

Hobbes on the Causes of War: A Disagreement Theory

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Hobbesian war primarily arises not because material resources are scarce; or because humans ruthlessly seek survival before all else; or because we are naturally selfish, competitive, or aggressive brutes. Rather, it arises because we are fragile, fearful, impressionable, and psychologically prickly creatures susceptible to ideological manipulation, whose anger can become irrationally inflamed by even trivial slights to our glory. The primary source of war, according to Hobbes, is disagreement, because we read into it the most inflammatory signs of contempt. Both cause and remedy are therefore primarily ideological: The Leviathan's primary function is to settle the meaning of the most controversial words implicated in social life, minimize public disagreement, neutralize glory, magnify the fear of death, and root out subversive doctrines. Managing interstate conflict, in turn, requires not only coercive power, but also the soft power required to shape characters and defuse the effects of status competition.

Witness this Army of such mass and charge,
Led by a delicate and tender prince,
Whose spirit, with divine ambition puffed,
Makes mouths at the invisible event,
Exposing what is mortal and unsure,
To all that fortune, death, and danger dare,
Even for an Egg-shell. Rightly to be great,
Is not to stir without great argument,
But greatly to find quarrel in a straw
When honour's at the stake.
(*Hamlet*, Act 4, sc. 4)¹

One of the claims for which Thomas Hobbes is much loved is his contention that without a common sovereign to strike fear in their hearts, human beings will inevitably come to blows. This notorious claim about the unavoidable results of political anarchy is the central tenet of the so-called realist tradition in the study of interstate relations; it is also one of the primary reasons why realists have seen in Hobbes, alongside Thucydides, their intellectual ancestor. Realists have traditionally provided three types of explanation for the causes of interstate war, all of which purport to show why states, under conditions of anarchy, are unfailingly driven to maintain or even expand their power relative to others. "Classical realists" such as Hans Morgenthau (1946, 1948) have argued, first, that faced with scarcity of material goods, selfish egoists must compete for what they desire and,

unless prevented by a mechanism that coercively imposes peace, will eventually resort to violence to satisfy their competing wants. Second, and this is the argument that weighed heaviest in Morgenthau's hands, violent conflict is directly the result of a natural human urge to dominate others, an aggressive *animus dominandi*. "Structural realists" (Mearsheimer 2001; Waltz 1979), in contrast, have argued that instrumentally rational actors (states) seeking merely to survive may be drawn into conflict, *despite* benign intent or shared interests, because of the systemic-structural incentives that political anarchy imposes on them: lacking a guarantee, absent a common sovereign, that others will refrain from violence, and unable to discern other actors' intentions, benign but vulnerable actors each have incentive to maintain or expand their relative power to guarantee their own safety; and knowing that other security seekers face the same incentive structure, each is forced to assume the worst of others, resulting in a brutal, "self-help" world of power-seeking politics.²

One of the central criticisms leveled against this realist picture is that it fails to take seriously the essential *social* role of ideology, culture, and identity formation in explaining conflict. According to "constructivists," it is not only that ideologies socialize individuals to follow norms constraining the instrumental pursuit of their interests, but also that ideas socially constitute the very interests and identities of actors in the first place and, indeed, the meanings that they attach to events and actions (Wendt 1992, 1999). Not surprisingly, in a post-September 11 world, accounting for the role of ideology and identity, especially of the religious kind, in fomenting violent conflict has seemed particularly urgent to many (Philpott 2009). It may seem, based on the predominant view of Hobbes in political science, that he would not have had much to contribute to understanding the ideological or identity-related sources of conflict. After all, the three explanations of war dominant in the realist tradition correspond rather closely to the three traditional interpretations

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¹ From the Folger Shakespeare Library edition.

² For an overview of realist theories of the causes of interstate war, see Levy (1989). In this article, I use the term "instrumentally rational" in the broad sense of purposive, means-ends reasoning that includes strategic rationality.

of Hobbes's own account: (1) according to one prominent reading, Hobbes explained war's inevitability in the state of nature as the outcome of competition over scarce material resources; (2) according to a second reading, war results because even purely benign individuals, without a common sovereign to protect them, will be fearful of death and uncertain of others' intentions, and have incentive to engage in preemptive first strikes just to save their skins; and (3) according to a third, the vain, aggressive, and indeed "evil" natural drive to dominate others inevitably propels humans to war. None of these traditional interpretations is without some textual warrant; in fact, they echo the three "principall causes of quarrel" that Hobbes famously singled out in chapter 13 of *Leviathan: competition, diffidence, and glory*.³ Some version of them is what frequently passes for Hobbes among scholars of interstate relations today; indeed, Hobbes's competition and glory arguments are the acknowledged source of classical realism, whereas his diffidence argument is a (sometimes unacknowledged) source of structural realism. Each interpretation, moreover, is compatible with acknowledging other contingent causes of war; the difference lies in what each takes to be the *universal* and thus primary cause for why the state of nature is *inevitably* a war of all against all.

Yet, as interpretations of Hobbes, these readings face two important puzzles. When Hobbes turned from his theoretical account to an historical explanation of the English civil war—a conflict whose background and eruption inspired much of Hobbes's theoretical reflections—he did not solely focus on the natural dispositions of human psychology and the systemic (material) incentives for instrumentally rational action under conditions of uncertainty; he also gave pride of place to the role of ideology and socialization, especially of the religious variety. Even at the theoretical level, moreover, when Hobbes turned to his *solution* to war, he once again granted ideology, symbols, and socialization a central role. In contrast, on the three traditional interpretations of Hobbes, *Leviathan* secures peace almost exclusively by altering, via the threat of (capital) punishment, the systemic, material incentives that individuals face, such that it is no longer in anyone's interest to resort to violence when competing for resources; the fear of death at others' hands is assuaged by the sovereign's protection; or aggressive vanity is tempered by the fear of death for violating the sovereign's laws. But Hobbes was perfectly explicit that, although the threat of punishment contributes to order by altering incentives for action (L 27, 203; 15, 100–1; DCv 5.1, 69), the coercive power of the state by itself is insufficient for securing peace: The rights of sovereignty "need to be diligently, and truly taught;

because they cannot be maintained by any Civill Law, or terrour of legall punishment" (L 30, 232).⁴

It is my purpose in this article to defend a distinct, "psycho-ideological" interpretation of Hobbes's account of war, according to which Hobbes sought to integrate three levels of analysis: the individual level concerning human psychology; the systemic-structural level concerning the incentives for action; and the social level concerning ideology, culture, and socialization. It is true that the insight that Hobbes was concerned with ideology and discourse, and not just with erecting a coercive enforcement mechanism, has already led some scholars to reconsider the traditional interpretations of Hobbes's account of war. According to revisionists such as Richard Tuck (1989, 1993, 1998), the primary cause of war lies not in a conflict of wants or desires, but, rather, in the lack of a common moral language; the solution is to provide an authoritative mechanism for governing the moral *language* used in social interaction (i.e., a mechanism for uniquely settling moral questions of right action) (cf. Wolin 2006). Yet, if traditional interpretations of Hobbes have ignored the third level of his analysis, then revisionists have either tended to recognize the role of ideology, language, and culture in isolation from Hobbes's account of human psychology (Tuck) (i.e., in isolation from the first level of his analysis) or reduced ideology's significance to a system of rules defined and enforced by the sovereign (Wolin) i.e., assimilated it to the second level of analysis.

The psycho-ideological interpretation defended here corrects for this bias. Like the revisionist reading, it begins with Hobbes's emphasis on the central role of ideological disagreement in causing war. However, it proceeds by noting that Hobbes's concern with disagreement is grounded directly in his account of human nature: in particular, in humans' disposition to pursue glory and honor, often even at the cost of death. Disagreement leads to war *because* humans are inclined to view its expression as a sign of contempt: To be contradicted by others, especially by a supposed equal—and sometimes especially if the disagreement concerns a mere "egg-shell," as Hamlet put it—is to suffer a blow to the glory and honor that humans typically desire. Thus, the problem in the state of nature is not simply that without an enforced common procedure for settling disputes about right action, conflicts stemming from other sources—competition or fear of death, for example—cannot be resolved. The problem is, rather, that the mere expression of disagreement is itself frequently the catalyst for war. Nor is violent conflict necessarily fueled by the aggressive desire to dominate others: Hobbes's glory argument focuses instead on the more reactive disposition triggered by perceived insults in social interactions. The solution that *Leviathan* provides to war is not only to *channel* subjects' passions coercively by harnessing the countervailing fear of death and by minimizing public disagreement, but

³ References to Hobbes's writings given as follows: to *Elements of Law* (Hobbes 1994) as (EL chapter.paragraph, page); to *De Cive* (Hobbes 1998) as (DCv chapter.paragraph, page); to *Leviathan* (Hobbes 1996) as (L chapter, page); to *De Corpore* (Hobbes 1839) as (DC chapter.paragraph, page); and to *Opera Latina* (Hobbes 1961) as (OP volume, page).

⁴ Recent commentators who have emphasized that for Hobbes coercion is insufficient for maintaining social order and peace include Holmes 1990; Johnston 1986; Lloyd 1992; Robin 2004; Williams 2005.

also to *shape* subjects' passions by controlling the apparatuses of socialization. Although Hobbes took the passion of glory to be natural to human psychology, he also believed that its character, relative strength, and the "self" to which it attaches—whether the individual, or one's family, class, religion, or nation—depend on intersubjective processes of socialization. Hence, ideology matters not only formally because disagreement provokes conflict, but also substantively because some ideologies are positively subversive and others stoke the imagination and foster dispositions of character, norms, and identities in a manner conducive to order.

In the following sections, I begin by critically attending (in the first four sections) to each of the three traditional interpretations of Hobbes's account of war, plus the revisionist interpretation, in order to show both their exegetical and theoretical shortcomings. The *exegetical* engagement paves the way for the psycho-ideological interpretation of Hobbes that I subsequently advance (in the fifth section). This reading, which indissolubly links the role of disagreement to that of glory and honor, is exegetically significant because it implies that, for Hobbes, the primary source of war is ideological rather than conflicts of interest over material resources. It also helps explain the inherent *relation* between Hobbes's competition, diffidence, and glory arguments, showing that the first two arguments are parasitic on the third: Glory is what I call the *organizing* cause of war, one that shapes and explains the ideological basis of the two other "principall causes." This interpretation of Hobbes's general argument, moreover, is the one that most fully coheres with the historical explanation that he provided of the causes of the English civil war; indeed, it is the interpretation that best explains why Hobbes's discussion of religion acquired increasing prominence each time he rewrote his political philosophy. Finally, this reading is exegetically significant because of its implications for how we read the Hobbesian *solution* to war. *Leviathan* solves the problem of war above all by a state-sponsored ideological program designed to minimize publicly expressed disagreement; channel and shape the desire for glory and honor; magnify subjects' fear of death; and root out false, subversive doctrines. All this in turn requires a common normative vocabulary expressing "consensus" on a public conception of morality: a glory atrophying ideology of fear, not of fellow citizens, ghosts, or eternal damnation, but of the sovereign and the vividly imagined terrors of the state of nature. That this is the ideological program to which Hobbes devoted the bulk of *Leviathan* is further evidence that the account of war to which it answers is indeed the account he meant to advance.

The critical *theoretical* treatment of the traditional interpretations of Hobbes helps contemporary scholars, in turn, to think through the limitations of twentieth-century realism's corresponding explanations of the causes of war. The psychoideological interpretation of Hobbes that I propose is theoretically significant because, insofar as it takes the vagaries of human psychology and culture to be essential for explaining war, it integrates the psychological, systemic-

structural, and social levels of Hobbes's analysis (as I show in the article's penultimate section). It thereby considerably complicates Hobbes's place in the realist canon, locating him squarely on the side of those who fault realists for minimizing the role of ideas, culture, and identity in explaining political outcomes. Furthermore, Hobbes's account avoids reifying ideological or cultural differences in the manner of the "clash of civilizations" thesis (Huntington 1996), which explains conflict by reference to a supposedly fundamental antagonism between cultural groupings; indeed, well before Freud (1989, 72) introduced the phrase "narcissism of minor differences," Hobbes provided a powerful explanation for why otherwise trivial religious or cultural differences can become, especially when fomented by ambitious elites, flashpoints for violent conflict—in Hamlet's words, why people will "find quarrel in a straw/When honour's at the stake." The interpretation offered here also leads (in the article's final section) to the Hobbesian conclusions, of relevance to interstate relations, that relative gains seeking by states cannot be explained solely by the structural incentives imposed by the interstate system, and that an important discontinuity exists between interpersonal and interstate relations, so that one cannot treat states as unitary actors akin to oversized human beings.

COMPETITION AND SURVIVAL: SCARCE RESOURCES

According to the *Leviathan's competition argument*, war results from the fact that human beings, without a sovereign to regulate their conduct, will invariably resort to violence in competing over the same goods: "if any two men desire the same thing, which nevertheless they cannot both enjoy, they become enemies; and . . . endeavour to destroy, or subdue one another" (L 13, 87).

One way to interpret this argument corresponds to the "Hobbes" of the popular imagination—the proverbial Hobbes conjured up and targeted by many an outraged moralist in Hobbes's own time—according to which the state of nature is inevitably a state of war simply because of the unavoidably selfish nature of humans. The strength of this picture is that, in one sense, Hobbes was quite clearly a psychological egoist. Human action, according to Hobbes's theory, is always the result of a desire for (or an aversion to) something persons perceive to be good (or bad) for themselves (L 14, 93; 6, 39; cf. DCv 6.11, 80).⁵ The problem, however, is that psychological egoism so defined does not tell us what *kind* of desires individuals typically have.⁶ Thus, the sense of egoism attributable to Hobbes is perfectly compatible with an altruistic person whose primary desire, for example, is the welfare of his or her

⁵ Gert (1967, 20–21) and Hampton (1986, 19–23) agree that Hobbes was an egoist in this formal sense. Cf. Gauthier (1987, 284–85).

⁶ This is why Gert (1967) calls this version "tautological egoism." It is, of course, possible to define egoism nontautologically (McNeilly 1968, 99–100), but egoism so defined is not attributable to Hobbes.

fellows.⁷ I may only act when I believe that something is good for me in the sense that I desire it, but I may desire nothing but your good, which I thereby consider to be my good as well. So, it may be true that *if* people had conflicting desires, *then* they might resort to violence to settle their differences; but *whether* they do have conflicting desires depends on what kind of desires they typically have. Even if their desires were not wholly altruistic, their desires might typically provide them with reason to cooperate, rather than compete—if they were to face a coordination rather than a conflictual zero-sum game. Everything will depend on *what* people actually desire.

This is why the most sophisticated readers of Hobbes who find the primary cause of war in competition have relied not on self-interest in general, but on the fear of death and the concomitant desire for survival in particular, which Hobbes frequently appeared to portray as the most overwhelming of human passions (DCv 1.7, 27). Thus, on the first traditional interpretation of Hobbes, war arises because humans each seek—above all else—their own survival. The question is, of course, why Hobbes would believe that this desire leads humans to a state of war, where the threat to life is most acute.

The surprising answer, on this reading, is that humans are instrumentally rational. David Gauthier, perhaps the most influential defender of this interpretation, explains war by imputing three premises to Hobbes: that humans are instrumentally rational; that humans overwhelmingly seek their own survival; and that the material goods necessary for survival are relatively scarce. As Gauthier (1969) lays out the argument, because humans desire above all else to stay alive, instrumental reason directs them incessantly to amass the power to survive through, among other things, the acquisition of the material goods necessary for survival. However, because these goods are relatively scarce, humans inevitably end up competing for the same ones. This leads to conflict and war because the fact that you might compete for the same goods that I desire makes me see you as a threat to my survival: It is thus “in my interest to forestall you from the outset” (11–18). Therefore, instrumentally rational beings who desire their own survival end up jointly producing a state of war in which everyone is, as Hobbes famously put it, in “continuall feare, and danger of violent death” (L 13, 89). Gauthier (1969, 17–18) concludes: “The actions which men naturally and reasonably perform in order to secure their ends prove self-defeating. . . . Men acting on their own, however reasonable they may be, are doomed to the war of all against all.”

The strength of this interpretation is that, true to Hobbes’s account, it explains war by reference to a substantive desire. There are, however, several weaknesses. One is that it requires imputing to Hobbes a premise for which the textual support is scarce—namely, the third premise, according to which com-

petition results from the relative *scarcity* of material goods necessary for human survival. Gauthier does not cite any Hobbesian text for the assumption of relative material scarcity, and it is significant that when Jean Hampton (1986, 60) imputes the assumption to Hobbes, she is forced to quote *David Hume* in his place!⁸ In fact, as Tuck (1998, xxiii–xxiv) points out, Hobbes did *not* believe that the material resources necessary for survival were scarce in his own time: A passage from *Leviathan* suggests that humanity would be afflicted by scarcity of material resources (and the wars prompted by it) only at some future age when population levels had increased. In the meantime, there is America.⁹ Thus, although a localized (and contingent) scarcity of material resources might help explain a local conflict, it cannot be the basic, primary cause of war because it could not explain why the state of nature is *necessarily* a state of war. Indeed, far from stating that material scarcity is a necessary condition of war, Hobbes asserted the opposite, that humans are most prone to war when material goods are *abundant*: “irrational creatures cannot distinguish between *Injury*, and *Dammage*; and therefore as long as they can be at ease, they are not offended with their fellows: whereas Man is then most troublesome, when he is most at ease” (L 17, 120; cf. Zarka 1995, 139). The Latin version is even more pointed: “man is then most troublesome, when his leisure and resources are most abundant [*quando otio opibusque maxime abundat*]” (OP 3, 130). The reference to *taking offence* foreshadows the true basis for Hobbes’s primary explanation of war, including the basis of his competition argument: not the fear of death, but the passion of glory.

The first and second premises of Gauthier’s argument, moreover, are challenged by his own reading of Hobbes’s well-known reply to the “Foole,” according to whom to “keep, or not keep Covenants, was not against Reason, when it conduced to ones benefit.” To appreciate the significance of Hobbes’s discussion of covenants for his account of war, it is crucial to distinguish between three components of his political theory: (1) an account of the positive *causes* of war, (2) an account of (a) potential *antidotes* to the causes of war and/or (b) potential *solutions* to war once its causes are operative, and (3) an account of the *obstacles* to these potential antidotes and/or solutions.

⁸ Imputing the assumption of resource scarcity to Hobbes, without textual evidence, is widespread (Kavka 1986; McNeilly 1968, 17, 22–23, 23, 102; Thivet 2008, 707). Nor is Gauthier alone to see in resource scarcity, and the desire to survive, Hobbes’s primary explanation of war (Schiller 1972).

⁹ “The multitude of poor, and yet strong people still encreasing, they are to be transplanted into Countries not sufficiently inhabited: where nevertheless, they are not to exterminate those they find there; but constrain them to inhabit closer together, and not range a great deal of ground, to snatch what they find; but to court each little Plot with art and labour, to give them their sustenance in due season. And when all the world is overchard with Inhabitants, then the last remedy of all is Warre” (L 30, 239). Cf. DCv Dedicatory, 5: with science in hand, “ambition and greed, whose power rests on the false opinions of the common people about right and wrong, would be disarmed and the human race would enjoy such secure peace that (apart from conflicts over space as the population grew) it seems unlikely that it would ever have to fight again.”

⁷ For evidence of an altruistic conception of pity in *Leviathan*, see McNeilly (1968, 118) and Hampton (1986, 21). Rudolph (1986, 81) argues that this represents a shift from Hobbes’s earlier works.

Covenants obviously fall in the second category: They either provide potential antidotes to war's causes in the state of nature or are the basis for a solution that ushers humans out of the war-afflicted state of nature. As Gauthier points out, Hobbes argued in his reply to the Foole that when one party has already performed its part of a covenant, and so effectively benefitted the other party, in the state of nature it is always rational, for the sake of survival, for the second party to perform its part as well. [On Gauthier's (1969, 76–89) reading, this is because those who develop a reputation for betrayal will discourage others from entering into beneficial covenants with them in the future, including (1) covenants of mutual help in the state of nature (what Hobbes called “Confederations”) and, crucially, (2) sovereignty covenants by which one leaves the state of nature. The only hope for would-be betrayers would be if others are deceived about their past behavior, an “error” that betrayers “could not foresee, nor reckon upon” (L 15, 102–3).]

This reply presents a dilemma for Gauthier's account of the Hobbesian causes of war. The first horn of the dilemma is this: If persons in the state of nature systematically act rationally for the sake of their survival, then it would appear that there is available, in the state of nature, a reliable antidote to the competitive causes of war, namely, cooperation on the basis of covenants. In a world of rational survivalists, parties contemplating a covenant know that the second performer's compliance is rational; therefore, any would-be first performers have reason to perform their end of a mutually beneficial covenant. This is a problem because the state of nature would begin to look considerably less nasty and brutish than Hobbes said it is. Gauthier obviously recognizes the problem, which is why he seizes the second horn of the dilemma: He argues that humans in the state of nature will systematically fail to uphold their covenants (even if others have already performed their part) either because of “errors in reasoning” or because of “the force of particular passions” that “lead men astray.” This is why in “order to ensure that men are actually motivated to fulfil their covenants, he [Hobbes] considers that there must be an earthly power sufficient to hold men to these covenants” (Gauthier 1969, 86).

However, the second horn of the dilemma poses three problems of its own. First, insofar as Gauthier relies on “errors in reasoning” to ensure that covenants in the state of nature fail to be effective antidotes to the competitive causes of war, he has abandoned the first premise of his account of war. Second, insofar as Gauthier relies on “those passions [other than the desire for survival] which lead men to violate their covenants,” he has abandoned his second premise. Gauthier's reading is, in other words, incoherent: His account of the positive *causes* of war assumes that humans are instrumentally rational and that the desire for survival typically overwhelms all other passions, whereas his account of the *obstacles* to potential antidotes to war in the state of nature assumes the contrary. Finally, if it really is the case that humans in the state of nature are unable to keep covenants, then it is not clear how they could ever *leave* the state of nature via covenant. The same

obstacle facing *antidotes* to war in the state of nature also appear to obstruct the potential *solution* to the state of war. Call this the *problem of entry* into political society.

In summary, the “resource-competition” reading of Hobbes exemplified by Gauthier suffers from three main weaknesses. First, its third premise, the assumption of relative material scarcity, has no textual grounding. Second, it is incoherent: Its account of the obstacles to the antidotes and solution to war requires abandoning either the first premise (about instrumental rationality) or the second premise (about survival), premises it requires to explain the presence of war in the first place.¹⁰ Third, insofar as this reading is successful in explaining why the state of nature is a state of war, it appears simultaneously to jeopardize Hobbes's political solution to the state of war.¹¹

DIFFIDENCE AND SURVIVAL: THE STRUCTURAL LOGIC OF ANARCHY AND UNCERTAINTY

The major advance that structural realists understand themselves to have made over classical realism is to show how the propensity for violent conflict follows directly—without imputing any particular desires to actors (states) other than their own security—from the structure of political anarchy itself. This is precisely the type of explanation that the second reading of Hobbes imputes to him. This reading maintains the appeal to instrumental reason and the desire for survival; however, by replacing the premise of relative material scarcity with an epistemological premise for which there is

¹⁰ This incoherence is particularly instructive because it is mirrored by the oft-noted equivocation among classical realists over whether the rational pursuit of “the national interest” is an assumption about state behavior or a *prescription* and, so, whether war results from instrumental reason or from its breakdown.

¹¹ For the first horn of the dilemma and the third weakness of the second horn, see also Hampton's (1986, 78) criticism of the “rationality account” of war. However, it is a mistake to say, as Hampton does, that Gauthier's reading of Hobbes identifies the cause of war with passions that disrupt rationality (63). When Gauthier (1969) provides his account of the Hobbesian causes of war, he categorically states: “We cannot suppose that men in Hobbes's state of nature are irrational. They do not engage in the war of all against all merely in order to satisfy immediate passion, or even to secure short-term interests. In competing with their fellows they are seeking their overall well-being” (17–18). Hampton's misreading of Gauthier stems from the failure to distinguish (1) the positive *causes* of war from (3) the *obstacles* to potential antidotes or solutions to war. When Hampton attributes the “passion account” rather than the “rationality account” of conflict to Gauthier, she is citing chapter II.3 of Gauthier's book, where he explains why someone might fail to keep a covenant in the state of nature. For Gauthier, Hobbes's reply to the Foole suggests that persons who defect when the other party has already fulfilled its commitments are acting irrationality, either because they have reasoned incorrectly or have been “overwhelmed by occurrent passions” (86). However, contracts, for Hobbes, are a potential means to overcome situations in which *other* factors pit humans against each other. Failing to keep contracts is not a positive cause of war; it is an obstacle to overcoming the effects of such causes. That is why Gauthier's account of the Hobbesian causes of war appears in chapter I.4, prior to and independently of his discussion of covenants. What leads Hampton astray is that Gauthier's analysis of the (1) causes does not cohere with his analysis of the (3) obstacles.

considerable textual support, it avoids the weaknesses from which the resource-competition interpretation suffers.

Beyond reason and the desire for survival, this interpretation emphasizes a crucial feature of Hobbes's account of human nature: human fragility. Humans are fragile in two senses. They are fragile existentially because they are mortal and, indeed, can potentially be killed by any of their fellow humans—what Hobbes famously called their natural equality (L 13, 86–87). They are also fragile epistemologically because their beliefs about particular external phenomena depend on the fallible interpretation of signs. Although they can directly know the effects of external objects on their sensory organs (i.e., their own mental states), their understanding of the external causes of their particular sensory experiences, and of causal relations between external phenomena, is wholly conjectural (L 3, 22; Jesseph 1996). Thus, judging whether the particular person one encounters is a threat to one's life is an uncertain matter of interpreting signs, and this means, crucially, that one “cannot tell the good and the bad [men] apart, hence even if there were fewer evil men than good men, good, decent people would still be saddled with the constant need to watch, distrust, anticipate and get the better of others” (DCv Preface, 11). Regardless of how many persons are “decent,” it is always possible that some might be “bad” and hence a threat to one's life. Even if one could be certain that no “evil” predators exist—that everyone is a pure security seeker—one still has reason to fear being a target in case some should deem what one wants, or what one is doing, a threat to *their* survival, which is most certainly possible. In either case, the upshot is that one can never be certain whether the other whom one confronts is a threat to one's survival or not.

We are, nevertheless, capable of certain but hypothetical *reasoning*. Thus, if my overwhelming desire is to preserve my life, and on the material assumption that when two people come to blows the one who strikes first has the upper hand, then, confronted with uncertainty about the threat that another poses to my life, I can reason that I have an overwhelming incentive to strike first. This is because if the other is a threat to my life, eliminating him will be to my benefit, whereas if he is not a threat, whether I eliminate him or not makes no difference to my survival. Striking first is a dominant strategy. Indeed, I can also reason that because everyone suffers from the same fragility I do, and can reason as I do, the person I confront in the state of nature will have a similar incentive, regardless of whether he wishes me ill or not. This simply magnifies our fear of each other, reinforcing each person's incentive to engage in a preemptive strike. As Hobbes put it in chapter 13 of *Leviathan* when explaining the second principal cause of “quarrel,” “from this diffidence of one another, there is no way for any man to secure himself, so reasonable, as Anticipation” (L 13, 87; cf. DCv Preface, 11).

The second interpretation therefore locates the primary cause of war in Hobbes's *diffidence argument*. Hobbes's explanation of war is here taken to be, as

McNeilly (1968, 164–65) puts it, a purely “formalised” one that merely involves working “out the structure of the reasonable calculations” that actors face under conditions of anarchy and uncertainty. The incentive to strike first arises not from maliciousness, but because of “security dilemmas” arising from the advantage of offensive measures and uncertainty about others' motives (Glaser 1997).¹² This is precisely the type of explanation given by structural realists for why interstate relations are a realm of power politics and war. It is therefore particularly instructive to see why this argument fails as a reading of Hobbes, that is, to see why even Hobbes needed to invoke a motive beyond survival in order to show that a state of nature is necessarily a state of war. For against Alexander Wendt's (1992) objection that structural realists must presuppose a prior set of (not purely security-related) interests and identities to explain why anarchy leads to competitive power politics, realists have replied that pure security seekers will seek relative power just because of uncertainty about others' present and future intentions—a point that Wendt's objection is said to overlook (Copeland 2000). It is therefore important to see that the main difficulty facing the “structuralist” reading of Hobbes centers directly on the problem of uncertainty.

The main difficulty is this: uncertainty about others' potential impact on one's survival faces three logical possibilities, not two. To be sure, the person whom I confront in the state of nature may be a threat to my survival or he may be benign; however, he might also be a cooperative and indispensable *aid* to my survival. In other words, whether a “decent” person continues to live could have either no impact on my survival or may turn out to be *necessary* to my survival. The upshot is that if my overwhelming desire is brute survival, then just as the possibility that the other may threaten my survival provides me with incentive to eradicate him, the possibility that he may be necessary to my continuing survival provides me a powerful contrary incentive to *protect* his life. Once one recognizes that a “decent” person may come in two stripes—neutral or helpful—striking first to kill is no longer a dominant strategy.

It might be retorted that, even though in principle a person may be a threat, neutral, or a help to my survival, in practice Hobbes ruled out the third possibility in the state of nature. Not necessarily because he believed that no one would ever *want* to help me survive, but because, as long as we remain in a state of nature, no one effectively ever *could* help me survive.¹³ Indeed, Hobbes cited two reasons why a mere coalition of mutual aid cannot be an effective means of security

¹² On McNeilly's interpretation of Hobbes, even the assumption that humans seek survival above all else is dispensable. McNeilly (1968, 164–68) argues that *whatever* one's objectives, one is vulnerable to others' power, which one cannot be certain will be wielded to further one's objectives; the result is that each has (a derivative) reason to seek power over others, and this, in turn, provides an incentive for the spiral of anticipatory violence.

¹³ Kavka (1983, 298–99) attributes this position to Hobbes, but argues against its cogency.

in the long run. First, without “a common Power to keep them all in awe,” individuals will all act “according to their particular judgements. . . concerning the best use and application of their strength,” such that they “but hinder one another” in pursuit of a common goal. Second, even if they manage to unite temporarily under a single commander for the immediate purposes of battle, as soon as “they have no common enemy,” they will “fall again into a Warre amongst themselves” (L 13, 88; 17, 118–99; cf. DCv 5.4, 70–71). Thus, the objection to the structuralist interpretation of Hobbes fails, according to this retort, because for someone effectively to aid my survival, we would have to form a stable, unified commonwealth, rather than an unstable coalition, and this would take us out of the state of nature. However, in the state of nature—which is the case under consideration—he can be of no help to me: He is either a threat or neutral.

The first problem with this retort is that, as Hobbes recognized, what is true in the long run is not necessarily true in the short run. Conversely, if one is dead in the short run, then one will still necessarily be dead in the long run. In the short run, coalitions are possible and potentially indispensable, which means that others can, at least in the short run, be absolutely necessary to one’s survival. Hobbes was rather explicit about this: “in a condition of Warre, wherein every man to every man. . . is an Enemy, there is no man can hope by his own strength, or wit, to defend himselfe from destruction, without the help of Confederates” (L 15, 102). Indeed, denying the potential effectiveness of a “confederacy,” as the retort does, is flatly incompatible with the premises of the structuralist reading of Hobbes itself. Recall that a crucial premise of that reading is existential fragility (i.e., humans’ natural equality). To demonstrate that *every* person in the state of nature can be killed by others, however, Hobbes assumed that “even the weakest has strength enough to kill the strongest, either by secret machination, or *by confederacy with others*, that are in the same danger with himselfe” (L 13, 87; emphasis added). My immediate security may require me to solicit the aid of others to eliminate the strongest among us who poses a threat to my life. Indeed, the “Anticipation” of which Hobbes spoke in his diffidence argument refers not only to preemptive strikes, but also to the prior formation of coalitions of mutual aid.¹⁴

The second problem with the retort is that it assumes that the primary threat to one’s life, which the (allegedly ineffective) coalition is meant to repel, is an ongoing threat from humans, rather than, say, intermittent threats from natural forces. This only makes sense on the assumption that one is already in a state of war. The whole argument, in other words, begs the question: that there is a state of war is meant to be the conclusion, not the presupposition, of the diffidence argument. If a state of war is not presupposed, then intermittent and nonhuman threats to survival become relatively more important, and the potential benefits of a merely

temporary coalition begin to weigh even heavier. The result would not be a policy of first strikes to kill but a policy either of immediate surrender (leading to “commonwealth by acquisition”) or a policy of immediately proposing to form a coalition or commonwealth (leading to “commonwealth by institution”).

But what if the purpose of first strikes were not to kill but, rather, to subdue—to put others to work in the service of one’s own survival? Indeed, this is how Hobbes himself described “Anticipation,” by which a person seeks “by force, or wiles, *to master* the persons of all men he can” (L 13, 87–88; emphasis added). This would account for the third logical possibility, that others may help my survival, and also seems to explain why the state of nature yields a policy of first strikes. Does this salvage the structuralist reading of Hobbes’s account of war? The argument now faces a further difficulty. Recall the assumption that each person’s overwhelming desire is survival. If so, and if violence always risks death even when one strikes first, then one does not necessarily have incentive to strike first to subdue. First, Hobbes did *not* (implausibly) take natural equality to mean that each human is powerful enough to *subdue* any other; natural equality refers, rather, to each human’s vulnerability to being *killed* by others. Second, because violence poses a potential risk of death to anyone, instead of first strikes one has incentive to avoid violence at all costs, either by immediately surrendering or by proposing to form a commonwealth to anyone one encounters, before coming to blows.¹⁵ This is not a state of first strikes leading to war, but a state of first surrenders or proposals leading to peace.

The upshot of the structuralist reading, in other words, is that the state of nature cannot last: that we are *inevitably* led to form a commonwealth (by surrender or agreement). This result is precisely the opposite of the problem of entry faced by the resource-competition interpretation of Hobbes. Thus, the merit of the structuralist interpretation is that it shows that the state of nature *inevitably* leads to a commonwealth, and so avoids saddling Hobbes with a seemingly intractable entry problem that does not seem to have troubled Hobbes himself much. However, this merit is by the same token a weakness: The case for why the state of nature *inevitably* leads to a commonwealth is also a case for why the state of nature *immediately* leads to a commonwealth, which undermines the case for why a state of nature is inevitably a state of war. War is simply

¹⁵ Kavka (1983, 298) makes a similar point. He adds that preemptive strikes are also irrational because they identify anticipators as especially dangerous, prompting others to eliminate them, and because successful anticipators may become tempting targets for glory seekers. (Theorists of security dilemmas might add that gaining mastery over a crew, in anticipation against others, may make those others feel *less* secure about one’s intentions and so *more* likely to strike, even if they are pure security seekers.) As an alternative to first strikes, instead of immediately surrendering, Kavka (1986, 120–24) considers the strategy of “lying low” and shows that in a world of rational survivalists, this strategy is not dominated by the strategy of striking first, so that to explain war one needs to assume that some people are aggressive glory seekers rather than survivalists. However, Kavka does not explain why a survivalist would not, instead of lying low, rather go out and surrender to aggressive glory seekers.

¹⁴ On Hobbes’s views about the viability of state-of-nature alliances, see Malcolm 2002, 450–52.

never given a chance.¹⁶ This goes against everything Hobbes wanted to say: We form a commonwealth, he wanted to say, *because* the state of nature is such a nasty state of war.

If the logic of the second traditional reading of Hobbes simply leapfrogs over the state of war, it is because, like the first reading, it relies so heavily on the fear of death and the concomitant desire for survival to explain war. What these readings miss about Hobbes's writings is their insistence that war arises not because people always seek their own survival above all else, but because often they *do not*. To be sure, diffidence, like competition, is an important component of Hobbes's explanation of war. However, the interpretations of Hobbes's account of competition and diffidence that I have considered up to now overlook a crucial feature of his overall argument: The self that seeks preservation is by nature a *glorying* self, so that the desire for self-preservation is not reducible to a mere desire for the individual's physical *survival*. War arises because the fear of death is often irrationally overwhelmed by other passions. This means that the first two "principall causes of quarrel"—competition and diffidence—cannot be understood in isolation from the third.

VAINGLORY AND AGGRESSIVE EVIL

The significance of Hobbes's *glory argument* has often been recognized by Hobbes's commentators, of course, but this recognition is often either coupled with the view that, by the time of *Leviathan*, Hobbes had come to abandon glory's central role in explaining war,¹⁷ or it is coupled with the view that the argument explains war by portraying humans as inherently and aggressively evil. The latter imputes to Hobbes a view akin to the one held by Morgenthau; the imputation has been most famously made by Morgenthau's colleague, Leo Strauss. I argue that both the former and latter readings of the role of glory are mistaken: They fail to recognize the relation between what Hobbes said about glory and what he said about disagreement.¹⁸ Strauss' interpretation of Hobbes is, among those focusing on the glory argument, the most influential; attending to its shortcomings helps to show why, for Hobbes, ideological *disagreement* is the primary cause of war *because* of the human passion for glory and honor, and why this passion is not equivalent to an *animus dominandi*.

¹⁶ Hampton's (1986, 149) contention that instrumentally rational persons, whose primary motive is survival, would be "clamoring to create" a commonwealth is exactly the right conclusion to draw from this interpretation of the Hobbesian state of nature.

¹⁷ E.g., Beitz 1999; Hampton 1986, 74; McNeilly 1968. According to Tricaud (1988, 120–22), "competition" becomes the most important cause of war in *Leviathan*. For an important corrective, attentive to the differences among EL, DCv, and L, see Slomp 2007.

¹⁸ Thus, Rudolph (1986) contrasts a "cognitive" account of the causes of war, which emphasizes the role of disagreement, with a "psychological" account, which emphasizes glory among other passions. This leads him—mistakenly, I believe—to contrast *Leviathan* to Hobbes's earlier works on the grounds that *Leviathan* subscribes to the former account, whereas his earlier works subscribe to the latter.

Strauss' point of departure is Hobbes's claim that humans desire to be admired. Of course, satisfying this desire might be instrumental to survival; after all, others' recognition of one's power actually enhances that power, including, crucially, the power to secure one's own life. "Reputation of power, is Power," Hobbes proclaimed, and "what quality soever maketh a man beloved, or feared of many; or the reputation of such quality, is Power" (L 10, 62). Yet Hobbes believed that the desire for admiration also has significance beyond the simply instrumental one: Humans take inherent pleasure in contemplating their own power and in seeing it acknowledged and valued by others. So, Hobbes asserted, there is a "*Joy*" arising "from imagination of a mans own power and ability," an "exultation of the mind" that in *Leviathan* he called "GLORYING" (L 6, 42). One thing that causes us to exult in this way is when others give us reason to do so, that is, when others "honour" us by recognizing our power.

Indeed, in earlier works, Hobbes had claimed that glory—which for Hobbes is, like power, an intrinsically comparative concept, concerned with one's *relative* power¹⁹—is the most intense pleasure of all (EL 27.3, 163–64; DCv 1.2, 22). According to Strauss (1963, 10–11), it is because of "the pleasure which man takes in the consideration of his own power" and superiority over others—that is, the desire for glory, not bare physical survival—that humans are subject to an infinite and "irrational striving after power."²⁰ The issue is not simply that humans desire glory, but that they vainly imagine themselves superior to others even when they are not; this is presumably why Strauss speaks of *vanity*, not just glory. The fact that "man by nature strives to surpass all his fellows and to have his superiority recognized by others" and "naturally wishes the whole world to fear and obey him" in turn implies—against Hobbes's own explicit denial—that "man is by nature evil" (13, 18). Hobbes's denial that humans are by nature evil (DCv Preface, 11) is simply the Monster of Malmesbury pulling his punches: Humans are by nature evil in the precise sense that they aggressively seek to subjugate their fellows and compel them to recognize their superiority. Not only do humans seek glory, they vainly overestimate their own worth; not only are humans vain, their vanity is their only natural appetite; not only are they naturally vain, they are aggressively so; and not just a few, but everyone is aggressively vain: "each desires to surpass every other and thereby offends every other" (Strauss 1963, 12). No surprise that such creatures should come to blows in the state of nature. This is Strauss' first account of Hobbesian war.

The strength of this account is the focus on glory; the weaknesses are the failure to maintain the distinction

¹⁹ McNeilly (1968, 144–46) claims that in *Leviathan* Hobbes abandoned a comparative concept of glory and of power; Slomp (1998) rightly shows this to be a mistake.

²⁰ Strauss claims that for Hobbes glory is the natural origin of all other appetites; as Slomp (1998, 2007) shows, however, Hobbes abandoned such a claim in *Leviathan*, although he maintained glory's centrality as the most important passion for explaining conflict.

between glory and *vainglory* or vanity, the assumption that humans are *aggressively* vainglorious, and the assumption that *every* human is aggressively vain. To his credit, in his most extensive treatment of the causes of Hobbesian war, Strauss quietly drops the final assumption. This revised account focuses on paragraph 4 of *De Cive*'s opening chapter, where Hobbes contrasted the "modest man," who "has a true estimate of his own capacities," who "practises the equality of nature," and who simply wants to enjoy his property and liberty, with the vainglorious man, who "overvalues his own strength" and thus supposes "himself superior to others," and who, as a result of his "vainglory," "wants to be allowed everything, and demands more honour for himself than others have" (DCv 1.4, 26). The passage implies, of course, that even if all humans seek glory, not all vainly overestimate their own worth. [Hobbes made this point more explicitly elsewhere, when he distinguished between two species of glory: a person's glorying is "*Confidence*" when it is "grounded upon the experience of his own former actions"; it is "*VAIN-GLORY*" when "grounded on the flattery of others; or onely supposed by himself, for [whimsical] delight" (L 6, 42)]. Strauss' argument here focuses specifically on the *vain* man's demand for more honor [i.e., on the explicit demand that others recognize the vain man's (imagined) power and the superiority he claims over them]. As Strauss (1963, 20–21) tells the story, the vain man aggressively "makes his claim to superiority and to recognition of his superiority"; this claim itself is a sign of contempt for others, and refusal to grant it simply returns the compliment; expression of contempt arouses a desire for revenge, which leads to an attempt to subjugate the offender even at risk to one's life; which leads to physical combat and pain; which leads to hatred and, ultimately, the will to kill. The crucial amendment in Strauss' revised reading is this: War does not result because *each* person has an a priori aggressive desire to subjugate everyone else; it arises because the mutual expression of contempt (between aggressor and aggressed) leads to the desire to subjugate.

What Strauss fails to mention, however, is that Hobbes did not, in this paragraph, refer to signs of contempt at all: He said instead that the vainglorious man's demand "for more honour for himself" will be seen by others as "the sign," not of contempt, but "of an aggressive character." Thus, although "the will to do harm" arises in the vainglorious man from his aggressive desire "to be allowed everything," in other persons it simply arises from "the need to defend" their property and liberty from those who have signaled their aggressive character. It is only in the next paragraph that Hobbes turned to signs of contempt, and when he did, he did not mention as such a sign the aggressive demand on which Strauss focuses, namely, that others recognize one's explicitly claimed superiority. As we shall see, the signs he mentioned are of a different, rather more trifling kind: "little injuries" of which a truly "gallant man" would "not take notice" (L 27, 206–7). This is one weakness of Strauss' reading: its assumption that to explain war Hobbes invoked the *aggressive* manifestation of glory qua vanity.

This weakness comes to light the moment we study Hobbes's glory argument in *Leviathan*: "every man looketh that his companion should value him, at the same rate he sets upon himself: And upon all signes of contempt, or undervaluing, naturally endeavours, as far as he dares . . . to extort a greater value from his contemners, by dompage; and from others, by the example" (L 13, 88). Signs of contempt or undervaluing trigger a response, regardless of whether one's estimation of one's own value is inflated. The problem is glory in general, not just vainglory in particular. The crucial point is this: Hobbes portrayed humans in general ("every man") as acting *defensively* in the name of their glory and honor. Their "endeavour" to "extort a greater value" is a response triggered by already expressed "signes of contempt." The problem of glory refers not to the inherently aggressive nature of humans, but to their *prickly* and defensive character. The crucial question, then, is: What precisely are the most infuriating signs of contempt? As we shall see when I present the psychoideological interpretation, Hobbes pointed rather directly to expressed ideological disagreement as the most important such sign. To bring to light the nature and importance of the link between disagreement and glory, however, I first turn to an alternative interpretation of Hobbes's account that also recognizes the centrality of disagreement, but fails to make the link to glory.

A REVISIONIST INTERPRETATION: NORMATIVE CONFLICT

The central role of ideological disagreement in Hobbes's explanation of war has already been recognized by a number of commentators. Both Richard Tuck (1989) and Sheldon Wolin (2006, 230–45) influentially argue that, for Hobbes, the point of sovereignty covenants is to erect a "Great Definer" who provides (and enforces) a common normative vocabulary that articulates shared norms yielding a determinate, coherent guide to social interaction. The implication is that the state of nature is necessarily a state of war because it lacks a common moral standard to regulate social interaction. There are at least three reasons why the unavailability of a common moral standard might be thought to lead to a state of war. First, it might be thought that this unavailability is precisely what a state of war means. This involves a radical reinterpretation of the standard view of the Hobbesian state of war, a reinterpretation I call the *normative reading* of the state of war. Second, this unavailability might simply give free reign to other, more primary causes of war to wreak full havoc. Third, this unavailability might go in tandem with widespread moral disagreement, which itself is the primary cause of war. At different points, Tuck suggests each of these three answers; I examine each in turn in order to show why the correct reading of Hobbes lies in the final one.

Tuck frequently calls Hobbes a moral relativist. If someone's action is right just because he or she believes it is right, and if I believe that I have a right to enjoy

something to which you also believe you have a right, then in fact we both have a right to enjoy the same thing. The upshot is that, for goods whose enjoyment is necessarily exclusive, our rights are objectively in conflict with each other, and because morality provides no further mechanism for resolving the conflict on moral grounds, it fails to provide an alternative to the violent resolution of conflict. It is true, on this reading, that Hobbes admitted a single exception to so-called moral relativism in the state of nature: a natural right to self-preservation, which Hobbes described as “the Liberty each man hath, to use his own power, as he will himselfe, for the preservation of his own Nature . . . and consequently, of doing any thing, which in his own Judgement, and Reason, hee shall conceive to the aptest means thereunto” (L 14, 91; see Tuck 1989, 58–59). However, this right of nature simply exacerbates the problem. Because according to the right of nature I have a right to what I subjectively believe is necessary to my self-preservation, if what I believe is necessary to my self-preservation conflicts with what you believe is necessary to yours, then our rights conflict and morality in effect sanctions war. As Hobbes put it in *De Cive*, “it was of no use to men to have a common *right* of this kind. For the effect of this *right* is almost the same as if there were no *right* at all. For although one could say of anything, *this is mine*, still he could not enjoy it because of his neighbour, who claimed the same thing to be his by equal *right* . . . one man *rightly* attacks and the other *rightly* resists” (DCv 1.11–12, 29). Thus, morality—such as it is—is incapable of providing an effective alternative to violence as a mode of conflict resolution. Despite the single exception to Hobbes’s supposed relativism, “we have,” as Tuck (1989, 59) puts it, “all the instability of a wholly relativist world back again.”

Tuck sometimes uses this reading to suggest the radical reinterpretation mentioned previously: He suggests that this conflict of rights is not so much the primary *cause* of war, but rather actually *constitutes* what a state of war means. The state of war, in other words, is not an empirical description of a state of hostilities between humans, but rather a normative description of people’s conflicting rights. It is not so much humans who are at war with each other, but morality that is at war with itself (cf. Wolin 2006, 235). Tuck suggests this normative reading when rejecting traditional interpretations of Hobbes. Such interpretations, according to Tuck (1989, 107), wrongly assume that Hobbes was trying to provide an empirical theory describing and explaining human behavior; to the contrary, “Hobbes was not actually concerned with explaining human conduct.” Hobbes’s claim that the state of nature is a state of war is not a descriptive claim, but a claim about the moral sphere: “the problems in the state of nature arise, for Hobbes, *in the sphere of rights*” (108). Instead of beginning with *behavioral* axioms grounded in human passions, as the previous readings of Hobbes do, the proper explanation of the state of war begins with *moral* premises—namely, an account of the right of nature.

On this reading, *Leviathan* solves the problem of war thanks to its *right of judgment*, which provides an

authoritative mechanism for producing a determinate set of consistent moral judgments in each case of social interaction (i.e., a consistent system of rights at peace with itself). What is crucial about sovereignty covenants is that through them, each individual gives up his or her right to judge, “as he will himselfe,” what is necessary for his or her self-preservation. It is not that moral relativism has been transcended in political society, but that the context of judgment to which morality is relative has been changed: not the judgment of each subject, but the sovereign’s public judgment determines that to which each person has a right. I have a right to something just in case the sovereign says I do. The conflict, internal to morality, between rights in the state of nature can be transcended because the sovereign can determine, in each particular case, exclusive use and property rights: for “annexed to the Sovereignty” is

the whole power of prescribing the Rules, whereby every man may know, what Goods he may enjoy, and what Action he may do, without being molested by any of his fellow Subjects: And this is it men call *Propriety*. For before constitution of Sovereign Power . . . all men had right to all things; which necessarily causeth War: and therefore this *Propriety*, being necessary to Peace, and depending on Sovereign Power, is the Act of that Power, in order to the public peace. (L 18, 125)

If this is indeed what Tuck means to say,²¹ then his reading faces at least two problems. First, the normative reading goes against Hobbes’s explicit definition of the state of war. Hobbes defined that state in clearly dispositional and behavioral terms, making reference to “the Will to contend by Battell” and “the known disposition” to fight (L 13, 88–89). These are clear references to his theory of human passions and action. The second problem with this reading lies in its characterization of Hobbes’s deduction that a state of nature is a state of war: It assumes that this deduction begins with moral premises about the right of nature, rather than psychological and behavioral premises about human passions and action. One cannot conclude that humans have the “Will to contend by Battell” simply by referring to a conflict of rights in the moral sphere: One must also show that people are willing to *exercise* these rights and even carry them to battle. Because Hobbes believed that people are not disposed to do anything except for what they desire, the deduction of the state of war clearly requires making assumptions about what people desire; in fact, Hobbes’s deduction that the state of nature is a state of war quite explicitly begins with an account of the passions, as he reminded us when saying that his conclusion is an “Inference, made from the Passions” (L 13, 89) known through introspection.²² Indeed, *Leviathan* only introduces the right of nature

²¹ Wolin’s (2006, 235–39) discussion of the absurdity intrinsic to the state of nature comes very close to endorsing the normative reading as well.

²² Hobbes said that “whosoever looketh into himself . . . he shall thereby read and know, what are the thoughts, and Passions of all other men, upon the like occasions” (L Intro, 10). Cf. DC 6.7, 74.

in chapter 14, after having already established, in the previous chapter, that the state of nature is necessarily a state of war (Tricaud 1988, 115). Hobbes appealed to morality to explain the *causes* of war defined as a state of hostilities between humans, not to *define* the state of war in terms of a tension within morality itself. The purely normative interpretation of the *meaning* of the state of war must be rejected: It fails to incorporate the individual level of Hobbes's analysis, concerned with the nature of human psychology.²³

Tuck also offers, however, a different, less radical answer to why the state of nature leads to war, an answer that does not rely on the normative reading of war, but war understood in traditional terms as hostilities between humans. On this account, war ensues because individuals in the state of nature simply cannot *agree* to common moral rules to regulate their conduct. Tuck emphasizes this reading when he portrays Hobbes as a nihilist who denies any effective moral principles in the state of nature, or when he calls him a skeptic, implying that, even if such principles existed, individuals in the state of nature could not know them. Either way, in the state of nature, the door to moral disagreement is wide open. Again, Tuck mentions the familiar Hobbesian exception: Everyone can agree to the natural right of self-preservation. However, individuals cannot agree on how to *apply* the right of nature to particular cases. Although Tuck does not make this distinction, it is important to see how the argument here differs from the one grounded in portraying Hobbes as a relativist. On the relativist reading, the crucial problem is not that people cannot *agree* on how to apply the right of nature. The problem is, rather, that the rights that we truly have may conflict: Even if we both agree that both of us need the same thing for our survival, the upshot is that, agreement or not, we have conflicting rights to the same thing. However, on the skeptical (or, indeed, on the nihilist) reading, the crucial problem is not what—if anything—morality truly says, but simply the fact of our *disagreement*. As Tuck puts it, “It was conflict over what to *praise*, or morally to approve, which Hobbes thus isolated as the cause of discord, rather than simple conflict over *wants*.” Humans “could not enjoy a decent social existence unless they were capable of using a common moral language to describe their activities” (Tuck 1989, 55, 56; Williams 1996, 2005).

The question is, of course, why moral disagreement should lead to war. One answer is that commonly agreed-on moral rules provide a peaceful way to resolve conflicts. Without this alternative to violence, war results. This is the implication of Wolin's (2006, 242–45) formalistic reading of Hobbesian “political society as a system of rules,” where the sovereign merely acts

to articulate, interpret, and enforce these rules, but is wholly unconcerned with the ideological project of transforming human nature. The shortcoming of this reading is that it fails to give disagreement the basic and primary (and not merely permissive) causal status that Hobbes believed it has. If the normative reading overlooks the first, psychological level of Hobbes's analysis, then Wolin's reading fails adequately to account for the third, *social* level of analysis, in particular, the crucial role that Hobbes's thought processes of socialization play in fomenting conflict or securing peace. However, because Hobbes's conclusion that the state of nature is a state of war is a claim about how people are disposed to act under the circumstances, the explanation of why moral disagreement is a positive cause of war requires attending to—beyond Hobbes's second-level account of the systemic-structural incentives individuals face in the state of nature—his first-level assumptions about human nature and the passions and his third-level analysis of ideology's role in socialization (which I respectively take up in the next two sections).

GLORY AND DISAGREEMENT

The passion crucial to Hobbes's account of war is glory—not Morgenthau's *animus dominandi*, not Strauss' vanity, but glory, the passion that renders humans sensitive to, and quick to anger at, perceived signs of contempt. Which signs of contempt are of the most infuriating kind? Although, as we have seen with Strauss, paragraph 4 of *De Cive's* opening chapter specifies what people take to be signs of aggression, only in the subsequent paragraph did Hobbes tell us what people read as signs of contempt. When he did so, he did not mention, as a sign of contempt, the aggressive demand that one recognize another's explicitly claimed superiority. He mentioned instead the same “signs of undervalue” that he later emphasized in *Leviathan* when, summarizing the glory argument, he wrote that people are prompted to “use Violence” because of mere “trifles, as a word, a smile, a different opinion, and any other sign of undervalue” (L 13, 88). Here is Hobbes giving his account of human nature: not universally vainglorious, but frequently *prickly*, so that mere “trifles,” such as a different opinion, can trigger the human being's rage. Humans, no matter how rational in their calmer moments, are akin to walking time bombs.

Prickly humans feel contemned by another's different opinion because of their natural tendency to *identify* with their own opinions, that is, to see their opinions as constitutive of who they are—no matter how trivial or unfounded those opinions happen to be. They take disagreement personally. Indeed, according to *De Cive*, the simple expression of a different opinion is by far the most devastating sign of contempt, a sign exacerbated by the fact that those who express it invariably couple it—people can hardly help it, Hobbes insinuated—with invidious smiles.²⁴ To disagree with someone is to imply

²³ I express some doubt that the normative reading can be attributed to Tuck because he also says that “the state of war is the consequence of everyone *implementing* their right of self-preservation” (Tuck 1989, 107–8; emphasis added). However, to explain what would motivate humans to implement this right, one must make some behavioral assumptions. Tuck's assertion that “Hobbes was not actually concerned with explaining human conduct” also fails to account for *Behemoth*, which explicitly seeks to explain the causes of human conduct that lead to the civil war (Holmes 1990).

²⁴ On laughter as an expression of contempt according to Hobbes, see Skinner 2002, chap. 5.

that the person is an idiot. Paragraph 5 in its entirety reads as follows:

Intellectual dissension too is extremely serious; that kind of strike inevitably causes the worst conflicts. For even apart from open contention, the mere act of disagreement is offensive. Not to agree with someone on an issue is tacitly to accuse him of error on the issue, just as to dissent from him in a large number of points is tantamount to calling him a fool; and this is apparent in the fact that the bitterest wars are those between different sects of the same religion and different factions in the same country, when they clash over doctrines or public policy. And since all the heart's joy and pleasure lies in being able to compare oneself favourably with others and form a high opinion of oneself, men cannot avoid sometimes showing hatred and contempt for each other, by laughter or words or a gesture or other sign. There is nothing more offensive than this, nothing that triggers a stronger impulse to hurt someone. (DCv 1.5, 26–27)

Hobbes made the same point, more succinctly, in *Leviathan*: If pedestrian disagreement provokes anger, when a person holds a “Vehement opinion of the truth of any thing” and is “contradicted by others,” what predictably ensues is the “Madnesse called RAGE, and FURY” (L 8, 54). Because, according to Hobbes, to disagree with people is to dishonor them (L 10, 65), and because one's actual power and one's belief in one's power in part depends on one's reputation for power, being contradicted is an affront to one's glory: It deprives one of the pleasure of contemplating one's own power. Elsewhere in *De Cive*, Hobbes reiterated the claim that such affronts to glory and honor are the most devastating causes of war: “Any sign of hatred and contempt is more provocative of quarrels and fighting than anything else, so that most men prefer to lose their peace and even their lives rather than suffer insult” (DCv 3.12, 49). Although the equivalent passage in *Leviathan* does not reiterate the causal urgency of this source of war, it does repeat the suggestion that the defensive desire to avenge dishonor *routinely* overwhelms even the fear of death—as routinely as expressions of contempt: “all signs of hatred, or contempt, provoke to fight; insomuch as most men choose rather to hazard their life, than not to be revenged” (L 15, 107).

The most critical reason for why expressions of disagreement flourish in the state of nature stems from a fundamental deficiency of that state: the absence of a fixed *common vocabulary*. In all three of his political works, Hobbes was inclined to characterize substantive disagreements either as consisting in, or as inevitably resulting from, disagreements over the *definitions of words*. This is the central insight behind Wolin's and Tuck's readings, and it is reflected in Hobbes's summary of the whole argument of *Elements of Law*:

In the state of nature, where every man is his own judge, and differeth from other concerning the names and appellations of things, and from those differences arise quarrels, and breach of peace; it was necessary there should be a common measure of all things that might fall in controversy; as for example: of what is to be called right, what good, what virtue, what much, what little, what *meum* and

tuum, what a pound, what a quart &c. For in these things private judgments may differ, and beget controversy. (EL 29.8, 180)

If the most devastating cause of war is expression of contempt or “undervalue,” and the most devastating expression of contempt is “difference of opinion,” then the most devastating type of disagreement is (as Hobbes's preceding list suggests) *evaluative, moral, and political* disagreement—disagreements about what ought to be praised and done, disagreements, that is, over what to call good, virtuous, right, necessary for peace, and so on. Although peace is in fact threatened even by disputes in natural philosophy (DCv 17.12, 215), disagreements over normative words are particularly deadly: In *De Cive*, Hobbes went so far as to say that “all disputes arise from the fact that men's opinions differ about *mine* and *yours*, *just* and *unjust*, *useful* and *useless*, *good* and *bad*, *honourable* and *dishonourable*, and so on, and everyone decides them by his own judgement” (DCv 6.9, 79). The problem is that there is no rational basis for agreement over the meaning of normative terms other than peace, and individuals are inclined to use them in ways that express their *own* particular wants, desires, and passions. Normative words are most dangerous because, on the one hand, they implicitly tell others what to do and, on the other, being signs not only of one's opinions, but also of one's passions (L 4, 31), they are especially wrapped up with the individual's sense of self or identity.

Far from abandoning this explanation, Hobbes forcefully reiterated in *Leviathan* his warning that disagreement paves the way to war. In a well-known passage, Hobbes singled out evaluative disagreement, arising from the conventionality of values, in particular:

Good, and *Evill*, are names that signifie our Appetites, and Aversions; which in different tempers, customes, and doctrines of men, are different: And divers men, differ not onely in their Judgement, on the senses of what is pleasant, and unpleasant to the tast, smell, hearing, touch, and sight; but also of what is conformable, or disagreeable to Reason, in the actions of common life. Nay, the same man, in divers times, differs from himselfe; and one time praiseth, that is, calleth Good, what another time he dispraiseth, and calleth Evil: From whence arise Disputes, Controversies, and at last War. (L 15, 110–11)

Some have taken the fact that this passage appears in chapter 16, *after* chapter 13's outline of the three “principall causes of quarrel,” to indicate that, by the time of writing *Leviathan*, Hobbes had come to see disagreement not as a cause, but as an effect of the state of war. However, this is a mistake: Such a reading ignores not only what the passage overtly says in the final sentence, but also the fact that Hobbes's claim that disagreement is a cause of war is a function of his claim that the desire for glory and honor is a cause of war. Glory, it will be recalled, was one of the three “principall causes.”²⁵

²⁵ Those who diminish the significance of glory and honor in *Leviathan* must also address chapter 17, which explains why humans need a sovereign, whereas “certain living creatures, as Bees, and Ants, live sociably one with another” without one. Hobbes's first

If evaluative, moral, and political disagreements are particularly dangerous, disagreements over religion unite elements of all three in explosive combination: According to Hobbes, theological and liturgical debates concern the evaluative words and actions with which to praise God, whereas ecclesiastical debates concern the political authority of clerics. To the early modern religious mind-set with which Hobbes was intimately familiar, to be contradicted even on the most abstruse points of theological doctrine, or to suffer the presence of divine worship on terms different, in seemingly the most trivial of details, from one's own, was the proper occasion for outrage and bloody action (Lecler 1955). No surprise that as the full violence of English political events gathered steam, Hobbes's ever-increasing alarm at the role of religious ideological conflict in spilling human blood was matched only by the amount of ink he came to spill on religion, so that by *Leviathan* his treatment of religion covered over half the text. If there was any change in Hobbes's evaluation of the role of ideological disagreement in explaining war, it was that he dramatically *increased* its weight as his thinking evolved—as confirmed by his explicit treatment of the causes of the English civil war in his *Behemoth* of 1688 (Hobbes 1990; Collins 2005; Kraynak 1982).

The problem with disagreement is thus not simply that the absence of consensus gives other causes of war, such as competition over material resources, free reign to wreak havoc. Nor is the pacifying role of a common vocabulary merely that it attenuates conflicts of interest by providing a commonly accepted way to settle them. The evaluative or moral agreement expressed in a common vocabulary is not merely—like effective covenants—an *antidote* to other, extrinsic causes of war. Because of its relation to glory, disagreement is a basic—indeed, the primary—cause of war.

None of this is to say that Hobbes at any point abandoned his competition and diffidence arguments. The point is, rather, that both are parasitic on his glory argument. When Hobbes pointed to the problem of competition over wants, he did not appeal to scarce material goods necessary for survival. He appealed instead to goods that are *intrinsically*, not incidentally, scarce—above all, the positional goods of glory. Here is Hobbes telling his readers what kind of goods the competition argument presupposes: Humans come to blows because they “are continually in competition for Honour and Dignity . . . and consequently amongst men there ariseth on that ground, Envy and Hatred, and finally Warre.” This is because “man, whose Joy consisteth in comparing himselfe with other men, can relish nothing

but what is eminent” (L 17, 119).²⁶ Hobbes's competition argument is derivative of his glory argument.

Glory-induced prickliness is also what ultimately explains the diffidence argument. Recall a fundamental difficulty with the purely structuralist interpretation of Hobbes: In principle, others can be a threat, neutral, or potential help to one's survival in the state of nature. It is the third class of person—the fact that the other may potentially be *necessary* to one's survival—that undermines the dominance of a “first strike to kill” strategy. Yet, the glory induced prickliness of humans practically transforms *everyone* into a long-term threat to one's survival, regardless of present intentions: Because humans are so prickly, the slightest affront to their glory—mere “trifles, as a word, a smile, a different opinion, and any other sign of undervalue”—may provoke them to violence. We cannot help but see other humans, whether in principle “decent” or “bad,” as walking time bombs who may unpredictably turn against us. This is what ultimately fuels our mutual diffidence.

PSYCHOLOGY, IDEOLOGY, AND SOCIALIZATION

Critics such as Hampton have challenged readings of Hobbes that emphasize glory and honor by claiming that if such passions “are so deep-seated as to generate total war, it would seem that rational pursuit of self-preservation will not be powerful enough among enough of the population” to facilitate the “creation and completion of the contract to institute the sovereign.” The glory account of war, in other words, makes the problem of entry unsolvable and, so, Hobbes's political solution to war—the institution of *Leviathan*—an impossibility (Hampton 1986, 73; cf. Hanson 1993, 652). In one sense, Hampton is quite right: The fear of death is the basis for humans' entry into political society, and if by nature glory and honor always trumped other passions, then no Hobbesian solution to war would be forthcoming.

Hampton's mistake is to assume that if glory can sometimes overwhelm the fear of death, then it must always do so. The mistake reflects a widespread assumption that Hobbes was a psychological reductionist according to whom there exists a passion that *always* trumps the others. However, Hobbes did not attribute such a status to *any* passion, whether glory or fear of death. Nor did Hobbes think that the relative strength of each passion is invariantly determined by humans' natural constitution. It is a central thesis of Hobbesian psychology that (1) of the passions to which one is disposed, *which* ones end up motivating action depends

answer is “that men are continually in competition for Honour and Dignity, which these creatures are not; and consequently amongst men there ariseth on that ground, Envy and Hatred, and finally Warre” (L 17, 119). See Kraynak 1982; Ripstein 1989; Slomp 1998, 2007. For debate about glory's role in Hobbes, see also chapters 7–9 in Caws 1989.

²⁶ Hobbes repeated the point, saying that “the Businesse of the world” or social interaction “consisteth almost in nothing else but a perpetuall contention for Honor, Riches, and Authority” (L Review and Conclusion, 483). The sandwiching of “Riches” between “Honor” and “Authority” serves to indicate that even the role that riches play in fueling contention is intricately linked to their *symbolic* value in establishing social status. Cf. EL 27.3, 163–64.

on the *circumstances*; it is also Hobbes's thesis that (2) the kinds of passion to which one is disposed depend heavily on social "customs" and one's "particular education." These two claims—elaboration of which requires attending to how Hobbes's argument integrates the individual-psychological, systemic-structural, and social levels of analysis—lie at the heart of Hobbes's account of war and of his solution to it.

Hobbes stressed the first thesis (1) when outlining the circumstances under which humans, as a matter of empirical fact, are inclined to act on their natural fear of death. What is distinct about the fear of death is not that it always overwhelms other passions, but, rather, that philosophical reason attributes to life (and so the means of its preservation) a unique evaluative status. Although Hobbes denied that anything has intrinsic value (EL 7.3, 44; L 11, 70), he assumed that if *anything* is of value to persons, their own life must also be of value to them because it is an instrumental but *necessary* condition for continuing to realize all other values. The necessary value of one's own life is the foundation for an entire set of instrumental goods necessary for *every* person's life (i.e., the shared social means for life's preservation that Hobbes articulated as laws of nature) (L 14, 91–92). Yet, regardless of how certain reason's discovery that survival is of necessary instrumental value, whether one *acts* in accordance with natural law depends on the circumstances. Thus, under some circumstances, humans will be moved by the fear of death that reason recommends, but under other circumstances, they will be moved to pursue an object of glory: "no one is without his calmer moments, and at those times, nothing is easier" than to grasp the value of life and to act on the means of its preservation; however, at other times and in other circumstances, "*hope, fear, anger, ambition, greed, vainglory* and the other emotions do impede one's ability to grasp the laws of nature, while they prevail" (DCv 3.26, 53). It is not that we are never moved by passions such as glory and honor to the detriment of our survival, but that when we are, we act *irrationally*, to the detriment of the ongoing satisfaction of all our desires, including our desire for glory. According to Hobbes, the typical circumstance under which humans will be moved by one passion rather than another is when either the objects of the passion or the consequences of acting on it are more vivid to the imagination (James 1997)—such as when (a) the prospect of an object's satisfaction is more immediately present [which is why humans suffer from a shortsighted but natural tendency to discount the value of future goods (DCv 3.32, 55–56), and why people sometimes risk death in the distant future for the sake of a more immediate pleasure of glory²⁷]; or when (b) the systemic-structural incentives weighed by instrumental reason are amplified by a sovereign's announced threat of punishment; or when (c) the symbolic order embedded in public discourse magnifies an object's imagined presence [as when the pageantry

²⁷ For the unique status of survival as a prerequisite for pursuing other goods, and on shortsightedness, see Robin 2004, 35–36; see also Hampton 1986 on shortsightedness.

of state magnifies Leviathan's power by enhancing its reputation, or when "Morall and Civill Science" furnishes "those prospective glasses" that enable subjects in political society "to see a farre off the miseries that hang over them" in the state of nature (L 18, 129)].

Hobbes announced the second thesis (2) when he stressed that although formally there is a "similitude of *Passions*. . . in all men," so that everyone experiences "*desire, feare, hope, &c.*" there is no necessary "similitude of the *objects* of the *Passions*, which are the things *desired, feared, hoped, &c.*: for these the constitution individuall, and particular education do so vary" (L Intro, 10). Individuals vary not only according to their natural constitutions or "tempers," to be sure, but also according to differences in their "particular education" and "customs" (L 15, 110). In fact, the specific concern with positional goods such as glory or honor is peculiar to humans precisely because we are linguistic-cultural beings (L 17, 119; Pettit 2008, 93–94); and even if, once language exists, glory becomes ineradicable, its *object* of attachment and its *strength* relative to other passions depend on cultural processes that amount to what we today call socialization. This is why the identity to which individuals attach their glory, and over which mere "trifles" provoke them to "Violence," could be "either direct in their Persons, or by reflexion in their Kindred, their Friends, their Nation, their Profession, or their Name" (L 13, 88). It is not merely that, via socialization, individuals internalize norms that constrain the pursuit of their immediate interests (i.e., the duties that subjects "need to be diligently, and truly taught"); it is also that intersubjective cultural processes shape individuals' very conception of their interests and identities in the first place.²⁸

Thus, although Hobbes most certainly posited natural principles of human psychology, he also embedded his psychological account within a nontrivial social theory. For Hobbes, even the *character* of the glory that dominates one's personality—whether it be well-grounded confidence in one's power or the kind of hypersensitivity that provokes fighting over mere trifles—is the result of social "customs" and one's "particular education." Hobbes was particularly concerned that the chivalric code of his time had exacerbated the prickliness of the English aristocracy: "a man receives words of disgrace or some little injuries," which, although "not Corporeall, but Phantasticall" and although "so light, as a gallant man . . . cannot take notice of," are nevertheless "in this corner of the world, made sensible by a custome not many years since begun, amongst young and vain men." The result of this aristocratic culture of pseudohonor is a set of enervated subjects, each of whom "is afraid, unlesse he revenge" himself with violence, that "he shall fall into contempt" (L 27, 206–7). The English condition was not, however, a historical quirk: For Hobbes, the social position of the aristocracy, which freed them from the "necessity" that keeps common people "attent on their trades, and labour" (L 30, 236), was especially prone to cultivating a politically

²⁸ For Hobbes's increasing concern with "cultural transformation," see Johnston 1986.

dangerous kind of glory: for “Man is then most troublesome, when he is most at ease.” Abundance permits focusing on matters not immediately related to material needs and, as a consequence, one’s sense of glory easily becomes tied not merely to trivial codes of honor—rendering aristocrats so much more easily “offended with their fellows” (L 17, 120, cf. Thomas 1965)—and to obscure religious doctrines, but also specifically to *political* ambitions.

It is because of the pivotal role of symbolic language in stoking the imagination, and of socialization in shaping opinions, passions, and identities, that to establish peace Hobbes outlined a full-scale ideological program for the sovereign to propagate (L 30, 233–36). The state’s coercive power is significant because it empowers the sovereign not only directly to *channel* passions, by altering systemic-structural incentives for action, but also indirectly to *shape* them, by seizing control of the central apparatuses of socialization—university, church, and publications (L 18, 124). Hobbes’s focus on the university reflects his elitist, “trickle-down” view of socialization: The common people receive their ideological formation “chiefly from Divines in the Pulpit,” and the clergy, along with the aristocracy, receive their formation “in the Universities.” Thus, the key to “the Instruction of the people” is “the right teaching of Youth in the Universities” (L 30, 236–37) and an Erastian state that appoints and supervises the clergy. All this to replace subversive, vanity-inducing ideologies with one that cultivates in their stead a peace-inducing fear of the state of nature. Subjects must be *taught* to fear death above all else.

CONCLUSION

If the satisfaction of our appetites in the long run is typically disrupted by irrational tendencies, then peace is attainable only if, having recognized these tendencies, we are able to bind ourselves to our ongoing future good. I take it that this is indeed what Hobbesian sovereignty covenants amount to. Sovereignty covenants (and thus entry into political society) are made possible by overwhelming moments of intense and shared fear that acutely focus everyone’s attention on the long-term requirements of survival. In these defining moments, the laws of nature, which recommend sovereignty covenants to all, acquire supreme urgency: Everyone is seized by the rational discovery that peace serves one’s values regardless of which desires one wants to satisfy in the long run. The real problem, then, is not how to *enter* political society—this could be done under the right circumstances when fear of death prevails—but how to *stay* in political society. On the psychoideological reading of the causes of war defended here, the Hobbesian account of human nature helps explain why the state of nature is so nasty without thereby implying that entry into political society is an extraordinary feat; it shows, rather, why *staying* in political society is an extraordinary feat. This is exactly how Hobbes himself saw matters: He was never unduly concerned with the entry problem that

has exercised his modern interpreters; he was always rather concerned with the problem of the commonwealth’s *subversion* and *dissolution*.²⁹ The reason why Hobbes was vastly more concerned with dissolution is because even if, under circumstances of immediate and present fear, humans are typically inclined to covenant to form a political society, once they enjoy the security provided by a sovereign they are apt to lose sight of the motivation for submitting to him in the first place. They may begin to take their security for granted and be tempted by more immediately present objects of appetite (Robin 2004).

War for Hobbes does not result, in other words, from the *exercise* of reason under conditions of material scarcity or uncertainty but, rather, from reason’s breakdown—to which humans may be particularly susceptible in times of abundance and security. This breakdown is incurred above all by the contempt that prickly humans read into expressed disagreement, contempt that provokes their glory and sends them marching to war. Peace, in turn, depends on recovering their rationality and fixing their gaze on death, no matter how distant, by steadily looking through the “prospective glasses” of “Civill Science . . . to see a farre off the miseries that hang over them” in the state of nature (L 18, 129). The rational fear of death, far from being the *cause* of war, is for Hobbes the basis for *avoiding* war (Strauss 1963)—which is why, structural realists notwithstanding, it is necessary to appeal to a motive beyond survival or security to explain the inevitability of war.

Each of the individual elements of Hobbes’s account of war emphasized here—from socialization to the passion of glory, from shortsightedness to ideology, from the secondary role of resource competition to the centrality of disagreement—has been separately noted by Hobbes’s previous interpreters. However, it is only in recognizing the inherent relation between disagreement and glory, and the relation of Hobbes’s glory argument to his competition and diffidence arguments, that we are able fully to appreciate his contribution to understanding the ideological sources of violent conflict. Hobbes’s glory argument does not just identify yet another cause of war alongside competition and diffidence: Glory is the *organizing* cause of war, which shapes and explains the ideological basis of its two other “principall causes.” Hobbes’s account, moreover, integrates three levels of analysis: At the individual-psychological level, it emphasizes the natural disposition to glory; at the systemic-structural level, how incentives for action can channel individuals’ passions; and at the social level, how ideologies can stoke the imagination and socialize individuals in ways that determine the objects, relative strength, and character of their passions. Hobbes believed that the ideological basis of war in his century could be traced to a culture that spawned endless disputes over rationally

²⁹ Lloyd (1992, 27) argues that if war resulted from a coordination problem in the face of material scarcity, then, once Leviathan is in place, it should be invulnerable because none would have incentive to defect, which was precisely the opposite of Hobbes’s view.

irresolvable and often obscure or trivial matters, inflamed the passion for glory, and cultivated fear for the wrong objects. The main culprit in all this, of course, was religion. Not, in its origin, the religious sensibilities of impoverished “Common-peoples,” whose “minds...are like clean paper” on which can be “imprinted” this or that (L 30, 233), but religion put in the service of ambitious elites, who, like the Pied Piper, conduct the commons here or there, having chased away the fear of death with that of damnation.³⁰ Not surprisingly, Hobbes’s explanation of the English civil war in *Behemoth* centered on politically ambitious elites who, their own basic needs met, puffed with pride and whipped up bellicose sentiment by tightly linking their own glory to the glory and honor of God, and the glory and honor of God, in turn, to their triumph over rivals in theological, liturgical, or ecclesiastical controversies—controversies that had served in the first place to create the factions they pitted against one another. Hobbes discerned similar dynamics in the interstate realm, where ambitious sovereigns used religious disputes to orchestrate domestic unrest abroad and to mobilize interstate war in the name of God’s honor. [He was especially incensed, of course, by the European-wide pretensions of the Pope, whose transnational church he condemned as a “*Confederacy of Deceivers*” (L 46, 417).] That religious and ethnonationalist ideologies, identities, and differences often perform a similar function in the hands of today’s ambitious leaders suggests that attention to Hobbes’s analysis may pay handsome dividends to contemporary students of violent conflict.

For students of interstate war, in particular, Hobbes’s account has at least two important theoretical implications. First, Hobbes’s three-level analysis challenges structural-realist theory by suggesting that it is not possible to explain conflict by focusing solely on the systemic-structural features of the state system. One reason that structural realists have deemed cooperation under anarchy unfeasible and conflict inevitable lies in their assumption that anarchy *structurally* induces states—even those ultimately concerned with absolute gains—to sacrifice absolute gains (from cooperation) to maintain or increase their (military/economic) capabilities *relative* to others. Hobbes’s assumption that “confederacies,” however precarious, are viable in the state of nature substantially anticipates the main criticisms leveled by “liberal institutionalists” against this central structural-realist tenet. Structural realists claim that anarchy induces states to pursue relative gains against others because, without an effective authority to prevent violence, no state can know whether others, even if presently benign, will threaten it in the future (Grieco 1988). Under these conditions, the prospect of *future* wars undermines the possibility of (realizing absolute gains from) present cooperation. Institutionalists critics have rightly argued, however, that uncertainty about future intentions does not, by

itself, lead to the conflictual pursuit of relative gains (Keohane 1993, 282–83; Rathbun 2007, 538). The basic reason for this is grounded in the logical possibility already recognized by Hobbes, that is, the possibility that another might be a help to one’s survival (and not just a threat or neutral). The fact that Hobbes believed that often others *will* be indispensable aids to survival is partly based on another insight canvassed by institutionalists, namely, that when there are more than two actors, structurally induced concerns over relative gains may go in tandem with a desire for some others’ short-run gain as well—if these others are potential allies in gaining over yet others (Keohane 1993, 276–77).

As Powell (1991) shows, moreover, the claim that the sheer *possibility* of future war induces relative gains seeking and undermines the prospects for present cooperation between instrumentally rational security seekers rests on two assumptions: that (1) success in war is determined primarily by one’s relative capabilities, which, in turn, are a function of one’s previous relative gains, and that (2) the expected gains from successful war are reasonably high. However, if it turns out instead that (~1) relative capabilities depend heavily on alliances and, so, on the relative capabilities of *others* (potential allies), then the prospect of war need not prevent cooperation. Moreover, if (~2) the expected costs of even successfully prevailing in battle are too high, then others’ relative gains will not concern such actors because there will be little incentive for anyone to wage war and, so, as Powell puts it, the “prospect of war is not at issue.” The first condition (~1) is met by Hobbes’s assumption that survival in the state of nature requires allies; the second condition (~2) is partly met by the possibility that preemptive strikes may eliminate a potential ally. Moreover, Hobbes’s assumption of existential fragility, according to which failure in war is possible for anyone and the cost of failure—death—is catastrophic, moves beyond Powell’s analysis: War may not be at issue for rational security seekers if the cost of possible *failure* is so high that *everyone* has incentive to avoid it. To be sure, Hobbes’s assumption of equal fragility may not hold between states, and Hobbes believed that interstate war need not be as catastrophic as interpersonal war (Beitz 1999; Bull 1981; Malcolm 2002, 450–52; cf. L 13, 90; 22, 163). However, the fundamental point is that the single-minded, instrumentally rational pursuit of survival does not by itself inevitably propel the state of nature into a state of war.

What does inevitably cause war, Hobbes assumed, is glory and disagreement: Humans *are* concerned with relative gains, but not for the structural reasons to which structural realists usually appeal. For Hobbes, relative gains seeking arises from the intrinsic desire for glory, which is not only a rival, positional good, but is also a passion that, without being properly socialized, in many circumstances disrupts the instrumentally rational pursuit of one’s long-term objectives. Hobbes’s account of war suggests that if the sovereign representatives of states operate in an international culture that—rather than containing their “continual jealousies” (L 13, 90)—exacerbates their prickliness, they will be prone to plunge the states they lead into

³⁰ On Hobbes’s emphasis on the importance of elites, elite conflict, and institutionalized forms of authority in explaining conflict, see Baumgold 1988.

irrational, disastrous wars. As he put it in *Elements of Law*, those “monarchs, as affect war for itself, that is to say, out of ambition, or of vain-glory, or that make account to revenge every little injury, or disgrace done by their neighbours” should count on their own “ruin” (EL 28.9, 177). If there is any strand of realist theory that can rightly claim Hobbes as its intellectual forbear, it is the one portraying conflict as fueled by “status competition” (Wohlforth 2008).

The second theoretical implication of Hobbes’s analysis of war, however, is that one cannot, as the realist tradition has tended to do, apply the account of war that Hobbes developed in the interpersonal context directly to the interstate context. It is true, of course, that Hobbes famously cited the relation between sovereigns as a paradigmatic instance of a state of nature (L 13, 90). However, he also drew an important distinction between the two types of state of nature: Whereas the individuals at war in the former are humans, what Hobbes called *natural* persons, the individuals at war in the latter are sovereign states, what Hobbes called *artificial* persons (L Intro, 9; cf. L 16). Insofar as Hobbes’s explanation of war incorporates the individual, systemic-structural, and social levels of analysis, this distinction introduces important discontinuities between the interpersonal and interstate states of nature. It implies, for example, that one cannot simply transpose the dispositional and behavioral characteristics stemming from human psychology to the state. It is true that Hobbes conceived of states as “acting” through the humans who “represent” them, so that human nature is relevant for understanding state action. However, human passions obviously play themselves out in a different systemic-structural and social context when the humans whose passions they are are state officials rather than persons with no state at all. The structural position and social identity of state officials are such that their power and glory depend heavily on the state itself, and the state’s power and glory do not solely depend on its *interstate* position. They also depend on its capacity to maintain order *domestically*. Interstate relations are constrained by the imperative that officials face to keep at bay the ever-present possibility of internal dissolution, so that state action is not only a function of the structural incentives imposed by the state system, as structural realists assume, but also of domestic politics (Williams 1996, 2005). Domestic affairs—as Hobbes’s attack on the Roman Catholic Church was meant to highlight—are subject to interference by foreign, nonstate actors. The state is one, but not the only, actor relevant to explaining interstate relations.

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