

## Hobbes' account of the conative operations of the mind

**Pleasure** – a motion communicated to the heart that enhances the vital motions of the heart and blood.

**Pain** – a motion communicated to the heart that impedes the vital motions of the heart and blood.

Pleasure causes a motion of the body towards the thing that causes pleasure.

Pain causes a motion of the body away from the thing that causes pain.

The “first beginnings” of these motions (= an initial impulse not yet followed by actual motion) are **desire** and **aversion**.

(Desire and aversion are not attitudes towards intentional objects. They are just beginnings of motion.)

Sometimes, a motion towards or away from an object of pleasure or pain is stopped before it gets beyond its “first beginnings.”

This happens when the desire or aversion is followed by a conception of the causes or effects of obtaining or avoiding the object, and that conception produces a contrary desire or aversion.

Alternating sequences of desire and aversion are **deliberation**.

**Will** is the last desire or aversion to emerge from the process of deliberation.

So, it is the beginning of a motion that is not stopped but instead continued.

**Intention** is the last desire or aversion to emerge from the process of deliberation when that process is interrupted (e.g., by sleep or by getting distracted by something else)

In this case the motion does not follow, but we assume it will when the agent’s attention returns to the project.

## There is no such thing as free will

To be free (at liberty) means to be able to act either way.

As long as acting either way is within your power, ...

... and you are still deliberating so that the outcome of your deliberation is uncertain,

you are free (able to act either way).

But once the process of deliberation terminates in a will, you are no longer able to do otherwise.

So deliberation takes away freedom to act.

And the will, as the outcome of the process of deliberation, is the point in the process at which all freedom ceases.

It is also entirely determined, since the process of deliberation is determined at each stage.

## Voluntary and involuntary

We can nonetheless draw a distinction between voluntary and involuntary action.

Voluntary action is motion caused by the will.

e.g., walking

Involuntary action is motion that is not caused by the will.

e.g., being carried or thrown

Illustrative cases:

hard choices  
acting out of character  
mixed actions

## Willing cannot be voluntary

By definition, what is voluntary is what follows from the will.

So will cannot be what follows from the will

(You need to have will first before you can have anything that is voluntary, otherwise you would get caught in an infinite regress)

Will is instead what follows from the process of deliberation.

All willing is determined by desire and aversion grounded in experience of pleasure and pain, of the causes of pleasure and pain, and of the concomitant, pleasurable or painful consequences of these causes.

## Compatibilism

Hobbes was a compatibilist

He maintained that even though the will is determined, moral praise and blame are still legitimate

*“The intention of the law is not to grieve the delinquent for that which is past and not to be undone, but to make him and others just that else [i.e., in the future] would not be so”* Debate with Bramhall, §14

Hobbes rejected retributive justice

(the notion that “justice” demands that wrong-doers be made to suffer as pay-back for their wrong doing)

Because the past cannot be changed, this does nothing to repair the past wrong, and only increases the misery

The only justification for punishment is reform and deterrence

Precisely because the will is determined by desire and aversion, public punishment can have a deterrent effect on the will of the perpetrator and of spectators, and reward a positive effect

likewise for praise and blame, which are just forms of reward and punishment

## Religious belief

Types of cognition:

- prudence (experience of matter of fact)
- science (evidence of truth from stipulative definition of terms or logical demonstration)
- opinion (assent to things that are false as a consequence of imperfect experience or fallacious demonstration; also assent to things that are probable based on confirmation of hypotheses or testimony)
- belief (opinion based on testimony)
- inspiration (opinion based on the testimony of a supernatural being)



## Requirements for authentic inspiration

- miracles (to prove that you are really being inspired by a supernatural being)
- conformity of the inspiration to what is good, judged by the “works and fruit” the inspiration (to prove that the being is a good supernatural being)
  - as a short-cut to this, conformity of the inspiration with what is already taught in scripture

The third requirement is question-begging.

Scripture claims to be the word of prophets and apostles inspired by God

Which raises the question of how we can know that it was God who inspired them

## Hobbes solution

Two senses of faith:

- belief (in testimony) that is forced upon us through an infusion of divine grace, independently of any reasoned assessment of the reliability or authenticity of that testimony
- belief (in testimony) that we arrive at as a consequence of an estimate of the character of the witness, based on our knowledge of the witnesses' honesty, integrity, intelligence, etc.

The faith described by many in the reformed churches was of the first sort (a gift of God to those elected for salvation).

It is also well supported by orthodox (Augustinian) theology.

But it is personal and private and opens an avenue for individuals to insist on the validity of their personal commitments in defiance of civil authority.

## Hobbes solution, cont.'d

We cannot deny that faith is a gift from God to the elect

But not the sort of gift envisioned by the Puritans

Rather

(not to put too fine a point on it)

it arises from God making one person more intelligent than another

More intelligent people are more disposed to accept a probability on the basis of a thorough and proper scrutiny of evidence

As opposed to blockheads, who will not accept anything unless it is certain

Or enthusiasts, who will accept anything they take a shine to

In this case the evidence is the testimony of others who are judged to be good witnesses (honest, intelligent people), and are testifying to a doctrine that is judged to morally good

## Political implications of Hobbes's solution

Since religious faith must ultimately be based on the testimony of others who are taken to be authoritative, we must continue to recognize the authority of those individuals in religious matters

This means deferring to them in the interpretation of controversial Scriptures

And offering due deference in religious ceremonies, which are legitimately structured and ornamental

This position preserves reverence for authority in an established church while attacking “enthusiasm” and the dangerously anti-authoritarian notion of the priesthood of all believers.

But it provides no real answer to the question of the rational foundations for religious belief.

Hobbes’s considered view was that religious belief has no proper foundation in reason alone or in inspiration alone but is rather the product of the sort of rationally-inspired “faith” in testimony of the sort he described.

A faith that is based on reasoned judgments concerning the character of others who testify to the religion

but that is inspired because these judgments are not certain or infallible and so ultimately depend on our being made to be the sorts of people who will be swayed by that sort of evidence