "The ataraxia of the soul, because this is the goal of the blissful life."

<sup>34</sup> Diog. Laert. 10. 136.

<sup>35</sup> Diog. Laert. 10. 131: *ἀλλὰ τὸ μὴτε ἀλγεῖν κατὰ σῶμα μῆτε ταράττεσθαι κατὰ ψυχὴν.* "The body not to be in pain and the soul not to be disturbed".

<sup>36</sup> Cf. Plout. *Moral.* 1129.E: *λάθε βιώσας.* "Live in obscurity".

<sup>37</sup> Diog. Laert. 2. 66 και 2. 89: *ἀλλὰ μὴν οὐδὲ κατὰ μνήμην τῶν ἀγαθῶν ἢ προσδοκίαν ἡδονὴν φασιν ἀποτελεῖσθαι· ὅπερ ἤρεσκεν Ἐπικούρω.* "But neither with the recollection nor with the anticipation of goods do they say that pleasure is created, something that Epicurus liked". Cf. Hobbes T., *Elements of Law*, VIII.

in relation to the others<sup>38</sup>. What matters is the satisfaction of natural or mental pleasure<sup>39</sup>, which arises before us, and not planning for continued satisfaction of future pleasures. The sum of the episodes of pleasure versus the episodes of pain may define how blissful one's life is, but the overall valuation of bliss of the separate pleasures is indeed very difficult to achieve<sup>40</sup>. However, bliss resides more in each of the separate pleasures than in a universal state of pleasure<sup>41</sup>. The purpose of human action is the satisfaction of episodes of pleasure and not an ultimate blissful state. As in Democritus or Epicurus, pleasure is defined as a smooth, normal movement of the soul, while pain as a rough movement, without, however, in this case (of Cyrenaics) determining the material or non-material constitution of the soul. Therefore, pleasure equates to freedom of movement, while pain to its limitation<sup>42</sup>. There is no life without desire, without pain or without pleasure, because life is movement and therefore interwoven with pleasure and pain. To not feeling someone pleasure or pain is equivalent to a state of sleep or death<sup>43</sup>.

---

<sup>38</sup> Diog. Laert. 2. 87: *μη διαφέρειν τε ἡδονὴν ἡδονῆς, μηδὲ ἡδιόν τι εἶναι*. "They said that one pleasure does not differ from another, nor that something is more pleasant than another".

<sup>39</sup> Diog. Laert. 2. 90.

<sup>40</sup> Diog. Laert. 2. 90: *ὡς δυσκολώτατον αὐτοῖς φαίνεσθαι τὸν ἀθροισμὸν τῶν ἡδονῶν εὐδαιμονίαν ποιουσῶν*. "Thus, it appears to them that it is very difficult to assemble the pleasures that cause bliss".

<sup>41</sup> Diog. Laert. 2. 87: *δοκεῖ δ' αὐτοῖς καὶ τέλος εὐδαιμονίας διαφέρειν. τέλος μὲν γὰρ εἶναι τὴν κατὰ μέρος ἡδονήν, εὐδαιμονίαν δὲ τὸ ἐκ τῶν μερικῶν ἡδονῶν σύστημα, αἷς συναριθμοῦνται καὶ αἱ παρωχηκυῖαι καὶ αἱ μέλλουσαι*. "They think that end also differs from bliss; and that bliss is the system consisting of several pleasures, with which both past and future pleasures are numbered."

<sup>42</sup> Diog. Laert. 2. 86: *δύο πάθη ὑφίσταντο, πόνον καὶ ἡδονήν, τὴν μὲν λείαν κίνησιν, τὴν ἡδονήν, τὸν δὲ πόνον τραχεῖαν κίνησιν*. "They accepted two passions, pain and pleasure, pleasure as smooth movement and pain as rough movement".

<sup>43</sup> Diog. Laert. 2. 89: *ἐν κινήσει γὰρ εἶναι ἀμφοτέρω, μὴ οὔσης τῆς ἀπονίας ἢ τῆς ἀηδονίας κινήσεως, ἐπεὶ ἡ ἀπονία οἶονεὶ καθεὺδοντός ἐστι κατάστασις*. "Because both pleasure and pain are processes of motion, as the absence of pain and pleasure is not motion, since the absence of pain is like the state of a man who is asleep".

However, in this case too, the factor of rationality essentially determines things<sup>44</sup>. Any pleasure must not lead man away from rational self-control. Aristippus, the founder of the Cyrenaic school, enjoys the pleasure of the famous courtesan Laida, but is able to maintain his rational control or restraint over this powerful hedonistic passion<sup>45</sup>. He controls his pleasures and they do not control him, which is why he is a wise man in the "Socratic" sense of the term. This predominance of this 'Socratic' rationality over the unfettered desire is a structural parameter. Bliss cannot exist without pleasure either, because good is something pleasant, but neither without rationality, because without it man will become a slave to pleasure and lose his rational character<sup>46</sup>. Human happiness without the dominance of reason cannot exist, the wise man is blissful, precisely because through his rational superiority he decisively controls the pleasures and knows the right limit of their satisfaction in relation to human nature.

### **The Platonic version of hedonism: is rationality a tool for the realization of hedonism?**

There is one more very important reference to the ancient reception of hedonism. In Plato's *Gorgias*<sup>47</sup>, Socrates and Callicles make an interesting conversation on the subject of the right of the most powerful, where the subject of hedonism, but also greed<sup>48</sup>, is involved. Socrates notes that the blissful man is one who has as few needs as possible, one who has reached a

<sup>44</sup> Diog. Laert. 2. 91: *τὴν φρόνησιν ἀγαθὸν μὲν εἶναι λέγουσιν, οὐ δι' ἑαυτὴν δὲ αἰρετήν, ἀλλὰ διὰ τὰ ἐξ αὐτῆς περιγινόμενα*. "They claim that rationality is a good, but preferable not in itself, but for what follows from it".

<sup>45</sup> Diog. Laert. 2. 67, 2. 69 και 2. 75: *πρὸς οὖν τοὺς μεμφομένους αὐτῷ ἔφη, ἔχω Λαΐδα, ἀλλ' οὐκ ἔχομαι· ἐπεὶ τὸ κρατεῖν καὶ μὴ ἡττᾶσθαι ἡδονῶν ἀριστον, οὐ τὸ μὴ χρῆσθαι*. "So to those who accused him he said: 'I have Laida, but I am not dominated by her; because it is excellent to dominate your pleasures and not be dominated by them, not to not have them' ".

<sup>46</sup> Diog. Laert. 2. 91, 2. 98-99.

<sup>47</sup> Plat. *Gorg.* 481b-522e.

<sup>48</sup> Plat. *Gorg.* 483c: *τὸ πλεον τῶν ἄλλων ζητεῖν ἔχειν*. "The pursuit of having more than others".

satisfactory level of fulfillment and no longer needs to participate in the endless game of filling and emptying pleasures. At this point it shows the problem of every hedonist position, pleasure cannot be an ultimate goal, because pure and stable pleasure does not exist, at the moment of the fulfillment of pleasure it is followed by its deprivation, we eat and after a while we are hungry<sup>49</sup>. Hunger is deprivation or pain, while taking food is filling of that deprivation and limiting suffering. Saying that the ultimate goal is pleasure is like saying that happy is the one who itches and scratches, or the one who eats and then has a bowel movement<sup>50</sup>. Callicles replies that the life that Socrates prefers is similar to the state of stones or the dead, who have no need<sup>51</sup>. On the contrary, the ideal condition is the continuous filling and emptying with pleasure, the unstoppable transition from one pleasure to another without time or any other measure, just as the Danaids continuously fill a hollow pitcher with water<sup>52</sup>.

Callicles' hedonism seems to take the mind as the servant for the pursuit of pleasures<sup>53</sup>, although earlier in the discussion he has agreed with the Socratic position that wise men are more powerful than the unwise, showing that classical hedonism cannot to free himself in any case from the primacy of rationality, he cannot easily accept pleasure as a ultimate

---

<sup>49</sup> Plat. *Gorg.* 497a.

<sup>50</sup> Plat. *Gorg.* 494c.

<sup>51</sup> Plat. *Gorg.* 492e: ΚΑΛ. *Οἱ λίθοι γὰρ ἂν οὕτω γε καὶ οἱ νεκροὶ εὐδαιμονέστατοι εἶεν.* "According to this view of course the stones and the dead would be perfectly blissful".

<sup>52</sup> Plat. *Gorg.* 494b-c.

<sup>53</sup> Plat. *Gorg.* 492a: Ἄλλὰ τοῦτ' ἐστὶν τὸ κατὰ φύσιν καλὸν καὶ δίκαιον, ὃ ἐγὼ σοι νῦν παρρησιαζόμενος λέγω, ὅτι δεῖ τὸν ὀρθῶς βιωσόμενον τὰς μὲν ἐπιθυμίας τὰς ἑαυτοῦ ἔαν ὡς μεγίστας εἶναι καὶ μὴ κολάζειν, ταύταις δὲ ὡς μεγίσταις οὐσαις ἱκανὸν εἶναι ὑπηρετεῖν δι' ἀνδρείαν καὶ φρόνησιν, καὶ ἀποτιμπλάναι ὧν ἂν ἀεὶ ἡ ἐπιθυμία γίγνηται. "But in this consists the right which flows from nature, which I will now without any hesitation set forth to you: that it behooves him who is going to live rightly to let his desires be as great as possible and to set no limitations, and these, of course, as they are great, he should be able to serve them with the help of bravery and rationality and to satisfy what the desire commands every time".

goal without its rational control<sup>54</sup>. Also, the hedonism of Callicles makes unbridled greed an inseparable companion of pleasure. Pleasure has no value if it is not accompanied by greed, by the accumulation of more goods than the others. At this point, the issue of the property of material goods as a measure of human happiness also arises: the greedy accumulation of desirable goods and the consolidation of this situation under the auspices of power. The sovereign must have more property-goods than his subjects, his power validating this greedy distribution<sup>55</sup>. The Platonic version of hedonism undoubtedly gives it political extension in terms of dominance and subjection. Complete hedonism derives from the greedy predominance in the acquisition of material goods over other people. Hedonism, individualism, greed and property characterize this hedonistic position. The only problem that looms is that of rationalism, and even this extreme hedonism cannot overlook it. Rational people are more worthy and more powerful than the irrational people, but what exactly does that value consist of? Is rationality an instrument for the realization of pleasure or something more in relation to the determination of human happiness?

### **Thomas Hobbes: Bliss as endless hedonism and property**

We now enter the case of Thomas Hobbes and the hedonism he advocates. Hobbes agrees that by nature the good is identified with the pleasant, while evil with the unpleasant. Pleasure or pain is a measure of good and evil. In this respect it agrees with classical hedonism as a whole. He also considers that pleasure is an unhindered, free movement towards the

---

<sup>54</sup> Plat. *Gorg.* 490a: *Εἷς φρονῶν μυρίων μὴ φρονούντων κρείττων ἐστὶν καὶ τοῦτον ἄρχειν δεῖ, τοὺς δ' ἄρχεσθαι.* "One rational man is more powerful than thousands of irrational ones and he deserves to rule, they to obey".

<sup>55</sup> Plat. *Gorg.* 484c: *ὡς τούτου ὄντος τοῦ δικαίου φύσει, καὶ βοῦς καὶ τᾶλλα κτήματα εἶναι πάντα τοῦ βελτιόνος τε καὶ κρείττονος τὰ τῶν χειρόνων τε καὶ ἡττόνων.* "Because this is the true essence of natural right, and the oxen and all the rest of the goods of the worst and the weakest should rightfully belong to the best and the most powerful".

natural good, so here he is in line with the positions of Epicurus or the Cyrenaics. It places human existence within a mechanistically structured natural world, where every movement has a moving cause, ignoring of course the primary moving cause of this causal chain (e.g. rational creator, first mover-immovable cause or God). The tendency towards pleasure is a necessary natural movement, dictated by the biological and material nature of living beings and not a moral choice<sup>56</sup>. In this sense, the desire for pleasure or the fear of suffering is the moving force behind every human activity<sup>57</sup>.

*Felicity*, for Hobbes, is a continual progress of the desire from one object -which causes pleasure- to another, the attaining of the former being still but the way to the latter<sup>58</sup>, a course that is interrupted only by death. There is a continuous movement from one pleasure to another, where this hedonistic condition is accompanied by the acquisition, by the property of the goods that cause pleasure<sup>59</sup>. As for its first part, the definition of bliss is similar to the Cyrenaic position that bliss is a continuous movement from one pleasure to another, there is no stability of happiness but a transition from one pleasure to another. On the contrary, for Epicurus, as we have seen, there is no constant movement, but a pursuit of *ataraxia*, a blissful stability with limited movement between necessary qualitatively higher pleasures. Hobbes in no way favors the limitation or absence of desire under the cloak of perpetual rational tranquility, but defines life as motion and therefore as continuous desire interwoven with the senses, not exempt from

---

<sup>56</sup> Hobbes T., *Elements of Law*, VII.

<sup>57</sup> Hobbes T., *De Cive*, I.10: *whatsoever a man would, it therefore seems good to him because he wills it*. 1.2: *whatsoever seemes Good, is pleasant, and pertains either to the senses, or the mind*. Cf. Abizadeh Ar., *Hobbes And The Two Faces Of Ethics*, Cambridge University Press, 2018, p. 146: (a) *all action is prompted by desire*, (b) *all desire is accompanied by pleasure*, and (c) *whenever we desire anything, we desire it only if we represent it as something pleasant to ourselves*.

<sup>58</sup> Hobbes, T., *Leviathan*, XI.

<sup>59</sup> Hobbes, T., *Leviathan*, VI: *Continual success in obtaining those things which a man from time to time desireth, that is to say, continual prospering, is that men call felicity*. Cf. Hobbes, T., *Leviathan*, XI.

the fear of the absence of pleasure - something that equates to pain and therefore dissatisfaction<sup>60</sup>.

Hobbes uses a quintessentially Cyrenaic way to define happiness, claiming that human life is a chain of moments of pleasure or displeasure. If the episodes of pleasure predominate, we can speak of happiness, while if the episodes of dissatisfaction predominate, of unhappiness<sup>61</sup>. Immediately afterwards Hobbes makes an Epicurean turn by claiming that the purpose of human desire is not a single and momentary pleasure, but rather the securing of satisfaction and future desires forever. While the Cyrenaics defined bliss as discrete episodes of pleasure, Hobbes says that there can be a future state of consolidation of pleasure. Bliss is something that can be achieved in a stable way and ensures the identification of the good with the pleasure forever<sup>62</sup>. This alludes to Epicurus but also to all classical thought (except the Cyrenaics), where happiness is something absolutely stable and can potentially be achieved for the entire duration of human life<sup>63</sup>. Every human action or mood is not only aimed at achieving a hedonistic moment, but at ensuring an overall blissful life<sup>64</sup>. But it should be noted that Hobbes rejects the concept of happiness as a *summum bonum*, as something to which all human activities should aim. This is nothing else but a utopia, a fallacy into which all previous tradition has fallen. Each pleasure or object of pleasure is also a separate goal. The basic human pursuit must be the constant maintenance of movement

---

<sup>60</sup> Hobbes, T., *Leviathan*, VI: *For there is no such thing as perpetual tranquillity of mind, while we live here; because life itself is but motion, and can never be without desire, nor without fear, no more than without sense.*

<sup>61</sup> Hobbes T., *Elements of Law*, VII. 8: *Now when in the whole chain, the greater part is good, the whole is called good; and when the evil outweigheth, the whole is called evil.*

<sup>62</sup> Hobbes, T., *Leviathan*, XI: *object of mans desire, is not to enjoy once onely, and for one instant of time; but to assure for ever, the way of his future desire.*

<sup>63</sup> Hobbes T., *Elements of Law*, VII. 7: *FELICITY, therefore (by which we mean continual delight), consisteth not in having prospered, but in prospering.*

<sup>64</sup> Hobbes, T., *Leviathan*, IV, XI. Cf. Abizadeh Ar., *Hobbes And The Two Faces Of Ethics*, Cambridge University Press, 2018, p. 139-140.

from one pleasure to another, that is, from one goal to another<sup>65</sup>.

Moreover, what had already been accomplished with the Machiavellian intervention as a founding act of modernity, namely that happiness ceases to be an affair of the soul, acquires with Hobbes a permanent existence. Human bliss is not a proper state or disposition of the soul (as in Democritus or Epicurus, but also in Plato), but the acquisition of material goods with a greedy predominance over others, a justification of human subjectivity by emphatically imposing it on others. Bliss for Hobbes is not a single pleasure or cessation of movement from one pleasure to another, but the design and achievement of a state of continuous satisfaction of pleasures or pleasant goods, as an inalienable property of some human subject, as a conquest of the past and of the future of the biological continuity<sup>66</sup>. On the one hand, then, there is no *summum bonum* as eudemonic goal, but on the other hand, there is a provision for a future condition of happiness, of a continuous and uninterrupted pleasure.

It is true that in many passages Hobbes does not define what goods are pleasurable to people, he implies that pleasurable goods are as many as human subjective desires<sup>67</sup>. This probably happens, to demonstrate that in the natural state, where the objectivity of the law is absent, any opinion or desire is possible, as long as there is no criterion of truth. However, in the description of the natural condition the war of all against all arises because of human competition for the goods that cause pleasure, the people are many, while the pleasant goods are few. This observation leads to the conclusion that people claim specific hedonic acquisitions, to which the human nature of desire leads them. Otherwise, there would be no competition for specific, rare goods<sup>68</sup>.

---

<sup>65</sup> Hobbes T., *Elements of Law*, VII. Cf. *Leviathan*, XI.

<sup>66</sup> Hobbes T., *Elements of Law*, VII. 7.

<sup>67</sup> Hobbes T., *Elements of Law*, VII. 3: *Every man, for his own part, calleth that which pleaseth, and is delightful to himself, GOOD; and that EVIL which displeaseth him: insomuch that while every man differeth from other in constitution, they differ also one from another concerning the common distinction of good and evil.*

<sup>68</sup> Hobbes T., *Leviathan*, XIII.

Additionally, in Hobbes's accounts the absence of external obstacles to the attainment of desire equates to freedom. In the natural condition there is absolute freedom, but also absolute annihilation or absolute fear of violent death, as the absolute freedom of one man collides with the absolute freedom of other people. Everyone has an absolute right to all goods, but everyone also has an absolute right to defend his self-preservation against others, even if it means exterminating them biologically. Absolute freedom to desire equals absolute annihilation, due to constant conflict and insecurity. Human rationality is activated at the crucial moment perceiving the first law of nature, which dictates the preservation of existence<sup>69</sup>. Man accepts an almost universal diminution of his freedom and thus of his desire in order to self-preservation through the agreed upon social contract. He surrenders all his freedom and at the same time all his desire for all things that bring pleasure to a sovereign, who ensures self-preservation and inner peace, but has the absolute power to determine what one should desire and where one should be moving. The limitation of freedom and desire gives the preservation of life within the civil society, while in the natural state absolute freedom and desire lead inexorably to death. This means that man gives up from short-term, intense but destructive pleasures in order to access a state of limited intensity but long-term pleasures. Just as Democritus or Epicurus prioritize long-term, future, beneficial pleasures over short-term, destructive ones.

It is also notable that Hobbes never elevates rationality or the pleasures of the mind to a state of bliss, of integration of man. Although he admits that there is pleasure of the mind as the knowledge of causes, which, when it becomes a permanent production of knowledge, surpasses in pleasure the brief pleasures of the flesh, he cannot prejudge the pleasure of rationality as the ultimate end of man<sup>70</sup>. The pleasure of the

---

<sup>69</sup> Hobbes T., *Leviathan*, XIII, XIV.

<sup>70</sup> Hobbes T., *Leviathan*, VI: *the care of knowing causes; which is a lust of the mind, that by a perseverance of delight in the continual and indefatigable generation of knowledge, exceedeth the short vehemence of any carnal pleasure.*

mind is a state, which is based on the anticipation of corporal pleasure because of the existing power that can bring about such a thing. The pleasure of the mind is based on the anticipation of the satisfaction of the desire through the evaluation of power. Human power having realized a condition of permanent satisfaction of pleasure hopes, expects that it will maintain permanent pleasure in the future as well<sup>71</sup>. Mental pleasure stems from the awareness of one's power to satisfy his desires in the future. So, the pleasure of the mind is a function of the human imagination, which contemplates through recollection and expectation the actual satisfaction of the desires. Therefore, it is not real pleasure, but a theoretical simulation of the actual pleasure. Especially, in the logical hypothesis of the natural condition of man, rationality is a servant of the pursuit of the desires, a powerful instrument for the satisfaction of pleasures<sup>72</sup>. Reason is an auxiliary means of increasing power and therefore happiness, since not only the acquisition but also the keeping of goods that cause pleasure constitutes power. Rationality assists in shaping the path from lesser to greater power, thus property, pleasure, freedom<sup>73</sup>. Rational tranquility or theoretical contemplation is not a

---

<sup>71</sup> Hobbes T., *Thomas White's De Mundo Examined*, trans. H. W. Jones, London: Bradford University Press, 1976, 38.8: *Now if glory be such that it springs from assessing one's power on the basis of previous deeds, they bring about hope, because he who has done, seems to have the power to do again. Therefore such a self-assessment gives rise to diligence [industria], & frequent success, through a true and just assessment of power; moreover one success causes another, thanks to the new power secured with each success; and this continuous manner of successes, together with a reason for hope if they persist, is called felicity.* Cf. 38.6-8. Abizadeh Ar., *Hobbes And The Two Faces Of Ethics*, Cambridge University Press, 2018, p. 157-160.

<sup>72</sup> Cf. Abizadeh Ar., *Hobbes And The Two Faces Of Ethics*, Cambridge University Press, 2018, p.160: *mental pleasures are parasitic on sensual pleasures.*

<sup>73</sup> Hobbes T., *Thomas White's De Mundo Examined*, trans. H. W. Jones, London: Bradford University Press, 1976, 38.6: *since not only acquiring, but also protecting one's gains, are a power, felicity will be the perpetual progress of appetite and hope from lesser to greater power.* "καθώς όχι μόνο η απόκτηση, αλλά και η προστασία των κερδών κάποιου, είναι δύναμη, η ευτυχία θα είναι η αέναη πρόοδος της επιθυμίας και της ελπίδας από μικρότερη σε μεγαλύτερη δύναμη".

characteristic of human nature, but a symptom of the peaceful living that political life ensures. Rationality is not a human end, but a means to the realization of the goal of continuous pleasure. It is a valuable tool for justifying unfettered desire and unfair greed while simultaneously dominating other people. For the classical hedonism, bliss is a state of the soul, accompanied by the supremacy of the rational element. Blissful can only be the wise man, the man who, according to the rational character of human nature, surpasses others in establishing an inner rational order. For Hobbes this is categorically rejected, the wise man is not happier than the unwise. The rule of rationality is not defined as human perfection, the goal is to create a state of continuous satisfaction of pleasures, and reason is only a useful instrument in justifying this enterprise<sup>74</sup>.

After the acceptance of the primary political contract, the subjectivity of each human part ceases and the objectivity of the state is imposed, true is whatever the sovereign agent defines as true. Unlimited freedom also ceases, in favor of the limited freedom allowed by political power. Human freedom extends as far as conventional law allows as a reflection of the will of the state. This applies not only to the criterion of truth or the limit of freedom, but also to the desires or the pleasures. Within the state not everyone has a right to all things, but only to those defined by the legal framework. Apart from the issue of private property - which also applies by the virtue of the political contract - which protects the pleasant goods belonging to one from the malicious desire of others, there is also the will of the sovereign. The sovereign can define the direction or the type of individual desires - except, of course, those that belong to the self-preservation - so that the cohesion of the civil society is not endangered. Pleasant is what the state defines or accepts as pleasant. Such a thing, of course, is completely unthinkable to the principles of ancient hedonism, where pleasure or desire is part of the individuality of everyone on the way to achieving bliss. For Hobbes the form of pleasure or happiness is defined by the state, one state can define, as it wants, the parameters

---

<sup>74</sup> Hobbes T., *Leviathan*, VIII: *For the thoughts are to the desires as scouts and spies to range abroad and find the way to the things desired.*

of happiness of its subjects and another state in a completely different way.

### **The free market way out**

However, despite the absolute omnipotence of the state over its subjects, Hobbes believes that there must be conditions for the development of individual well-being. The sovereign must leave space for the creation of individual happiness as a product of the work of the subjects<sup>75</sup>. Essentially, through property and work, a margin of identification of happiness with individual desire must be opened, which was fact in the natural condition. Within the state, however, something like this is very difficult to activate, as it conflicts with the omnipotence of the sovereign representative and the desire of each different political party. To increase the freedom of a political party in all goods, means to shrink the freedom of the state, but also of the other political parties. The way out here is the realm of the free market, where everyone's property and desire can grow continuously in relation to their work, even at the transnational level, while the role of the state is limited to the level of observation and control of the economic activity. The free market is the equivalent of the natural condition, a space of insatiable fulfillment of one desire after another. Possessive individualism, greedy expansion over the others and continuous transition from one pleasure to another find their justification in this vast economic becoming. The state upholds its founding goal of self-preservation and the safety of its citizens, while the free market gives the prospect of achieving bliss as hedonistic vanity and domination over others. In the free market there are all the predicates of the natural condition except the fear of violent biological death: relentless competition, the identification of happiness with the possession-property of goods and continuous pleasure, the deification of greed, the identification of individual value with money and property, subjective delimitation-definition of pleasure, equality in front of the laws of the market. The

---

<sup>75</sup> Hobbes T., *De Cive*, XIII. *Leviathan*, XIII.

political state secures its existence by diverting the voluptuousness of the people into economic competition<sup>76</sup>.

## Conclusions

From the above findings, it becomes evident that Hobbes' hedonism differs essentially from all the theoretical approaches of classical hedonism. 1) The most important differentiation lies in the issue of rationality. Ancient Greek hedonism in all its manifestations cannot be separated from the rational function as a structural feature of the human existence. Any conception of bliss as pleasure presupposes the rational distinction and choice of pleasures. Pleasures cannot uncritically direct human activity, such a thing constitutes obvious irrationality and a turn towards self-destruction. Even the Cyrenaics, who advocate a more extreme form of hedonism, cannot escape the rational parameter: one man must dominate through rationality to his desires and not be dominated by them. For Hobbes, on the contrary, rationality is a weapon of increase of pleasures<sup>77</sup> and not an agent of imposing the right measure. There is no blissful stability achieved by mastery of

---

<sup>76</sup> Cf. Macpherson C. B., *The political theory of possessive individualism Hobbes to Locke*, Oxford University Press, 1962, p. 46-106. Macpherson C. B., (1983). "Hobbes' Political Economy", *Philosophical Forum*, 14 (3): 211-224. Gross R., "Political Economy from Hobbes to Hegel", *Cultural Hermeneutics*, 1976, 25-41. Springborg P., "Thomas Hobbes and the Political Economy of Peace", *Croatian Political Science Review*, Vol. 55, No. 4, 2018, pp. 9-35. Nielsen T. H., "The State, the Market and the Individual. Politics, Economy and the Idea of Man in the Works of Thomas Hobbes, Adam Smith and in Renaissance Humanism", *Acta Sociologica*, Vol. 29, No. 4 (1986), pp. 283-302. Devine J., "The Positive Political Economy of Individualism and Collectivism: Hobbes, Locke, and Rousseau", *Politics & Society*, 2008, Volume 28, Issue 2, 265-304. Vinnicombe Th. - Staveley R., (2002), "John Locke, Thomas Hobbes and the development of political economy", *International Journal of Social Economics*, Vol. 29 Iss 9 pp. 690 - 705.

<sup>77</sup> Hobbes T., *Leviathan*, VIII: *The passions that most of all cause the differences of wit are principally the more or less desire of power, of riches, of knowledge, and of honour. All which may be reduced to the first, that is, desire of power. For riches, knowledge and honour are but several sorts of power.*

the mind over the destructive passions, life is movement, pleasure, sensation to the fullest extent.

2) For ancient hedonism, bliss is a matter of the human soul, it is a right movement or order of the soul connected to the choice of the right pleasures. Hobbes rejects any such approach, bliss cannot be understood as a proper disposition of the soul, but as a continuous corporal pleasure and greedy, material expansion at the expense of others. The disconnection of human happiness with the psyche, which had already been accomplished with Machiavelli, finds its ultimate realization in the philosophical system of Hobbes.

3) For Hobbes, hedonism has political consequences, because it is inextricably linked to power, individual or collective. Power over others, i.e. political power, is a condition of happiness as a constant transition from one pleasure-giving good to another. An increase in power implies an increase in the conditions of bliss, while conversely a decrease in power implies a decrease in bliss. The terms freedom or pleasure are also closely related to the concept of bliss. Power pronounces freedom of movement toward the natural tendency to pleasure, while restriction of movement amounts to restriction of power and thus of bliss. On the contrary, the ancient Greek perception of hedonism disconnects power from bliss. Epicurus is indifferent to political life or the possession of power, considering them as elements responsible for the disorder of the soul and therefore human unhappiness, while the Cyrenaics emphasize that happiness is an individual matter, not connected with political supremacy over others in terms of pleasures or property. Only Democritus envisions a political continuation of hedonism under the rule of the wise, those who can rationally manage their pleasures and politically transform this possibility into a concord, a common mind of the state.

4) Also, Hobbes connects happiness with the possession of material goods (possessive individualism), he considers that the continuous acquisition of goods or their easy appropriation from others gives happiness. Happiness, whether for the individual or for the state, means a continuous increase of

property, a greedy course that is interrupted only by death<sup>78</sup>. Neither approach of the ancient Greek schools of hedonism regards the acquisition or property of goods as pleasure. Epicurus favors a rational hedonism under the necessary extension of friendship, the common property of minimal material or intellectual goods related to bliss, while the Cyrenaics see bliss as episodes of pleasure, where the one good that gives pleasure is unrelated to the previous one, nor is it an addition to it. There is no accumulation of pleasant goods, but momentary pleasure of them.

5) Furthermore, Hobbes's hedonism faces death with terror, as an act of ultimate unhappiness. Death or the fear of death as a suspension of vital movement constitutes the bottomless shore of bliss or freedom. Fear is defined as the anticipation of future pain, and the greatest pain is death. There is an inseparable relationship between fear, death and hedonism, as the constant fear of death or the death itself as constant pain is the opposite side of pleasure and consequently of bliss<sup>79</sup>. For classical hedonism the fear of death or the death itself are simply elements that disrupt the path to bliss on the grounds that they deconstruct the well-being of the soul. Death is simply the disintegration of the material nature of man, the disconnection of the atoms as elements of matter that make him up and therefore something essentially indifferent to us, since when we exist death does not exist, and vice versa. There is no terror before death, but reconciliation with the idea of death. Ancient hedonism does not fear death, but regards it as a natural course of things, which should have little effect on the path to the happiness into this material world.

6) Additionally, the free market perspective is missing from classical hedonism, there is no association of happiness with money, nor is individual worth valued through work. Money is not the purpose of human action, but a means to acquire only useful material or intellectual goods for a quality living. Even when Aristippus visits the tyrant Dionysius for the purpose of obtaining money, he does so not to increase his

---

<sup>78</sup> Cf. Hobbes T., *Elements of Law*, VII. 7.

<sup>79</sup> Hobbes T., *Elements of Law*, VII. 2: *but in respect of the displeasure expected, FEAR.*

individual worth, but to multiply the means of obtaining happiness. Money is undeniably a means and that is why Dionysius needs Aristippus, a philosopher, to learn how to use it properly. On the other hand, Hobbes considers the human value as a consequence of money. The value of a person is the amount that would be spent at that particular moment in order to utilize his abilities. Possession of money and property define human value by the power accumulated by their possessor and are synonymous with bliss because they ensure a continuous perspective in the transition from one pleasure to another. In the field of the free market, where human competition is expressed, no blissful condition can be understood without money and property as the bases of power. In the eyes of Hobbes the tyrant Dionysius would already be blissful, as he would have unlimited money, property much greater than other people and constant satisfaction of pleasure. Hence the assistance of a philosopher in pointing out the true path of happiness would be entirely unnecessary.

7) The only real common ground between Hobbes and classical hedonism is the Platonic passage from Gorgias. There is a strong connection in Callicles' argumentation with Hobbes's view regarding the identification of happiness with the continuous satisfaction of pleasure and the possession of more goods than others. The satisfaction of pleasure must be continuous and characterized by absolute freedom of limits, then only one is close to bliss<sup>80</sup>. There is no intention or provision for a rational distinction of pleasures into beneficial and harmful, happiness equals limitless pleasure, immersion in the infinite sea of pleasure.

Also, the inseparable connection of happiness with greed, the possession-property of more goods in relation to others, is emphasized. In the Platonic passage, the relationship of property with happiness is continuously mentioned. Having,

---

<sup>80</sup> Plat. *Gorg.* 492c: Ἀλλὰ τῇ ἀληθείᾳ, ὦ Σώκρατες, ἣν φῆς σὺ διώκειν, ὧδ' ἔχει· τρυφή καὶ ἀκολασία καὶ ἐλευθερία, ἐὰν ἐπικουρίαν ἔχη, τοῦτ' ἐστὶν ἀρετὴ τε καὶ εὐδαιμονία. "But the truth, Socrates, which you claim to pursue, in this triptych lies; lewdness, debauchery, and unlimited freedom, if one has the ability to realize them, these constitute virtue and bliss."

possessing goods in a superlative degree compared to others, partly defines the happy life. In fact, the blissful and at the same time stronger man must seize the goods of others with the unhindered right that his power ensures him<sup>81</sup>. Hobbes recognizes something like this as a characteristic of the powerful in the pre-social condition, it is easier to usurp the goods of others than to acquire one's own property from the beginning.

Also, there is an extension of insatiable pleasure and greed in the political field. Ultimately this kind of hedonism is political, as supremacy in terms of pleasure and material possessions is transformed by power into political supremacy. The truly blissful man cannot but be superior and ruler over others with his unnegotiable power. Gorgias' discussion is at bottom a purely political discussion, which aims to find the blissful life on an individual and civil level, but also to define those who should be in a position of dominance and submission. In the same motive Hobbes at no point in his work can separate his hedonism and theory of property from political sovereignty. All have as a common political denominator the right or obligation to property or pleasure. Political sovereignty and the role of the state follows as a consequence of regulating the insatiable human desire for pleasure and property.

A surprising similarity between the two views also exists in the matter of rationality or wisdom, which becomes the servant of pleasure and greed. Although Calicles vacillates between the positions that a) the blissful and therefore superior are the rational people<sup>82</sup> or b) the physically strong who can take away

---

<sup>81</sup> Plat. *Gorg.* 488b: Ἄγειν βίαν τὸν κρείττω τὰ τῶν ἡττόνων καὶ ἄρχειν τὸν βελτίω τῶν χειρόνων καὶ πλέον ἔχειν τὸν ἀμείνω τοῦ φαυλοτέρου; "Let the most powerful take away by force the goods of the weakest and let the best rule over the worst and let the ablest have more goods than the least able"?

<sup>82</sup> Plat. *Gorg.* 488b: Οὐκ ἐρεῖς, τοὺς βελτίους καὶ κρείττους πότερον τοὺς φρονιμωτέρους λέγεις ἢ ἄλλους τινάς; "To the concepts better and superior do you give the interpretation rationally superior or do you mean something else? Cal.: Yes, in the name of Zeus, indeed I mean them, par excellence in fact."

the material goods of others by force<sup>83</sup> or c) those who insatiably satisfy their pleasures, in the end he emphasizes that rationality exerts an auxiliary action in creating the conditions for the exercise of power and the satisfaction of pleasure<sup>84</sup>. We could say that the mind is empirically adapted to the circumstances and used instrumentally, so as to advance the goal of the acting subject. Rationality is not the ultimate goal or natural integration of man, but an ability to adapt to circumstances to serve other purposes. The rational faculty is not a non-negotiable arbiter of right and wrong, beneficial and harmful in terms of the pleasures, but a lever for increasing the pleasure of power, an instrument for overcoming any natural or conventional limit. Hobbes fully supports this version of hedonism, relegating the human rational capacity to the service of achieving the passions and pleasures in a particular situation<sup>85</sup>. Although Hobbes vacillates or contradicts himself regarding the human rational capacity, when he anoints it responsible to the perception of the laws of nature and the political solution to the problem of mutual annihilation. Human civilization is the result of the human reason, which is able to carry out a rationally structured political planning capable of liberating man from the fear of

---

<sup>83</sup> Plat. *Gorg.* 484c.

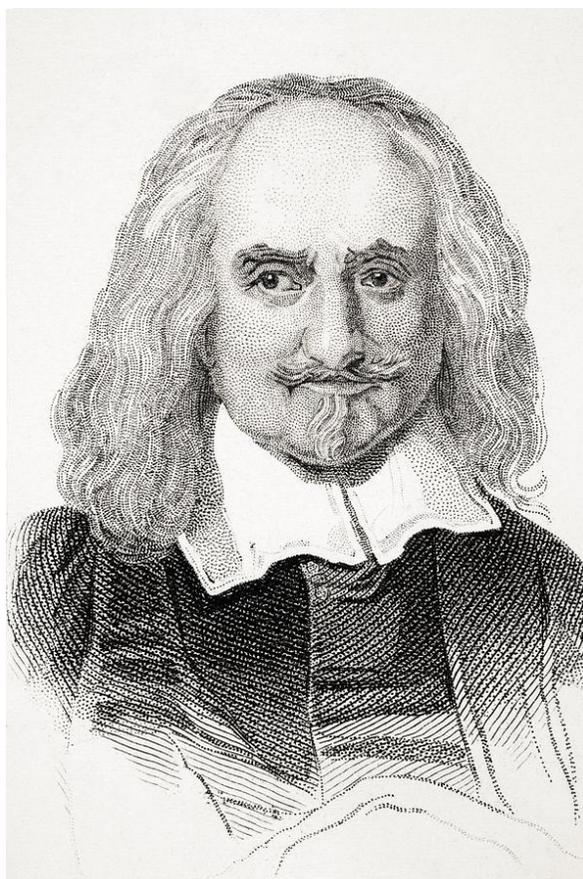
<sup>84</sup> Plat. *Gorg.* 492a.

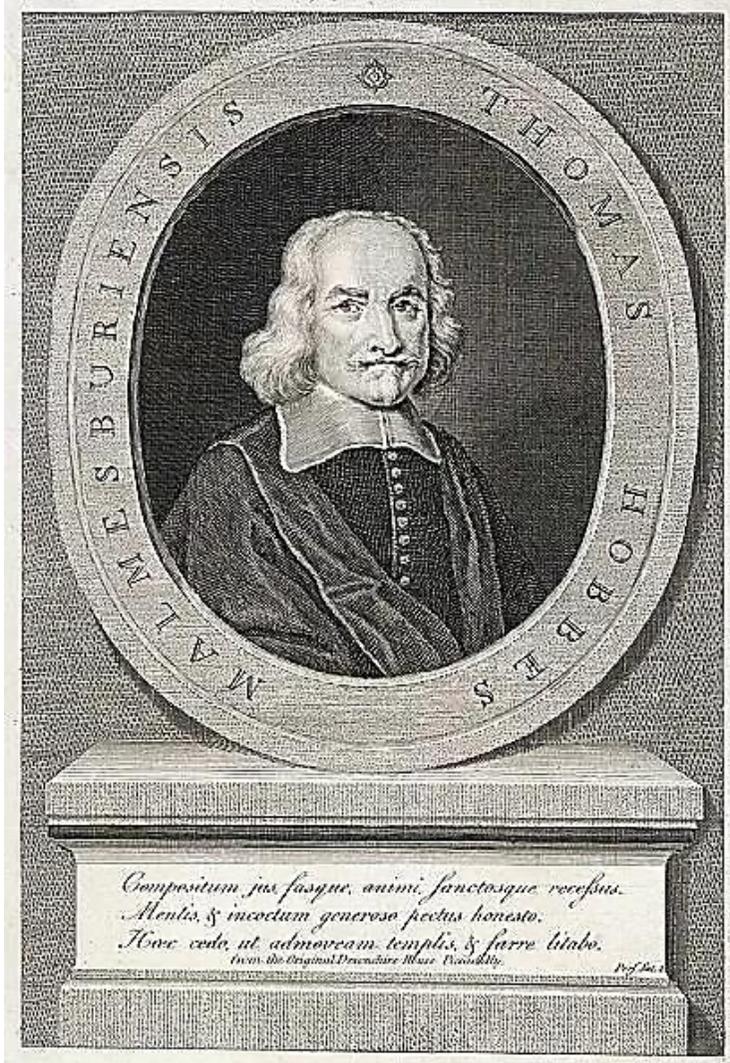
<sup>85</sup> Hobbes T., *Leviathan*, VIII: *From desire ariseth the thought of some means we have seen produce the like of that which we aim at.* Cf. Blau Ad., "Reason, Deliberation, and the Passions", *The Oxford Handbook of Hobbes*, (Ed. by Martinic A. P. - Hoekstra K.) 2016, pp. 195-220. Rahe P., *Republics Ancient and Modern. Volume 2: New Modes & Orders in Early Modern Political Thought.* Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1994, pp. 142-144. Warrender H., *The Political Philosophy of Hobbes: His Theory of Obligation*, Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1957, p. 269. Hampton J., *Hobbes and the Social Contract Tradition*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986, p. 34-42. Oakeshott M., *Hobbes on Civil Association*, Indianapolis: Liberty Fund, 1975, p. 27, 94. James Susan, "Explaining the Passions: Passions, Desires, and the Explanation of Action," *The Soft Underbelly of Reason: The Passions in the Seventeenth Century*, (ed. Gaukroger St.) London: Routledge, 1998, pp. 17-33. Parsons T., *On Institutions and Social Evolution*, Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1982, pp. 88, 96-98. Darwall St., *The British Moralists and the Internal "Ought": 1640-1740.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995, pp. 57-79.

violent death. The creation of a blissful state of satisfaction of one pleasure after another cannot be realized without the predictive ability of human rationality. This is perhaps the most important problem of these two hedonistic approaches, the inability to completely get rid of rationality as a special characteristic of man.



*Philosophical Notes  
on Hobbes*



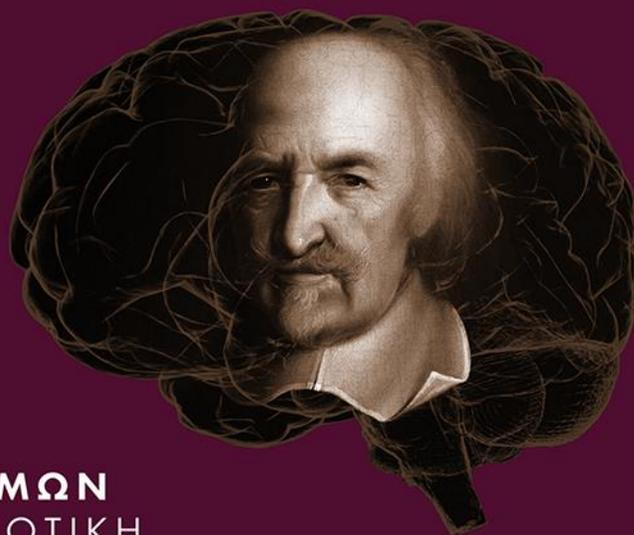


ΣΕΙΡΑ: ΦΙΛΟΣΟΦΙΚΗ ΣΚΕΨΗ

THOMAS HOBBS

ΠΕΡΙ ΤΩΝ ΣΤΟΙΧΕΙΩΝ  
ΤΟΥ ΦΥΣΙΚΟΥ ΝΟΜΟΥ  
ΚΑΙ ΤΗΣ ΠΟΛΙΤΙΚΗΣ

ΕΙΣΑΓΩΓΗ, ΜΕΤΑΦΡΑΣΗ:  
ΒΑΣΙΛΕΙΟΣ Δ. ΜΑΚΡΥΠΟΥΛΙΑΣ



ΑΜΜΩΝ  
ΕΚΔΟΤΙΚΗ

