

**LOVE AND THE LEVIATHAN:
THOMAS HOBBS' CRITIQUE OF PLATONIC *EROS***

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ABSTRACT

Hobbes' understanding of love, and its significance for his political thought, has received insufficient attention. This article contends that Hobbes has a consistent and comprehensive teaching on love that directly repudiates what he regards as the Platonic teaching on *eros*. In attacking the Platonic idea of *eros*, Hobbes undermines a pillar of classical political philosophy and articulates a significant aspect of his new understanding of the passions in terms of power, which is itself a critical part of his new political science most famously presented in *Leviathan*.

Keywords: *eros; liberalism; beauty; Platonic love; tyranny*

The vast scholarship on Thomas Hobbes' political thought has concentrated on his theories of power, sovereignty, and contract. Few scholars have explored his theory of love, especially of erotic love.¹ Of those who have, the discussion has been limited, often incidental to the main argument.² It is not surprising, then, that Hobbes has been dismissed by some as simply unconcerned with erotic love.³ A notable exception to this scholarship is the work of Victoria Kahn. Kahn argues that "from his earliest works of political theory through *Leviathan*, Hobbes is concerned to criticize the contemporary politics of romance", and she claims that

[a]gainst those of his contemporaries who thought that the sovereign needed to appeal to the subject's erotic feeling—to what Edward Hyde, the Earl of Clarendon, called the subject's 'affection' for the sovereign—Hobbes believed that the passions were erratic and subversive, not least of all when they took the form of emulous identification. Like romance vainglory, love gives rise to the desire to imitate and master others, and such emulous identification is itself a potential threat to civil order.⁴

Therefore, according to Kahn, Hobbes believed that "[g]reat love' needed to be replaced by contract or fear", and so "Hobbes' goal in *Leviathan* was to divorce contract from the false identification and errors of romance".⁵ To do that, "Hobbes tried to redefine romance, to purge it of its errant fictions".⁶ In its place, he hoped for a more sober attachment to the sovereign with fear as the "ground of political obligation".⁷

Notwithstanding these helpful insights, Kahn's analysis has left some important issues unaddressed. In her discussion of "Hobbes's Critique of Romance", Kahn mentions his view of vainglory in *The Elements of Law* and notes his emphasis on the problem of Don Quixote, but she largely limits her study to *Leviathan*, which means that she does not, for example, explicate Hobbes' explicit treatment of *eros* in *The Elements*. Nor does she draw the connection between his repudiation of the Platonic view of *eros* and his teaching on the primacy of power in understanding the

passions. Most importantly, she does not connect the subject of romantic imagination to *eros*, which was the natural source of such imagination according to the classical tradition originating in Plato.⁸

While the scholarly neglect of Hobbes' theory of love is understandable – the word '*eros*' is not used in *Leviathan*, where love appears as just one of many passions and not a particularly central problem for politics – it is a noteworthy omission for those trying to interpret a thinker who claims to build his new political science on a comprehensive understanding of human nature, especially the passions. It is a particularly important oversight because Hobbes declares in *The Elements* that he has broken with the received tradition and become the first person to articulate “the true, and only foundation” of the “science ... of justice and policy” (HN, Ep. Ded.).⁹ As he later claims in *Leviathan*, he offers a political science “that neither *Plato*, nor any other Philosopher hitherto, hath put into order, and sufficiently” (L 31, 407). These observations compel an examination of the character of Hobbes' re-interpretation of Platonic *eros*, and its significance for his new political science.

The importance of this examination is magnified when we consider that the division between ancient and modern political philosophy over human nature has been said to come down to their respective understandings of the extent and way in which human beings are erotic.¹⁰ Certainly, the tradition of classical political philosophy with which Hobbes claims to break (whether in its 16-17th Century scholastic or humanist strains) regarded love and *eros* as vitally important for political life. Socrates was the inaugurator of this classical approach by being the first to turn to the study of political things. This Socratic “turn” or “new sailing” – or as Cicero put it, bringing philosophy down from the heavens to the city – is most famously portrayed in Plato as “knowledge of ignorance” gained by Socrates' questioning of

those in the city who claimed to know what was “noble and good” (Cicero *Tusculan Disputations* 5.4.10, *Academia* 1.15-6; Plato *Phaedo* 96a6-100b3, *Apology* 20e-23a). Yet this public, *zetetic* Socrates is to be contrasted with the private Socrates who confides to his close acquaintances that he is an expert in “erotics”, an art he claimed to have acquired from the prophetess Diotima (Plato *Symposium* 177d; see also *Charmides* 155d, *Lysis* 204b4-c2, *Theages* 128b1-e2). The significance of Socratic expertise in erotics for the understanding of politics is demonstrated in detail in Plato’s most famous political work *Republic*, where Socrates accounts for politics in terms of love (*Republic* VIII-IX). According to Socrates, all regimes are shaped by the love that dominates the souls of their leaders. The love at the heart of each regime – whether aristocracy, timocracy, oligarchy, or democracy – also shapes its citizens, so that its dominating principle can be discerned even in its most subtle and small aspects (*Republic* 445dff.). Love, particularly in the form of *eros*, also accounts for transitions from one regime to another, especially explaining the political pathology that is tyranny (*Republic* 571aff.).¹¹

In *The Elements*, Hobbes claims to reject this understanding of the nature and political importance of *eros*. In this article, we contend that the character of Hobbes’ repudiation of Platonic *eros* is complex. On the one hand, he denies the classical idea that *eros* is a longing for the noble or beautiful that can and must be cultivated and directed toward self-transcending speeches and deeds, especially those connected with politics and philosophy. On the other hand, he believes that *eros* cannot be ignored in developing a new political science because *eros* has roots in the inescapable human desire for power and in imaginations and hopes for unlimited power that inevitably arise in human beings. Hobbes’ political thought does not therefore ignore *eros* and so is not most accurately described as “unerotic”. What Hobbes wants is to reduce the

power and scope of *eros* in the world, returning it to the limited, private sphere of sex, pleasure, and perhaps the family. It is better, then, to call his understanding of love “anti-erotic” – or perhaps even more precisely, anti-Platonic. Embracing a new understanding of *eros* and beauty in terms of power, he substitutes power for love, becoming *the* famous political theorist of a concept that continues to fundamentally shape and influence modern political science.¹² While it is too strong to say that Hobbes founds his new political science upon his critique of the Platonic understanding of love, it is fair to conclude that his re-interpretation of *eros* is an important (though too often neglected) piece of his broad philosophical rejection of an older political science rooted in a study of love.

In the first part of this article we outline in detail Hobbes’ understanding of desire and pleasure, and its implications for his conception of beauty. We then undertake a comprehensive examination of Hobbes’ understanding of erotic love. Many students of political philosophy – perhaps including scholars of Hobbes’ thought – may not know that Hobbes offers an explicit treatment of *eros* in a little-known critique of Plato’s *Symposium* that takes place only once and appears in the important but relatively understudied work, *The Elements of Law* (1640), which J.C.A. Gaskin has called “the first and, according to many critics, the clearest and most accessible statement of what was to become the grand philosophical system continued in *De Cive* (1642), *Leviathan* (1651), *De Corpore* (1655), and *De Homine* (1657)”.¹³ We conclude by examining the theoretical and practical implications of Hobbes’ anti-Platonic theory of *eros* for his own political thought and, more generally, for the foundations of modern political science.

HOBBS' UNDERSTANDING OF LOVE

Desire, Pleasure, and Avoiding Death

To understand Hobbes' views on love, we must start with his understanding of desire and pleasure, because, as he argues in *Leviathan*, that “which men Desire, they are also sayd to LOVE” (L 6, 119). Feeling pleasure is especially important in Hobbes' thought, which has often been described as a kind of hedonism. It is certainly true that for him, people desire something because they experience pleasure from it or because they “imagine” that it is pleasant for them (DH 11, 2).¹⁴ Hobbes' hedonism is of a particular kind, however; and to understand his views on love, it is useful to compare his hedonism briefly to that of another famously “unerotic” thinker, John Locke.¹⁵ Locke argues that happiness “in its full extent is the utmost pleasure we are capable of”, which generally means “a constant train of moderate mean Pleasures, without any mixture of *uneasiness*” (*ECHU*, II, XXI, secs. 42, 44). But pain can never be absent as long as desire exists because “Desire... is an *uneasiness* of the Mind” (*ECHU*, II, XXI, secs. 31-34). In Locke's view, desire is a pain that pushes us toward an object that promises new pleasure or at least the pleasure of release from current pain.

In contrast, Hobbes maintains that desire is a pleasure that pulls (not pushes) people toward the pleasant object. For Hobbes, fleeing toward an object in order to escape pain is not desire but aversion: endeavor “fromward something” (L 6, 119). Desire is “Endeavour ... toward something which causes it” and is a “solicitation or provocation ... to draw near to the thing that pleaseth” (L 6, 119; HN VII, 2). Indeed, pleasure *is* the sensation or “appearance” of desire (L 6, 122). Thus, going in motion and being in motion toward a pleasing object is pleasant: “as much as he that

proceedeth towards the end, conceiveth good, he proceedeth with appetite. And appetite is joy” (HN IX, 7). In Locke’s view, happiness is found in “indolency and enjoyment” (states without desire), which are “disturb’d” by new desires (*ECHU*, II, XXI, sec. 59). For Hobbes, “Life it selfe is but Motion, and can never be without Desire ... no more than without Sense” (L 6, 130). Because desire is not painful, a life moved by desire is not (as Locke suggests) a constant attempt to escape pain, except that “Feare” is also always present where “Sense” is present (L 6, 130). But, according to Hobbes, it is fear (the constriction of our motion), not desire (the increase of our motion), that causes pain. Thus, for Hobbes, “Life it selfe” inherently includes the hedonistic possibility of pure pleasure. We can, without utter delusion, imagine being completely happy. This insight makes Hobbes aware that if people think they can find such happiness in beauty and love, then they will be open to the charms of *eros*. Unlike Locke, Hobbes’ hedonism makes him believe that *eros* is too powerful to ignore, and so without enhancing its powerful appeal, he confronts it directly and publicly in his first major work, *The Elements of Law*.

We cannot forget, however, that Hobbes’ confrontation with *eros* in *The Elements* takes place within the context of his already-developed thought, the hallmark of which is an emphasis on the powerful human impulse to avoid death. According to Hobbes, while we cannot help but desire what is pleasant, we do not desire pleasure simply for its own sake but in order to escape the feeling of death. This conclusion can be traced back to the natural causes of pleasure. When the brain receives a physical sensation from the sense organs or reflects a stored mental image, it sends a signal through the nerves to the heart. As he puts it, “the reall effect there is nothing but Motion” that “of necessity there must either help or hinder that motion which is called vital” (L 6, 121; HN VII, 1). If it is a feeling of increased motion, it is

pleasure (if it is a feeling of constricted motion, it is pain). Pleasure is therefore “nothing really but motion about the heart”, the most vital of organs (HN VII, 1). This fact explains why people want pleasure: it “seemeth to be, a corroboration of Vitall motion, and a help thereunto” (L 6, 122; see also Coli 2006, 81).

According to Hobbes, people desire the feeling of increased vital motion because all of us feel a “certain impulsion of nature” to “shun...death” (DC I, 7; see also L 13, 185). A “necessity of nature”, he says, “maketh men... avoid that which is hurtful; but most of all that terrible enemy of nature, death” (HN XIV, 6). People are therefore innately drawn to the opposite of death – to feeling alive, to feeling “perpetuall” vital motion (DH XI, 15). We flee from death to pleasure so that we can feel alive and thus forget the terror of extinction. This means that we seek a “contented life” in which we actually feel alive, not one of “bare Preservation” in which we are constantly “weary” (L 11, 161; L 30, 376).¹⁶ According to Hobbes, then, “preservation” means both literally avoiding death and also *feeling* alive.¹⁷

Power and Beauty

The question for Hobbes then becomes: Where do we find this sense of ‘feeling alive’? Hobbes suggests that it is most *reasonably* found in “commodius living” – a situation of physical security and comfort in which people are free “to buy, and sell, and otherwise contract with one another; to choose their own abroad, their own diet, their own trade of life, and institute their children as they themselves think fit; & the like” (L 11, 161; L 13, 188; L 21, 264). In this situation, people have enough security and pleasure to feel alive without risking their lives to feel that way. But Hobbes knows that because of people’s varying “dispositions”, there are many other ways of “taking pleasure”, and hence many kinds of human beings: for example,

the “luxurious” look for a feeling of life in “sensuall pleasures”; those addicted to “Gain” seek it in great wealth; and those who crave “reputation” turn to “Glory” (HN X, 3; L 13, 184-5).¹⁸

All of these goods, however, can be reduced to one common denominator: power. That we need power to avoid death is clear: if we have the power of security (especially by being obedient subjects in a well-constructed commonwealth), we can avoid being destroyed by violence. But, as Daniela Coli notes, what is not often appreciated is how “power is for Hobbes the central element in all human conduct, marked by passions” because it serves our psychological need to feel the pleasure or contentment of unimpeded vital motion.¹⁹ In sensing power we feel most alive. Such feeling is not found, as the tradition held, in some activity that is by nature the highest or best because “there is no such *Finis ultimus* (utmost ayme,) nor *Summum Bonum*, (greatest Good,) as is spoken of in the Books of the Old Morall Philosophers” (L 11, 161). Such a “greatest Good” is impossible because there is “nothing simply and absolutely so; nor any common Rule of Good and Evill, to be taken from the nature of the objects themselves” because “Nature” is just matter-in-motion and thus cannot have “Morall” qualities (L 6, 120-1). ‘Good’, therefore, is simply a word that human beings attach to whatever pleases them.²⁰

At first glance, Hobbes’ view of ‘the good’ would seem to weigh against any notion of erotic love, since love seems to rest on beauty, and if there is nothing by Nature good, can there be anything naturally beautiful? For Hobbes, the answer is ‘yes’ if we properly understand what beauty is and how it is connected to our desire for power. Because there is no “greatest Good”, ordinarily “Felicity” lies in “a continual progresse of the desire, from one object to another” (L 11, 160). But when a person feels a sense of power without any disruptive physical or mental pain, he is

“contented” *at that moment* because he feels no barrier “to assure forever, the way of his future desire” (L 11, 161). He feels, for a brief time, that he can do whatever he wants, and so he feels the “more intensive delight” accompanying a sense of unlimited power, which delivers him from pain (and hence any shadow of death) for as long as it lasts (L 6, 161). This experience of power can be recreated by the “imagination of a mans own power and ability”, which gives rise to the “exultation of the mind” that Hobbes calls the “Joy” of “GLORYING” (L 6, 125).

The problem is that the feeling of unlimited power does not last because new desires and aversions are always created by the “Senses and Imaginations” (L 6, 124; L 11, 161). The continual emergence of these new passions interrupts the “perseverance of delight”, creating a need for additional power and showing the person that “he cannot assure the power and means to live well, which he hath present, without the acquisition of more” (L 11, 161). The person realizes that rather than a momentary feeling of unlimited power, he needs an unlimited supply of power that he can call on for “obtaining those things which a man from time to time desireth” (L 6, 129). As a result, Hobbes famously declares that “in the first place, I put for a generall inclination of all mankind, a perpetuall and restlesse Desire of Power after power, that ceaseth onely in Death” (L 11, 161).

While Hobbes contends that such a restless pursuit of power makes human beings prone to conflict and violence, he also suggests that it opens us to beauty, if we properly understand the term. According to him, beauty is a sub-species of “*Pulchrum*” (“to which we have no words precisely answerable” in English) (HN VII, 3).²¹ He defines “*pulchrum*” not as physical, moral, or intellectual perfection but as “that quality in an object that makes one expect good from it”, or that which “by some apparent signes promiseth Good” (DH XI, 5; L 6, 121). When the promise of

goodness “dwells in a form, it is called beauty”, which “pleaseth by imagination even before the good of which it is a sign is acquired” (DH XI, 5). As one example of such “signes”, he says that people place a high value on “beauty of person”, which consists “in a lively aspect of the countenance, and other signs of natural heat” (HN VIII, 5). We value “natural heat” – ‘she’s hot!’; ‘he’s hot!’ – because it is one of the “signs precedent of power generative, and much issue”, which can satisfy human beings’ innate sexual itch (HN VIII, 5). *Pulchrum*, then, is a thing’s promise of power, and our “restlesse” desire for power is what attracts us to the physical pulchritude manifest in beautiful bodies. According to Hobbes, there are many other ways in which someone or something can be *pulchrum* – it all depends on what each person considers pleasant and on each person’s differing capacity to see the “signes” of someone’s power (DH 11, 5) But for all people, seeing these “signes” is the experience of beauty, which is always pleasant and makes us feel more alive; so Hobbes describes beautiful things with the Latin term “*Jucunda*”, which means causing delight by “helping or fortifying... the motion vitall” (L 6, 122; see also HN VII, 1).

“The Passion of Love”

Since we are always looking for delight, our “imagination” is always open to being struck by beauty. But does this kind of openness to beauty make us open to love? Perhaps this is a surprising question for a thinker who emphasizes that “men have no pleasure, (but on the contrary a great deal of griefe) in keeping company, where there is no power able to over-awe them all” (L 13, 185). Yet Hobbes knows that human beings love, an emotion he describes in chapter six of *Leviathan* as one of

the “simple Passions”, among which are also “*Appetite, Desire, ... Aversion, Hate, Joy, and Griefe*” (L 6, 122). That “which men Desire”, Hobbes states, “they are also sayd to LOVE ... Desire, and Love are the same thing”: except, he quickly adds, “by Desire we alwayes signifie the Absence of the Object; by Love, most commonly the Presence of the same” (L 6, 119). For Hobbes, then, love is not properly a desire for any good (‘I’d love to have a beautiful painting’); it is “the joy a man taketh in the fruition of any present good” (‘I love my Rembrandt!’) (HN IX, 16). And because there is no “greatest Good” toward which all love is properly directed, Hobbes maintains that “love ... may be divided into as many passions as there are objects of love” (DH XII, 8).

Notwithstanding the great varieties of love, *eros* is a specific kind that poses a particular problem for Hobbes’ analysis because as conceived by the classical and humanist traditions, it seems to promise satisfaction of our soul’s deepest longing, something Hobbes says is impossible. In *Leviathan* (his most ruthless presentation of the passions), he never uses the word “*eros*”. He does allude to it, however, in chapter six’s discussion of the more complex passion of “*Love of Persons*”, among which he includes “THE PASSION OF LOVE”. He defines this as “*Love of one singularly, with desire to be singularly beloved*” (L 6, 124). What we seek in this kind of love differentiates it from lust (“*Love of Persons for Pleasing the sense onely*”) because we want the *love* of a person, not just some beautiful body. Since love is already by definition a passion, Hobbes is literally saying that one type of the passion of love is ‘the passion of love’. With this apparent redundancy, he is trying to show that there is something peculiarly *passionate* about this love.

To understand its uniqueness, we must turn from *Leviathan* to *The Elements of Law*, where Hobbes does not hide the problem of *eros* by including it among other

kinds of love but draws the reader's attention to it by devoting two separate sections to its analysis. In interpreting *The Elements*, we must remember, as J. C. A. Gaskin points out, that in this slender early work "Hobbes seldom ekes what he has to say. His argument is often dense in texture. He expects his readers to remember or refer back to what has gone before and to go on drawing conclusions out of his principles or definitions".²² In the spirit of trying to draw out what Hobbes densely packs, we turn to section 16 of chapter nine ("OF THE PASSIONS OF THE MIND"), where he begins by noting that he has already spoken generally of love "in the first section of the seventh chapter ["OF DELIGHT AND PAIN; GOOD AND EVIL"], under which is contained the love men bear to one another, or pleasure they take in another's company; and by which men are said to be sociable by nature" (HN, IX, 16). There, he says, he describes love as "the joy that a man taketh in the fruition of any present good" (HN IX, 16). He quickly notes, however, that this treatment of love is not adequate because there is "another kind of LOVE, which the Greeks call ΕΡΟΣ", which is "that which we mean when we say: that man or woman is in love" (HN IX, 16). This love warrants a special discussion because it has a strong appeal to the "poets", who make it the "great theme" of their "romants" and thus give *eros* special public importance and influence (HN XI, 16). For example, Hobbes says, they have created "much of the present gallantry in love and duel" of 17th Century Europe, which he regards as a particular example of the dangerous general human tendency to let romantic imagination guide people's understanding of their passions and their moral and political obligations (HN X, 9).²³

"Notwithstanding their praise", the poets fail to tell the truth about exactly what makes *eros* unique: while other loves are a sense of pleasant satisfaction, *eros* "must be defined by the word need" (HN IX, 16). But what does the erotic lover

need? Hobbes gives an important hint when he says that this love “cannot be without diversity of sex”, therefore, “it cannot be denied but that it participateth of that indefinite love” called lust (HN IX, 16).²⁴ Unlike merely sexual lust, however, *eros* is not “indefinite”, but is for one particular person. Indeed, Hobbes contends that the “great difference” between lust and *eros* is that *eros* is “the same desire [as lust] limited *ad hanc*” – to this “one person desired” (HN IX, 16). *Eros*, he concludes, “is a conception of the need a man hath of that one person desired” (HN IX, 16). As a “conception”, *eros* is a psychological need caused by imagination rather than a physiological itch like natural lust. More specifically, it is the idea (i.e., imagination) of needing one person – and only that person – and endeavoring to do everything we can to win his or her love. It is this erotic vision, according to Hobbes, that fires the imagination of the poets, whose “similes, metaphors, and other tropes” constantly proclaim that lovers cannot live without their beloved (HN X, 4). The example that Hobbes gives of such a poetic presentation is *Don Quixote* by Cervantes (HN X, 9).²⁵

But this presents a difficulty. Why is this love so refined and specific in its longing? A sober student of Hobbes might ask: why not love many different people, each for some good quality? Why not feel kindness for some people and lust for others? It would seem like the natural approach for people always restlessly seeking some new source of power. Hobbes does not address these questions in *The Elements*, but his argument can be filled in by turning to *De Homine*, where he provides a fuller account of “*Pulchrum*”. According to him, every person forms an opinion about what quality (or set of qualities) is “the best of its kind” – that is, what most pleases us or provides us with the most power given our individual “dispositions” (DH XI, 13; L 8, 139; DH XIII, 1). Sometimes we experience a person who appears to have these qualities in the highest degree imaginable – that is, to have “extraordinary power”

(DH XI, 13). For example, perhaps the person has done what we regard to be “both good and difficult”, which “is an indication of uncommon power” (DH XI, 13). Or maybe someone has “extraordinary form”, which “is a sign in all things of the extraordinary execution of the work whereunto one was born” (DH XI, 13).

It is this “extraordinary power” (or “pulchritude”) in the beloved that gives *eros* its peculiarly needy character. When we are in love, we feel pleasure in the presence of our beloved; indeed, we feel almost drunk with delight because the experience of something so “uncommon” resurrects in our imagination the experience of power not as an endless supply of “moderate power” but as the “more intensive delight” of unlimited power (L 11, 161). This is unlike other loves: for example, when a hungry person orders chocolate cake, he feels delight when one arrives (he ‘loves’ the cake). After he has eaten it, however, he does not immediately want another one; he has had his fill of cake. Indeed, the thought of eating more cake can be uninviting or even unpleasant (it causes “griefe” in Hobbes’ language), since his hunger has been sated and the “constitution” of his body changed after eating the cake, making it no longer seem delicious to him right now (L 4, 120, 109).

The difference between a beloved and chocolate cake is this: our desire for chocolate cake is finite because the amount of power and pleasure it provides is limited. There are other kinds of food at other times that can satisfy our need for nutrition and changing taste. But we imagine that *no one* besides our beloved has the “extraordinary power” we most prize. Unlike the power provided by any other thing, theirs appears *sufficient* for our desires, whatever they may be; this promise of an unlimited power seems to satisfy our “perpetuall and restlesse Desire of Power after power” unlike any other good (L 11, 161). We do not need to think about how we will get our next pleasure because we imagine that we have all we will ever need. To be in

their presence (or even to imagine so) is a “delectation” that makes our pulse quicken and our heart beat faster (L 6, 184). Perhaps we even flush, more aware of “something dishonourable” in ourselves in the presence of such power (L 6, 124). We are totally alive, feeling what Hobbes refers to in another context as the “continuall prospering” called “FELICITY” (L 6, 129). Our beloved seems to make us fully, finally happy.

Yet, Hobbes reminds us, *eros* is *needy*. This is because the moment of painless pleasure never continues, not merely – as with ordinary love – because other desires or fears interrupt, but also, and more importantly, because of the nature of *eros* itself. When we are in the presence of our beloved, our desire for them is not permanently transformed into unending joy unless we are *sure* that they love us back (and will continue to love us). Hence, “the cause of this passion is not always, nor for the most part, beauty, or other quality, in the beloved, unless there be withal hope in the person that loveth” that he can acquire the love of the other person in return (HN IX, 16). *Eros* requires hope because to be in love we must not only seek the beloved’s love in return but also want to be “*singularly* beloved” (L 6, 124 – emphasis added). They must love us and only us.

Hope, however, introduces fear because “the hoped for good that is expected to come to us we *never* perceive with security, for if we so perceived it, it would then be certain and our expectation would more properly be called not hope, but joy” (DH XIII, 4 – emphasis added). The problem is magnified in love because our beloved is so “extraordinary” that our hope is raised to the highest possible level; a happiness we never knew before now seems possible. Yet it is almost impossible to be sure that they will love only us in return, as *eros* demands. Why should they, if they are so “uncommon” and “extraordinary”? We can easily imagine losing them, and “if, with

good impending, we conceive of some means whereby it may be lost ... the emotion is called *fear*” (DH XII, 13). If that were not true, lovers would not feel “JEALOUSIE”, which is “*fear* that the love is not mutual” (L 6, 124 – emphasis added). Fear, of course, is an “*aversion*” and therefore painful (L 6, 123). The fear of losing such “uncommon” power is an almost unbearable pain, according to Hobbes, and can make some people “lose their wits” (L 6, 123; HN IX, 16). As a result, *eros* always contains within itself moments of intense pain that alternate with pure joy. This is why Hobbes says that *eros* – unlike other, ordinary loves – must be described as a “need” rather than simply a desire (HN IX, 16). As a psychological need akin to physical hunger, *eros* “may also and more properly be called” an aversion (L 6, 120). And it is the inherent vibration between desire and aversion, pleasure and pain, that makes *eros* needy, passionate, and therefore ripe for the dramatic art of “the poets”, whose minds are especially attuned to such vibrating tension because they have a special “swiftness of imagining things” (DH XIII, 2).

Without hope, however, *eros* dies and the drama ends. If we finally judge that we can never have the love of our beloved, we conclude that pursuing them cannot conduce to our good and therefore is a waste of our resources. They are simply out of our league. And no one does what he believes to be against his own good: even for those in love, “the object is some *Good to himselfe*” (L 14, 192; HN XIV, 6). If we truly think that we cannot obtain their love, we may still think that they have “extraordinary power” (i.e., that they are beautiful), but they do not promise *us* that power. Without such promise, they no longer stir our *eros*. In such a situation, the old erotic feelings can always be rekindled based on the slightest imagination because “[e]ven the most insubstantial arguments are sufficient for hope” (DH XII, 4). But

without any hope, such imaginations inevitably wither and we are left with only desire. This is a situation of “DESPAIRE” – of “*Appetite*” without hope (L 6, 123).

This means that while a person can have the moments of pain of *eros* or the constant unrequited desire of despair, he cannot be hopelessly in love. As evidence, Hobbes points to what happens in love affairs between unequals. In “great differences of persons, the greater have often fallen in love with the meaner, but not contrary” (HN IX, 16). Since people most often respond to the power of a “greater” person rather than the promises of a less powerful one, “for the most part they have much better fortune in love, whose hopes are built upon something in their person, than those that trust to their expressions and service” (HN IX, 16). Too readily offering “service” is a sign of desperation (and therefore of lack of power); while the opposite, “self-confidence”, is “*pulchrum*: being a certain sign of one conscious of his own virtue” (DH XI, 13). As a result, “they that care less” about giving the beloved everything she wants have greater success “than they that care more”, “which not perceiving many men cast away their services, as one arrow after another” and “in the end together with their hopes they lose their wits” (HN IX, 16). So while people cannot be hopelessly in love, they can be crazy in love. It is not the hopelessness of their situation, however, that makes them crazy; it is their continuing imagination of being able to win the love of their beloved even as they repeatedly fail to do so. Indeed, such a “defect of the mind” is the very definition of “MADNESS, which appeareth to be nothing else but some imagination of such predominance above all the rest, that we have no passion but from it” (HN X, 9). Like Don Quixote with Dulcinea, the fundamental mistake that these lovers make is to let their imagination overpower reality and make the “extraordinary power” of the beloved the *only* power in the world (HN X, 9).²⁶ It is a mistake, according to Hobbes’ analysis, to which

those in love are constantly liable -- imagining our beloved is as pure a “delight” as possible (save being in their presence); thus, it is easy to take hold of and exaggerate while it is hard to restrain (L 6, 125).

In sum, Hobbes views *eros* or ‘the passion of love’ as an overpowering need for one other person that originates in the human desire for power and in the opinions that individuals inevitably form about what physical or mental qualities provide the most power. *Eros* builds when a person (especially one of strong imagination) experiences such “pulchritude” – that is, when he imagines he has found one person who alone has that quality or combination to an “extraordinary” degree. Erotic love erupts when the person believes that he can acquire the other person’s love by his own powers. He then becomes a lover. The hope for such unlimited power simultaneously brings its own fear, however, causing the neediness characteristic of those in love.

Against Hobbes’ interpretation, however, stands the classical tradition, which contends that *eros* is not about beauty or *pulchrum* understood in terms of power but about a surpassing goodness that moves lovers to be charitable and even noble, sometimes talking about sacrificing everything for their beloved’s happiness. How can Hobbes account for the rival notion of the ancients that *eros* ennobles those in its grip?

“MAKETH ME SUSPECT”: HOBBS’ CRITICISM OF PLATONIC *EROS*

The Charity of Socrates to Alcibiades

Hobbes addresses this issue in *The Elements of Law* through a direct confrontation with the ancient political philosopher of *eros* par excellence, Plato.²⁷ Hobbes’ critique is actually presented not in the section on *eros* but in the following section of chapter

nine (section 17), which he begins by declaring that he now wants to discuss “yet another passion sometimes called love but more properly called goodwill or CHARITY” (HN IX, 17). In placing the sections next to each other, he is clearly indicating that his critique of Platonic understanding of charity (“platonic love” or “honourable love”) must be understood in light of his treatment of *eros*.

Beginning his refutation of Platonic love, he argues that “the opinion of Plato” on “honourable love” is “delivered (according to his custom) in the person of Socrates” in the dialogue, *Symposium* (HN IX, 17). In that dialogue, as we recall, Socrates is among the guests assembled at the poet Agathon’s home to celebrate the victory of his tragic poetry at an important Athenian festival. They each respond to a suggestion by one of the guests, the physician Eryximachus, to “prepare the finest speech we can in praise of Eros” (*Symposium* 177d).²⁸ Socrates’ speech is last and comprises a questioning of Agathon along with a recounting of a conversation he claims to have had “when I was a young boy with a woman named Diotima, a priestess from Mantinea” who “was famous for her experience in all areas of Eros” (201d). While the dialogue is extremely complex in its form and content, several aspects of Socrates’ speech deserve mention. Using the famous ladder-of-love image, Diotima portrays Eros as a longing for beauty (*to kalon*) that starts with a person’s attraction to a beautiful body, moves to all beautiful bodies, then to beautiful souls, and then to “the beauty of many different laws and customs” (210c). From there, “[t]he next stage will take the initiate from the study of law and ethics to the various branches of the sciences” where “he will learn the beauty of knowledge itself” and “give birth to countless beautiful ideas and speeches” (211c-d). Finally, “as he reaches the end of his journey, approaching the true goal of Eros, he will now see a truly wonderful sight: a vision of the very nature and Form of the Beautiful” (210e). The

longing for the beautiful manifests itself in a ‘pregnant’ feeling in the presence of *to kalon*, which makes us “interested in conception and birth in beauty” – that is, in producing something beautiful, whether that is a handsome child, a noble speech, a great city filled with excellent citizens, or a high-minded thought (207e, 209a-e). Giving birth to noble or beautiful things is our way of participating in ‘the beautiful itself’, which seems to be the way to overcome death and have “the permanent possession of the good” (207a, 208b). At its core, then, Diotima suggests that *eros* is the “longing for union with the beautiful” that makes us want to become more beautiful physically, morally, and intellectually, and thereby “more worthy” to attain the permanent happiness that comes from the highest good (Newell 2000, 2-3).

According to Hobbes, Plato teaches that the effect of such *eros* is “good will or CHARITY”, which is the “the desire to advance and assist others” (HN, IX, 17). In response to beauty, the erotic man simply wants to see more beauty and so will help someone beautiful in every way possible and let nothing sully that beauty, even if that means sacrificing to help or defend it. Hobbes therefore says that Plato’s teaching in the *Symposium* “is this: ‘a man full and pregnant with wisdom, or other virtue, naturally seeketh out some beautiful person, of age and capacity to conceive, in whom he may, without sensual respects, engender and produce the like’” (HN IX, 17). According to Hobbes, Plato tries to show this erotically-inspired charity in “the then noted love of Socrates wise and continent, to Alcibiades young and beautiful; in which love, is not sought the honour, but issue of his knowledge” (HN IX, 17). Socrates’ “honourable love” of Alcibiades supposedly transcends self-regarding physical love that merely desires “to please, and to be pleased” (HN IX, 17). His “platonic love” rises above “common love” and simply wants to help Alcibiades to

give birth to noble and good things without a regard for its own pleasure or profit (HN IX, 17).

Hobbes, however, does not believe that Socrates' "honourable love" actually exists, at least in the form presented by Plato. He admits that charity exists in the form of a "natural affection of parents to their children, which the Greeks call *Storgi*" (HN IX, 17). This is not noble charity, however, but really a type of self-love "wherein men seek to assist those that adhere to them" (HN IX, 17). But "the affection wherein men may times bestow their benefits on strangers, is not to be called charity, but either contract, whereby they seek to purchase friendship; or fear, which maketh them purchase peace" (HN IX, 17). But what about Socrates and Alcibiades? They were not family, yet Plato claims that Socrates wanted to help Alcibiades give birth to wisdom or virtue simply out of a longing – stirred in the beautiful presence of Alcibiades – to produce something noble. To say the least, Hobbes is unimpressed. First, he wonders why a wise man like Socrates would seek an "ignorant" person like Alcibiades rather than another wise man (HN IX, 17). To this, Plato's Socrates might reply that the wise do not care about all the unwise, only about those who are "potent" with "wisdom and all the rest of these virtues" and thus "ready to receive the god and his mysteries" (215c). But then Hobbes asks why a supposedly honorable man like Socrates should "be more charitable to the beautiful than to others" (HN IX, 17). Why seek the company of Alcibiades rather than some less attractive but perhaps more promising young man? It must be because Alcibiades is so rich and handsome, which shows that no *eros* can – contrary to Diotima's speech – leave behind the body and its "sensuall respects". Even the most charitable love is not self-forgetting, and the fundamental motion of the 'self' is always some pleasure for itself. Yes, Hobbes admits, Socrates did not give into Alcibiades' advances; he was continent. But

“continent men have the passion they contain, as much or more than they that satiate the appetite” (HN IX, 17). There is, then, something not quite so noble in Socrates’ “honourable love” for Alcibiades – something, Hobbes slyly suggests, “savouring of the use of that time” (HN IX, 17). It turns out that Socratic charity – fueled by an *eros* that was supposed to rise above the body to the “beautiful itself” – was “merely... an honourable pretense for the old to haunt the company of the young and beautiful” (HN IX, 17).²⁹

But insinuation is not refutation, and it is worth noting that Hobbes ends his discussion of Plato by saying that Socrates’ continence “maketh me *suspect* this platonic love for merely sensual” (HN IX, 17 – emphasis added).³⁰ Thus, it seems that Hobbes rejects Plato’s presentation of Socrates based simply on a suspicion that no one – including Socrates – could possibly have the noble love Plato describes. Nevertheless, Hobbes maintains that his suspicion of Socrates (and all who claim such “honourable” motives) is well-grounded by observation and argument. He knows that starting at least with Plato, the philosophical and poetic tradition influenced people to believe that in love (and perhaps only in love), people give without expectation of reward or reflection back on themselves. Nor does he simply define away the problem of charitable love by re-asserting that it is impossible for people to respond to beauty with sacrifice because “every man’s end” is “some good to himself” (DCP, XXIV, 4).

Instead, he examines the phenomenon of erotic love and concludes that such love is itself profound *evidence* against the Platonic interpretation. According to him, when in love, our first impulse is not to draw back and look at the beautiful object but to *possess* it. We cannot “gaz[e] upon” beauty without being both drawn toward it and wanting to reach out (physically or mentally) to “acquire” it (*Symposium* 211e; DH XI, 8, 5). As Hobbes says, lovers cast away “their services” not out of a spontaneous

impulse to give something beautiful to their beautiful beloved but to *win* their love (HN IX, 16). If that were not true, lovers would not feel “JEALOUSIE” and even “the madness of love”, which is the “rage” that a great lover like Don Quixote feels when his “pride” (his sense of possessing his beloved) has been offended (L 6, 124; *EL* I. X, 9). True, a lover wants to please his beloved, but this desire is not for Hobbes a sign of selflessness – a lover wants “the imagination of the power they have so much to please” because if a person imagines he has such power, it is easier for him to hope that his beloved will stay with him and continue to provide him with the benefit of her “extraordinary power” (HN IX, 14). Contrary to Diotima’s claim, the desire to possess beauty is therefore not rooted in a need for “gazing upon beauty in the mind’s eye and being there with it” (211d), but for having control over an “extraordinary power” and excluding others from it. In Socrates’ case, he is charitable to Alcibiades not to help Alcibiades give birth to wisdom but in order to win him over and make him his. Alcibiades was extraordinarily handsome, and, in the “use of that time”, Socrates could not ignore that fact (if only from a “continent” distance). In addition, Hobbes might note, Alcibiades’ looks and charm (and family background) made him popular, which would be a great benefit to a philosopher like Socrates in search of interlocutors and sometimes even safety (see L 46, 692). Most importantly, in helping Alcibiades Socrates gives an “argument ... of his own power” – that is, Socrates shows himself and others that he has so much power in his continence and intellect that he can attract the powerful Alcibiades as his student and perhaps even instruct him (HN IX, 17). This is important to a lover because *eros* is not “onely” a desire to receive physical pleasure: “there is in it also a delight of the mind: for it consist of two appetites together, to please, and to be pleased; and the delight men take in delighting, is not sensual but a pleasure or joy of the mind, consisting in the imagination of the

power they have so much to please” (HN IX, 15). The “platonic” desire to please the beloved, therefore, is really a sign of the desire to exhibit one’s own power, not to give up oneself or one’s power for something worthy of such sacrifice.³¹

This insight helps us to understand an otherwise puzzling problem for Hobbes: if *eros* is a desire for “extraordinary power”, why would someone want to give power to his beloved? Doesn’t he want *her* power? Diotima portrays the phenomenon as an indication that the lover is responding to the presence of *to kalon* and seeking to transcend himself and find the beautiful itself, within which somewhere resides the good that satisfies the soul (*Symposium* 205d). Hobbes understands the lover’s offer of his own power as the first step in a contract or covenant: even a beloved with “extraordinary power” needs some power because *all* human beings – even beautiful ones – restlessly seek power. The question for the lover is whether he has the power she needs, and whether she can be made to see (or imagine) that he does. To do that, he tries to make himself appear “*pulchrum*” – that is, to give his beloved “an indication of [his own] uncommon power” (DH XI, 13). If she sees his beauty or pulchritude, the way is clear for them to ‘make a deal’ to exchange powers – in the non-Hobbesian words of the poets, they can fall in love.

Hobbes believes, however, that – absent widespread artificial erotic stimulation from “the Histories, or Fictions of Gallant Persons” created by the poets (L 6, 125) – erotic human beings are few and far between.³² This lack of lovers does not trouble him because in his view erotic love is generally bad for human beings. The *eros* spoken of by the ancients does not really exist in the way that they claim, so trying to find happiness in it will inevitably lead people to unnecessary pain and make them neglect truer sources of felicity, especially “the moderate power” of bodily security and comfort. Moreover, lovers’ highly active imaginations make them like

Don Quixote, who falls into the “gallant madness” of love and fights against every slight to his beloved’s honor (no matter how foolish), causing disproportionate harm to himself and to political society (HN X, 9). Lovers’ taste for the unlimited power of the beloved can even make them susceptible to the charms of glory, a very dangerous pursuit for human beings whose pride must be constantly suppressed and re-directed so that people can experience the pleasures found in order, stability, and life.³³ As a result, Hobbes concludes that the world (especially 17th Century England) can and must be disenchanted of the “present gallantry in love” caused by the continuing influence of the ancient understanding of *eros*.

EROS AND MODERN POLITICAL SCIENCE

As we have seen, for Hobbes *eros* is produced by imaginations and hopes that inevitably arise in human beings. But this is not because *eros* is a longing for beauty that – at its best – issues in noble words and self-transcending deeds, or at its worst in tyranny. Nor does *eros* foster an attachment to justice that defines fundamentally different human beings and regimes. While it is always going to exist to some extent and be potentially powerful, it is in reality a personal rather than political form of the desire for power. In focusing on Hobbes’ view of power, many scholars have not seen, or at least fully appreciated, his understanding of love and especially his critique of Platonic *eros*. Perhaps this is because the critique in *The Elements* is only implicit in his more famous works like *Leviathan*.³⁴ Yet Hobbes’ understanding of love is suffused throughout his political thought; his turn to power is not possible without rejecting the “old” political science founded on understanding types of human beings and regimes based on what they love. That rejection seems to have been persuasive to

many scholars of politics: while ‘regime’ analysis has not died, much of our discipline thinks in the de-Platonized (indeed, Hobbesian) language of power and its political conceptualisations such as autonomy, sovereignty, and the state.

In one important respect, however, Hobbes’ powerful re-interpretation of *eros* in *The Elements* could be at some tension with the political science of *Leviathan*. *Leviathan* seems to show a scientist-sovereign with a deep – and what Plato’s Socrates might call an *erotic* – attachment to teaching, persuading, and even inscribing people with his new “Doctrine”.³⁵ At the end of *Leviathan*, Hobbes says that he wants to resume his scientific studies: to “return to my interrupted Speculation of Bodies Naturall” (L “A Review and Conclusion”, 729). We cannot help but suspect, however, that all his endeavors to transform political science are not designed only to make such scientific speculation safer; that he is also deeply moved by a beautiful new vision -- the prospect of an everlastingly peaceful society in which human beings are not tormented by the fear of violent death. As Shaftesbury once said, while Hobbes claimed that there was “nothing which naturally drew us to the Love of what was without, or beyond *our-selves*”, the “Love of such great Truths and sovereign Maxims as he imagin’d these to be, made him the most laborious of all Men in composing Systems of this kind for our Use; and forc’d him, notwithstanding his natural Fear, to run continually the highest risk of being a Martyr for our Deliverance”.³⁶ If Shaftesbury is right, then Hobbes’ own ‘sociable’ activity of writing may indicate an *eros* that his own political science cannot account for, or explain, especially if in reflecting on Hobbes we read “not this, or that particular man; but Mankind” (L “Introduction”, 83). Perhaps, then, Hobbes does not so easily move beyond the political science of Plato’s Socrates. If so, we need to re-open and reconsider the debate powerfully spurred by Hobbes between a classical political

philosophy rooted in the investigation of human opinions of the noble and good, and informed by notions of love (and therefore of the science of regimes); and a modern political science based on the (Hobbesian) principle that politics can be understood on the basis of observable, reducible, and mathematically manipulable quanta of power instantiated in states and sovereignties. Such a debate should be welcomed not simply as a matter of joyful inquiry (as Hobbes would put it), but also as an attempt to return to a more self-critical and richer understanding of political science.

¹ For example, ‘love’ does not appear in the indexes of the major works on Hobbes, such as Jean Hampton’s *Hobbes and the Social Contract Tradition* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986), Gregory S. Kavka’s *Hobbesian Moral and Political Theory* (Princeton, N. J.: Princeton University Press, 1986), Sharon Lloyd’s *Ideals as Interests in Hobbes’s Leviathan: The Power of Mind Over Matter* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992), or Deborah Baumgold’s *Hobbes’s Political Theory* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988). There is a mere two-line entry (and no entry on *eros*) in Aloysius Martinich’s *A Hobbes Dictionary* (Cambridge: Blackwell, 1995) and only scattered references in Mary Dietz’ edited collection *Thomas Hobbes and Political Theory* (Lawrence, Kan: University Press of Kansas, 1990), and M. M. Goldsmith’s *Hobbes’s Science of Politics* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1966).

² See, for example, Sorell’s brief discussion of desire and *eros* in the context of the psychological egoism of Hobbes: Tom Sorel, *Hobbes*, (London: Routledge 1991, 97); Spragen’s observation that Hobbes’ critique of Platonic *eros* as well as Augustinian *amor Dei* is a logical outcome of his rejection of teleology and rationality: T. Spragen, *The Politics of Motion: The World of Thomas Hobbes* (London: Croom Helm, 1973,

185); R. E. Ewin's ("Hobbes on Laughter", *The Philosophical Quarterly*, v51, n 202, (2001), 29-40 at 35-6) and Bernard Gert's ("Hobbes and Psychological Egoism", *Journal of the History of Ideas*, v 28 n 4, (1967), 503-20 at 512-514) views regarding the unreliable nature of passion; and George Schulman's argument that for Hobbes (especially in his account of Ixion in *De Cive*) there is an oedipal relationship between citizens and justice ("Hobbes, Puritans and Promethean Politics", *Political Theory*, v16 n 3, (1988), 426-43, at 432-3). James Martel's treatment of the theme in his *Love is a Sweet Chain: Desire, Autonomy, and Friendship in Liberal Political Theory*. (NY: Routledge, 2001), 190; 199) is indicative. He notes the importance of Hobbes as the "road not taken" by liberalism on "its task to create a politics out of love", without indicating the character of this "road not taken".

³ Consider, for example, Allan Bloom, "Introduction" to Jean-Jacques Rousseau *Emile or On Education*. Trans. Allan Bloom. (NY: Basic Books, 1979, 21); and Diana Schaub's reference to Hobbes as "sere-souled" English bachelor, with his political philosophy described as "unerotic liberalism" in *Erotic Liberalism: Women and Revolution in Montesquieu's Persian Letters*. (Lanham, MD: Roman and Littlefield, 1995, ix-x; 9).

⁴ Victoria Kahn, "Hobbes, Romance, and the Contract of Mimesis." *2 Political Theory* (2001), 11.

⁵ Kahn 2001, 11, 22.

⁶ Kahn 2001, 10.

⁷ Kahn 2001, 8.

⁸ Perhaps Kahn does not examine the connection to Plato because she attributes so much importance to Aristotle's understanding of the passions in shaping Hobbes' views (Kahn 2001, 9). Yet as she acknowledges in her major work

Wayward Contracts: The Crisis of Political Obligation in England, 1640-1674. (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2004), 225, neoplatonism played a fundamental role in the “formal elements” of 17th Century romance.

⁹ References to Hobbes’ works are as follows: *Leviathan* (L, chapter, and page number) from Thomas Hobbes, *Leviathan*. Ed. C.B. Macpherson. (Middlesex, UK: Penguin Books, [1651] 1968); *De Homine* (DH, chapter, section number) from Thomas Hobbes, *De Homine*. In *Man and Citizen*. Ed. with translation by Bernard Gert. (Gloucester, MA: Peter Smith, [1658] 1978); *Human Nature* (HN, chapter, section number) from Thomas Hobbes, *The Elements of Law: Human Nature and De Corpore Politico*. Ed. J.C.A. Gaskin. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, [1640, 1650] 1994); *De Corpore Politico* (DCP, chapter, section number) from Thomas Hobbes, *The Elements of Law: Human Nature and De Corpore Politico*. Ed. J.C.A. Gaskin. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, [1640, 1650]. 1994); *De Corpore* (DCo, chapter, section number) from Thomas Hobbes, *De Corpore* in *Thomas Hobbes: Metaphysical Writings*. Ed. Mary Whiton Calkins. (LaSalle, IL: Open Court Classics, [1657] 1989); *De Cive* (DC, chapter, section number) from Thomas Hobbes, *De Cive*. In *Man and Citizen*. Ed. with translation by Bernard Gert. (Gloucester, MA: Peter Smith, [1658] 1978); and *Behemoth* (*Behemoth* page number) from *Behemoth; or The Long Parliament*. Ed. Ferdinand Tonnies with an introduction by Stephen Holmes. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, [1890] 1990)

¹⁰ See generally, Allan Bloom, *Love and Friendship*. (NY: Simon and Shuster, 1993), 46-7; Thomas L. Pangle and Lorraine Smith Pangle, *The Learning of Liberty: The Educational Ideas of the American Founders*. (Lawrence: University of Kansas Press, 1993), 288; Mark J. Lutz, *Socrates’ Education to Virtue: Learning the Love of the*

Noble. (Albany: SUNY Press, 1998), 19; and Haig Patapan, *Machiavelli in Love: The Modern Politics of Love and Fear* (Lanham, MD: Lexington, 2006), 1-14.

¹¹ See also Waller Newell, *Ruling Passion: The Erotics of Statecraft in Platonic Political Philosophy*. (Lanham, MD: Rowman and Littlefield, 2000), “Introduction”.

¹² See C. B. Macpherson, “Introduction” to Thomas Hobbes, *Leviathan*. [Middlesex, UK: Penguin Press, 1968], 9.

¹³ J.C.A. Gaskin, “Introduction” to Thomas Hobbes, *The Elements of Law:*

Human Nature and De Corpore Politico. (Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press, 1994), xii. *The Elements of Law* was completed by 1640 and circulated in manuscript, but was not published until 1650 – and then in two parts (*Human Nature* and *De Corpore Politico*) and probably without Hobbes’ approval. See also Daniella Coli, “Hobbes’s Revolution” in *Politics and the Passions, 1500-1850*. Eds. Victoria Kahn, Neil Saccamino, and Daniela Coli. (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2006), 77.

¹⁴ This is not to deny that, according to Hobbes, the first or original impetus for moving toward objects is pain – specifically, the physical pain caused by the need “of food ... of excretion, and exoneration” (L 6, 120). Once we taste certain objects, however, we learn “from Experience” that they give us pleasure (L 6, 120). At that point, a desire for them is born independent of their ability to quell our pains.

¹⁵ While Locke nowhere talks systematically about *eros*, he does speak of “love”: (TCU, sec. 45; ECHU, II, XXI, sec. 38). References to Locke’s works are as follows: *On the Conduct of Understanding* (TCU, section) from John Locke, *On the Conduct of the Understanding*. Eds. Ruth W. Grant and Nathan Tarcov. (Indianapolis, IN: Hackett Publishing Company, [1706] 1996); *An Essay Concerning Human Understanding* (ECHU, book, chapter, section)

from John Locke, *An Essay Concerning Human Understanding*. Ed. Peter Nidditch. (Oxford, UK: Clarendon Press, [1700] 1975).

¹⁶ The status of fear of death in Hobbes' thought is contested: see for example, Lloyd, 1992; Spragens 1973, 194-7; F. S. McNeilly, *The Anatomy of Leviathan*, (London: Macmillan 1968, 178-182); Peter Ahrensdorf, "The Fear of Death and the Longing for Immortality: Hobbes and Thucydides on Human Nature and the Problem of Anarchy" *American Political Science Review* v. 94, n 3, (2000) 579-594; J. Blits, "Hobbesian Fear", *Political Theory*, v 17, n3 (1989). While Hobbes acknowledges that the pursuit of power often creates disorderly passions like the desire for honor that lead people to risk their lives, preservation remains for him the objective standard by which human beings can judge what is good for them: as he says, "the greatest of goods for each is his own preservation" (DH XI, 6), and "he that foreseeeth the whole way to his preservation (which is the end that every one by nature aimeth at) must also call it good, and the contrary evil. And this is that good and evil, which not every man in passion calleth so, but all men by reason" (HN XVIII, 14). It is true that in *De Homine*, he says that "though death is the greatest of all evils (especially when accompanied by torture), the pains of life can be so great that, unless their quick end is foreseen, they may lead men to number death among the goods" (DH XI, 6). Note, however, that he does not say that it may *reasonably* lead men to do so. More importantly, consider the context of Hobbes' statement: it occurs in a section that begins by asserting that "the greatest of goods for each is his own *preservation*" (DH XI, 6; emphasis added). As we have seen, for Hobbes preservation means more than "bare Preservation". A person living in hopelessly inescapable and overwhelming pain no longer feels any pleasure and thus no longer feels alive; he is experiencing the

horrifying feeling of extinction over and over again. In a truly hopeless situation, it might be reasonable to prefer actual extinction, after which there is at least no pain.

¹⁷ Hobbes judges the reasonableness (and therefore the rightness) of even ‘natural’ desires and pleasures based on whether they promote preservation. According to Kahn, Hobbes makes such distinctions between desires because “consistent naturalism” would have obliterated the distinction between good and bad passion essential to his political thought (Victoria Kahn, “‘The Duty to Love’: Passion and Obligation in Early Modern Political Theory” in *Rhetoric and Law in Early Modern Europe*. Ed. Victoria Kahn and Lorna Hutson. [New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2001], 259). We would only add that Hobbes believes that his philosophy is one of “consistent naturalism” (what Gaskin calls “one-world realism” [Gaskin 1994, xxv]) because he believes that all passions (even the ‘foundational’ desires for pleasure and power) can be traced back to the *original* “impulsion of nature” – to avoid death (DC I, 7).

¹⁸ A fourth kind of person alluded to by Hobbes is the scientist, who finds his greatest pleasure in satisfying curiosity, especially through speculation (L 6, 124; L, “A Review and Conclusion”, 729).

¹⁹ Coli 2006, 75.

²⁰ Indeed, it is so true that there is no “such thing as ... simply good” that “even the goodness of which we ascribe to God Almighty, is his goodness to us” (HN, VIII, 3).

²¹ In *Leviathan*, Hobbes says that the “Latine Tongue has two words, whose significations approach those of Good and Evil; but are not precisely the same; And those are *Pulchrum* and *Turpe*. But in our tongue ... for *Pulchrum* we say in some things, *Fayre*; in others *Beuatifull*, or *Handsome*, or *Gallant*, or *Honourable*, or *Comely*, or *Amiable*” (L 6, 121).

²² Gaskin 1994, xiii.

²³ The importance of *eros* for Hobbes reaches beyond romantic vainglory because, as Kahn notes, such vanity fueled “the Crown’s chief competitors in the production of ideological fictions: the common lawyers, natural rights theorists, Presbyterians, Independents, and radical sectarians” (Kahn 2004, 136).

²⁴ Natural lust is a very powerful form of love; so powerful, in fact, that in the absence of law in the state of nature, the “concord” of “small Families” “dependeth on naturall lust”, not erotic love (L 13, 187). According to Hobbes’ analysis, lust can replace law and love (however imperfectly) because people naturally have an “indefinite desire of the different sex” based on a need for “issue” (HN IX, 5). See in this context Carol Pateman, *The Sexual Contract*. (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1988), 44-54.

²⁵ For an interpretation of Quixote’s erotic vision of Dulcinea, see Henry Higuera, *Eros and Empire: Politics and Christianity in Don Quixote*, (Lanham, MD: Rowman and Littlefield, 1995), ch. 2.

²⁶ In *Behemoth*, Hobbes cites the example of the third Earl of Essex, who was moved to show his valor by risking his life in leading the parliamentary army because of taunts that he was a cuckold. Essex possessed *Amadis de Gaul*, Don Quixote’s favourite (Kahn 2004, 138, 328, n. 11; Higuera 1995, 17, 99).

²⁷ Hobbes commends Plato as “the best Philosopher of the Greeks” not because Plato understood the passions but because he “forbad entrance into his Schoole, to all that were not already in some measure Geometricians” (L 46, 686).

²⁸ All citations from Plato’s *Symposium* are taken from Plato, *Symposium*. Trans. Avi Sharon. (Newburyport, MA: Focus Philosophical Library, 1988).

²⁹ While apparently positing that Greek homosexuality was conventional (“the use of that time”), Hobbes seems to admit the possibility of homosexual erotic attraction. Compare this with his definition of lust as desire for “the different sex”, or his observation that *eros* “cannot be without diversity of sex” (DH VIII, 5; HN IX, 16).

³⁰ Hobbes does not deny that charity exists; indeed, he says that charity is the sole virtue in the state of nature and encompasses all those qualities necessary for “the cause of peace” (DH XIII, 9; HN XVI, 8). As Hobbes defines it, however, charity is not sacrificial love but “that passion by which we strive mutually to accommodate each other... as far as may be without danger to their persons, and loss of their means” (HN XVI, 8).

³¹ Gaskin therefore misses the point when he says that Hobbes had an insight into “benevolence” that “is a pointer to the road later taken by Shaftesbury and Hume” (Gaskin 1994, xxxv). Shaftesbury explicitly criticizes Hobbes for trying to *ignore* benevolence by reducing all human actions – including benevolent ones – to some form (however confused) of self-interest (Anthony Ashley, Earl of Shaftesbury, *Characteristicks of Men, Manners, Opinions, Times*. Ed. Douglas Den Uyl. [Indianapolis, IN: Liberty Fund Press, [1712]. 2001], 57).

³² One reason is our natural vanity: to fall in love we must find someone who is extraordinary but does not offend our vanity by making us feel foolish, a potentially difficult combination. Adding to the problem is the fact that to feel *eros*, a person must have hope of winning the beloved’s “singular” love in return. He would have to need the particular kind of power that the beloved has while himself having the type of extraordinary power that the beloved is herself seeking, another combination that is extremely hard to find. Finally, this difficulty is magnified by the problem of imagination. *Eros* requires imagination because beauty “is pleasant by imagination,

even before the good of which it is a sign is acquired” (DH XI, 5). But when the lover actually experiences his beloved, she may have less of the good quality than he had hoped, which would make her less beautiful and perhaps cast doubt on (or even shatter) the imagination necessary to sustain his passion of love. Thus, while Hobbes admits that people can imagine finding their “felicity” in love, he suggests that no one in reality can have all the power we seek. It is no wonder, then, that the lover as a type of human being is largely absent from Hobbes’ political thought.

³³ For Don Quixote as an example of someone whose *eros* for a beloved becomes more and more a desire for his own martial glory, see Higuera 1995, 47-8.

³⁴ As Gaskin persuasively shows, *The Elements* has “considerable claims as the primary source for Hobbes’s main ideas, as the most succinct presentation of them, and as an epitome of those parts of his philosophy that have most enduring value” (Gaskin 1994, xiii).

³⁵ On the tension between Hobbes’ rhetoric and his scientific principles see Quentin Skinner, *Reason and Rhetoric in the Philosophy of Hobbes* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996).

³⁶ Shaftesbury 2001, 57

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