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The Fear of Death and the Longing for Immortality: Hobbes and Thucydides on Human Nature and the Problem of Anarchy

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Recent challenges to the modern secular state invite us to reexamine the arguments made by its theoretical founders, especially Hobbes. Hobbes argues that the desire for security is the most reliable and rational desire of our nature, and the state based on satisfying that desire is fully in harmony with human nature and therefore fully capable of solving the problem of anarchy. I will examine his argument that anarchy, although in some sense the natural human condition, can be overcome once and for all through political institutions that ensure the rational fear of death will control humans' destabilizing hopes and longings for immortality. I then turn to Thucydides, the classical thinker whom Hobbes admired most and who seems closest to Hobbes in outlook, and consider his more somber thesis: Because human hopes for immortality are more powerful than the fear of violent death, anarchy will return over and over again.

During the past quarter-century, powerful challenges have emerged to that hitherto mighty Leviathan, the modern secular state. In the Islamic world, India, and Israel, religious movements have weakened and in some cases overthrown modernizing, secular governments.[1] In the former Soviet Union and former Yugoslavia, ancient ethnic and religious loyalties and hatreds have crippled and in some cases shattered state power.[2] More generally, the modern state, which Nietzsche (1967, 160) described as "the coldest of all cold monsters," seems to be losing its hold over the hearts and imaginations of postmodern human beings. Throughout much of the world there seems to be an antipolitical mood, an anarchism of the heart, which manifests itself in different ways but is recognizable to all.

During the past few years, observers in America and Europe have written of "The Coming Anarchy" (Kaplan 1994), "Ethnarchy and Ethnoanarchism" (Tamas 1996), *Pandaemonium* (Moynihan 1993), and *The Balkanization of the West* (Mestrovic 1994). They wonder whether the age of the modern state is over and whether we are returning to a premodern epoch (Hassner 1995, 338–9), a world "in which the classificatory grid of nation-states is going to be replaced by a jagged pattern of city-states, shanty-states, nebulous and anarchic regionalisms" (Kaplan 1994, 72), a world in which the primary problem of security "is not the desire for power or expansion, but rather the breakdown of States" (Delmas 1996, 7).[3]

These challenges invite us to reexamine the arguments made by such theoretical founders of the modern state as Locke, Montesquieu, and above all Hobbes.[4] The modern state was based not on humans' hopes for salvation or their desire to fulfill their political natures, but on their fear of death and desire for self-preservation. The thesis of Hobbes in particular is that this desire for security is the most reliable and rational desire of our nature, and any state based on satisfying that desire is, unlike premodern forms of political organization, fully in harmony with human nature and hence fully capable of solving the problem of anarchy. I will explore Hobbes's argument that anarchy can be overcome once and for all through political institutions that ensure the rational fear of death will control destabilizing hopes and longings.[5] Then, for a critical perspective on this argument, I will turn to the classical thinker Hobbes admired most, Thucydides, who believed that individual statesmen and regimes can effectively address the problem of anarchy to a considerable extent, but anarchy will nevertheless return repeatedly as long as human nature remains the same.[6] I conclude that the fundamental reason Thucydides does not share Hobbes's hope that the problem of anarchy can be solved once and for all is that he does not share Hobbes's hope that the fear of violent death can lead humans to master their destabilizing hopes. Thucydides argues instead that human hopes, especially for immortality, tend to overwhelm human fears, even of violent death. Hobbes is hopeful precisely because he believes that the power of hope can be tamed by fear, whereas Thucydides is not

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[1] Consider, for example, Huntington 1996; Juergensmeyer 1993; Kepel 1994.

[2] See especially Fairbanks 1995, 1997; Ignatieff 1993, 3–56; Tamas 1994, 1996.

[3] See also Hardin 1995, 226–8, Hassner 1995, 23–61, 335–54, 371–91; Huntington 1996, 33–6; Kaplan 1996.

[4] See Mansfield 1971, esp. 109–10; 1989, esp. 153–8; 1996, 281–94, esp. 294; Skinner 1978, 2:353; 1989, 120–3; Tuck 1993, xvii; xiv, 348; 1996a, ix, xlv. On the relation between Hobbes and such liberals as Locke and Montesquieu, consider MacPherson 1970, 1–4, 256–7, 270; 1982, 24–5; Tuck 1990; 1993, 345, 333; 1996a, xxxiv. See also Skinner 1965, 171–8; 1966, 295–303. Consider as well Eisenach 1981; Oakeshott 1960, lvii; Pitkin 1967; Ryan 1996, 234, 237; Strauss 1952, 157; 1953, 165–6, 202–51; Tarcov 1984, 34–66, 245–7.

[5] Regarding Hobbes's hopefulness, consider Tuck 1996a, xxxix; see also xxvi; and Strauss 1952, 138. Consider as well Kateb 1989, 367; Kraynak 1990, 6, 102–3, 189–90, 207; Strauss 1953, 194.

[6] For the influence of Thucydides on Hobbes, see *Hobbes's Thucydides,* 1975, 6–27, as well as 580, n. 5 (all references are to the Schlatter edition). See also Bull 1981; Johnson 1993; Klosko and Rice 1985; Orwin 1988, 839–41; Pouncey 1980, 151–7; Ryan 1996, 209–10; Skinner 1996, 229–30, 235, 242, 244–9, 282–3; Strauss 1952, 44, 59. But consider Kraynak 1990, 23 n. 15 on Hobbes's admiration for Diodorus Siculus.

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hopeful precisely because he believes hope is invincible.

A number of scholars overlook this fundamental difference between Hobbes and Thucydides. Cogan (1981, 1987) contends that "the two share an almost identical view of the nature of mankind, of its motives, of the origin of those motives, and of the usual result when this nature is allowed a free rein to operate."[7] Other scholars, who have noted that Thucydides is less hopeful than Hobbes in his view of the problem of anarchy and human nature, agree with Pouncey (1980, 43): "The principal difference between Hobbes and Thucydides on this point is the difference between a political theorist and a historian."[8] Yet, by claiming that his work will be useful for those who seek clarity about not only the past but also the future and is therefore "a possession for all time," Thucydides explicitly makes the *theoretical* claim on behalf of his book that it will reveal the permanent and comprehensive truth about human affairs and human nature (Thucydides 1963, *History,* 1.22.4).[9] He thereby indicates that he is, in a crucial sense, a political theorist.

I maintain that the principal difference between Hobbes and Thucydides is their theoretical disagreement over whether the fear of violent death or the desire for immortality is the stronger element within human nature. Orwin and Slomp offer especially helpful observations concerning this matter. Orwin (1988, 845) remarks that "Thucydides knows better than to anticipate Hobbes in hoping for too much from fear," and Slomp (1990, 574; see 581, 586) points out that "Hobbes refuses to share the pessimistic Thucydidean position according to which, as a rule, hope of success prevails over fear of failure." I argue, however, that the reason Hobbes and Thucydides disagree over whether the problem of anarchy can be solved lies in their disagreement over whether the destabilizing hope for immortality in particular—that is, the hope that one can somehow overcome one's mortal nature and live on after death—can be controlled by the fear of violent death.

HOBBES: THE FEAR OF VIOLENT DEATH AND THE ESCAPE FROM ANARCHY

Even though Hobbes believes the natural condition of human beings is the war of all against all, he also believes it is possible for humans to escape that state of "meer" nature once and for all. "If the moral philosophers had as happily discharged their duty" as have the geometricians,

> I know not what could have been added by human industry to the completion of that happiness, which is consistent with human life. For were the nature of human actions as distinctly known as the nature of *quantity* in geometrical figures, the strength of *avarice* and *ambition,* which is sustained by the erroneous opinions of the vulgar as touching the nature of *right* and *wrong,* would presently faint and languish; and mankind should enjoy such an immortal peace, that . . . there would hardly be left any pretense for war (Hobbes 1972a, Epistle Dedicatory, 91, emphases in original).[10]

Hobbes suggests here that the problem of anarchy, at least on the domestic plane, can be solved definitively. According to him, anarchy is not a necessary consequence of human nature but, rather, an accidental consequence of the "erroneous opinions" of particular human beings.

> Though nothing can be immortall, which mortals make; yet, if men had the use of reason they pretend to, their Common-wealths might be secured, at least, from perishing by internall diseases . . .. Therefore when they come to be dissolved, not by externall violence, but intestine disorder, the fault is not in men, as they are the *Matter;* but as they are the *Makers,* and orderers of them (Hobbes 1982, xxix, 363, emphases in original).[11]

Although the state may not, perhaps, ever be free of the threat of foreign war,[12] it can "be secured" from the threat of civil war if only it is properly ordered by human beings who have, thanks to Hobbes, surpassed the moral philosophers in their understanding of human nature. Insofar as "at least" civil war is avoidable through human efforts, then, it is indeed possible, according to Hobbes, for mortals to create an "immortal peace." In order to understand how this is possible, let us turn to Hobbes's account of human nature.

What distinguishes man from the other animals, according to Hobbes, is foresight and hence the awareness of death. Man is the mortal being who is aware that he is such. The consequence of this awareness is constant anxiety, "a perpetuall solicitude of the time to come," and hence a tendency to live, as it were, in the future (*Leviathan,* xii, 168–9; cf. Strauss 1959, 176, n. 2). Just as "man is famished even by future hunger," so is he tormented by future sufferings, that is, by the possibility of future sufferings (Hobbes 1972b 10.3).[13] Accordingly, man not only fears death and seeks to avoid it in the here and now but also seeks to "*secure* himself against the evill he feares" for the future (*Leviathan,* xii, 169, emphasis added). He seeks not only to be secure but also to feel secure. He desires specifically to feel assured that he will continue to be secure in the future so that he may be free, not only

[7] Brown (1987, 34; see 40) maintains that "virtually every part" of Hobbes's argument in chapters 11 and 13 of *Leviathan* "finds its parallel in Thucydides." Even Schlatter (1945, 357; see 358–60, 362) suggests that "Hobbes found in Thucydides concrete examples of how human nature performs: the descriptions in the *Leviathan* of how men act read like generalizations from these examples." Consider as well Connor 1984, 99.

[8] See Pouncey 1980, 156–7. Consider Johnson 1993, 70; but see 69, 199–200; and Schlatter 1945, 357–62.

[9] All references to Thucydides are to the Jones and Powell edition (1963). All translations are my own. See also 3.82.2, as well as 1.76–7, 2.50–3, 3.45, 4.61, 4.108.4, 5.89, 103, 105. Consider Hobbes 1975, 6–7; Bolotin 1987, 7; Orwin 1994, 3–8.

[10] Hereafter cited as *De Cive;* all references are to the Gert edition (Hobbes 1972a).

[11] Hereafter cited as *Leviathan;* all references are to the Macpherson edition (Hobbes 1982).

[12] But consider Kraynak 1990, 113, and see also 29, 31, 95–6, 170, 186; Pangle 1976, 339–40; Tuck 1996a, xxvi. See as well Kateb 1989, 379; Strauss 1953, 194.

[13] Hereafter cited as *De Homine;* all references are to the Gert edition (Hobbes 1972b).

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from death but also from the gnawing fear of death (xii, 169; consider xiii, 186). Consequently, since "the object of mans desire, is . . . to assure *for ever,* the way of his desire," he must desire an immortal security in order to be secured absolutely and "for ever" against future evil and future death (xi, 160–1, emphasis added; see xix, 247–8). The fundamental desire of the human animal is the unlimited desire for self-preservation.

Yet, even though Hobbes sometimes goes so far as to speak of this desire as a "necessity of Nature,"[14] he also acknowledges that human beings are at times willing to sacrifice their life, especially for the sake of honor or revenge.[15] There, are, then, two sides of human nature: the anxious, death-fearing side and the spirited or vain, honor-seeking side (see Strauss 1952, 18; 1959, 192). Both sides lead to a state of war. Just as the proud desire for honor—namely, that others honor you more than they honor themselves—leads humans to attempt "to extort" honor from others by force, so the anxious desire for security leads humans to subdue or kill preemptively anyone who might possibly threaten their life (see *Leviathan,* xiii, 184–5; Kavka 1983, 309). Hobbes does not contend that these desires always lead to actual fighting, only that they always lead to the danger of fighting: "The nature of War consisteth not in actuall fighting; but in the known disposition thereto, during all the time there is no assurance to the contrary. All other time is PEACE" (*Leviathan,* xiii, 186; see Kavka 1983, 292). Because no society up until now has successfully "assured" or guaranteed that fighting will not arise, that is, because all societies hitherto have laid their foundations "on sand," all societies hitherto have existed, according to Hobbes's strictest definition, in a state of war (*Leviathan,* xviii, 233; xx, 260–1; xxiv, 296; see Johnston 1986, 213; Mansfield 1971, 104–5).

But if the threat of anarchy is rooted in human nature, then how can that threat ever be overcome once and for all, to be replaced by the security of an "immortal peace" (see *Leviathan,* xxxi, 395)? The answer, of course, is the Leviathan, that artificial state whose goal is only peace, which subordinates all other possible goals—such as justice or virtue or salvation or truth itself—to this goal, and which aims therefore at peace at any price.[16] This state must possess absolute power as a necessary means to achieve the limited aim of peace, above all, in order to "bridle men's ambition, avarice, anger, and other Passions" through the threat of punishment.[17] But Hobbes emphasizes that the absolute power of the state cannot, by itself, establish peace, since the threat of punishment alone will not always deter people from rebellion. Accordingly, the state must also enjoy the enlightened, moral support of the people. The people must believe, in other words, that the state has right, as well as might, on its side (see *Leviathan* xxx, 376–85).[18]

Yet, how can we human beings, whose vain and anxious nature leads us to anarchy, be led to embrace the artificial state, whose goal is to avoid anarchy at all costs? We must first experience the horrors of the state of war (*Leviathan* xviii, 236–7; xlvi, 699). According to Hobbes, the two principal natural passions of human beings are the desire for security and the desire for honor, and both passions are equally natural, but they do not both equally lead to the natural state of war. Your anxious desire to preserve yourself may lead you to kill others, but your fundamental desire is to be left alone, in peace, and this desire does not necessarily lead you into conflict with others who feel that desire. In contrast, your desire for honor does necessarily lead you into conflict with others, since in seeking honor from others you demand that other human beings, who are just as self-regarding as you are, honor you more than they honor themselves (see xiii, 184–5).[19] In order to induce humans to quit the state of war, the natural desire to preserve oneself, or the fear of death, must be inflamed and instructed, while the natural desire for honor must be weakened and controlled. How is this conquest of honor-loving human nature to be achieved?

The solution to the natural state of war lies precisely in the natural state of war. For it is primarily those who enjoy security and consequently forget their primary, natural insecurity who long for honor. "All men naturally strive for honour and preferment; but chiefly they, who are least troubled with caring for necessary things . . .. And therefore it is no marvel, if with greedy appetites they seek for occasions of innovations" (*De Cive* 12.10). The love of honor is based on the splendid illusion, born of plenty and safety, that we should not trouble ourselves with mere life but should seek honor from others and from future generations. The long experience of comfort and security leads humans to forget their vulnerable nature, to unlearn their natural anxiety, and breeds in them that confidence and "excessive self-esteem [that] impedes reason" and threatens peace (*De Homine* 12.9). Hence, cruelty proceeds "from Security of their own fortune" and "Man is . . . most troublesome when he is most at ease" (*Leviathan,* vi, 126; xvii, 226; see xxvii, 341–2). Hobbes suggests that the experience of security stifles our natural fear of death, strengthens our natural vanity and love of honor, and eventually leads to the state of war and the destruction of our security.

But precisely insofar as the blinding love of honor and, more generally, the vain, confident, noble stance toward life lead to war and insecurity, these ultimately

[14] See *Leviathan,* xv, 209–10; *De Cive,* Epistle Dedicatory, 90; 1.7, 2.3, 2.18, 3.9; Hobbes 1975, 577, n. 5.

[15] See *Leviathan,* xv, 210–1; xxvii, 341–2; *De Cive* 3.12. See also Gert 1996, 163, 165, 169–70; Johnston 1986, 50–1; Kraynak 1990, 197–200; Tuck 1996a, xxviii–xxix; 1996b, 188.

[16] See *Leviathan,* xv, 215–6; xviii, 232–3; xxiv, 297; xxxvi, 468–9; xl, 500–1; xlii, 550–1, 591; xlv, 670–1; xlvi, 691, 703; *De Cive* 2.1–2, 3.19. Hobbes admits that his claim that all men are equal is based primarily on the goal of peace rather than on the truth. Compare *Leviathan,* xiii, 183–4, with xv, 211 and *De Cive* 3.13.

[17] *Leviathan,* xiv, 195–8, esp. 196. Consider xvii, 224–5; xviii, 232–3; Mansfield 1971, 101–3.

[18] On the importance of enlightenment for Hobbes, see Blits 1989, 426–9; Johnston 1986, 91–2, 101, 120–33, 213; Kraynak 1990, esp. 112–4; Trainor 1985, esp. 356–7.

[19] On this point, see Manent 1977, 55, 81; Ryan 1996, 219–22. But consider also Kavka 1983, 309.

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lead to enlightenment and salvation. Hobbes maintains that "continuall feare, and danger of violent death" is a most valuable learning experience. With a gun at your head, you suddenly see clearly what counts and what does not. In a flash, you grasp the essential human situation. You see the folly of vainly disdaining mere life in favor of fame after death (*De Homine* 12.8).[20] You see that all speech about Right and Wrong, Justice and Injustice, and especially about *Finis ultimus* and *Summum Bonum,* to be found most notably "in the Books of the old Morall Philosophers," is just talk, just "uselesse" cant (*Leviathan,* xiii, 188; xi, 160–1; xxxi, 407–8). And you see that the one real thing in human life—our only star and compass—is the evil of death, "the chiefest of natural evils," "the terrible enemy of nature" (*De Cive* 1.7; Hobbes 1889c, *De Corpore Politico* I.1.6).[21] The state of war is for Hobbes truly a "most violent master" or teacher; by inflicting violence upon us, it teaches us to fear death most of all, and such eye-opening and mind-clearing fear is the beginning and the end of human wisdom (see Hobbes 1975, 3.82). The experience of the "calamity of a warre with every other man," precisely insofar as it "is the greatest evill that can happen in this life," "instruct[s]" human beings on the necessity of establishing a state aimed at avoiding such war at all costs (*Leviathan,* xxx, 376; xviii, 236–7). The state of war proves to be a blessing as well as a curse, a blessing because it is a curse. That "which is worst of all" about it is the "continualle feare, and danger of violent death." But the intense and overwhelming fear of death overpowers the vainglorious passion of humans, inclines them to peace, and leads them to consent to, and thereby embrace, the sovereign (xiii, 186, 188; xx, 251–2; xlii, 599).[22] Such fear of death is the rational and the saving passion of humankind, for it makes human beings reasonable, sober, and peaceable.[23] Death is the chiefest of natural evils, but the fear of death turns out to be the chiefest of natural goods. It is that passion upon which Hobbes reckons, and builds, to attach human beings to the artificial state, the Leviathan, so that they might thereby escape once and for all from the natural state of war (compare *Leviathan,* xiv 200 with xx, 260–1 and xxix, 363).

To be sure, Hobbes does not believe that the state should appeal exclusively to its subjects' fear of death in order to save them from anarchy. "The Passions that encline men to Peace" also include the "desire of such things as are necessary for commodious living" and "a Hope by their industry to obtain them" (*Leviathan,* xiii, 188). Accordingly, when arguing that the end for which the sovereign is entrusted with his power is "procuration of *the safety of the people,*" Hobbes explains that "by safety here is not meant a bare Preservation, but also all other Contentments of life, which every man by lawful Industry, without danger, or hurt to the Commonwealth, shall acquire to himself" (xxx, 376, emphasis in original; see xxiv). Hobbes clearly encourages the sovereign to appeal to the desire for comfortable self-preservation of his subjects, but he also clearly argues that the sovereign should appeal primarily to their fear of death. "Of things held in propriety, those that are dearest to a man are his own life, & limbs; and in the next degree, (in most men,) those that concern conjugall affection; and *after them* riches and the means of living" (xxx, 382–3, emphasis added). Consequently, "the Passion to be reckoned upon, is Feare" of that which is "worst of all," namely, "violent death" (xiv, 200; xiii, 186; see xii, 169; xiv, 202; xvii, 223; xxvii, 343).

Hobbes's account of human nature might seem to imply that the state of war can never be escaped once and for all but will always alternate with periods of peace. It seems there is no natural order to the human soul, that neither fear of death nor vanity naturally rule, but each predominates or gives way depending on external circumstances. If the terrible experience of war strengthens our fears, weakens our vanity, and leads us to embrace an artificial state aimed at peace at all costs, then will not the comfortable experience of peace inevitably lead us to forget the horrors of anarchy, inflate our vanity, and eventually undermine the state and return us to the state of war?

Hobbes suggests that human history has been marked by cyclical war and peace but he reveals how this cycle can be broken.

> If there had not first been an opinion received of the greatest part of *England,* that these Powers were divided between the King, and the Lords, and the House of Commons, the people had never been divided, and fallen into this Civill Warre . . . which have so instructed men in this point of Soveraign Right, that there be few now (in *England,*) that do not see, that these Rights are inseparable, and will be so generally acknowledged, at the next return of Peace; and so continue, till their miseries are forgotten; and no longer, except the vulgar be better taught than they have hetherto been . . .. For all men are by nature provided of notable multiplying glasses, (that is, their Passions and Self-Love,) through which, every little payment appeareth a great grievance; but are destitute of those prospective glasses, (namely Morall and Civill Science,) to see a farre off the miseries that hang over them, and cannot without such payments be avoyded (*Leviathan* xviii, 236–8; see xxvi, 320; xlvi, 699, emphases in original).

Hobbes indicates that the seemingly inevitable cycle between war and peace, vanity and fear, can be overcome through an instruction that artificially gives people who are at peace the lessons they would "naturally" learn from the bitter and bloody experience of war. An education enlightened by "Morall and Civill Science" can correct the natural tendency of human beings who are at peace to succumb to vanity by equipping them with the foresight—"those prospective glasses"—to see and to feel the terrible consequences of such vanity—namely, anarchy and war—without having to experience them directly. The purpose of enlightenment is to make human beings who are secure feel insecure, so that they may properly appreciate their security and

[20] As Manent (1977, 87) puts it: "Seule la peur de la mort delivre Narcisse de ses songes."

[21] Hereafter cited as *De Corpore Politico;* all references are to the Molesworth edition (Hobbes 1889c).

[22] See Johnston 1986, 45–6; Manent 1977, 81; Mansfield 1971, 100–1.

[23] As Oakeshott (1960, xxxvi) states, "man is a creature civilized by the fear of death."

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thereby continue to be secure.[24] "To regain a good is better than not to have lost it. For it is more rightly esteemed because of the memory of evil" (*De Homine* 11.14).

The price of objective security is subjective insecurity. The more insecure you feel, the more secure you will be. If you "enjoy" your security, then you will take it for granted, you will hope and strive for goods greater than mere security—such as honor—and eventually will lose your security. But if you feel insecure, if you feel in your bones "the continualle feare, and danger of violent death," then you will continually cherish peace and the state that provides it. "Men profit more by looking on adverse events, than on prosperity" and "men's miseries do better instruct, than their good success" (Hobbes 1975, 20). Such events and miseries teach us sober fear rather than lofty, vain hope.

Since "those imbued with no matter what opinions from boyhood retain them even in old age," and since the majority of people receive their moral opinions from the learned class, the education Hobbes proposes as the solution to the problem of anarchy must focus "wholly, on the right teaching of youth in the Universities" (*De Homine* 13.3; *Leviathan*, xxx, 384; see 376–85 as a whole). This will entail broad and deep university reform, because it will "root out" books, such as those "by all the philosophers, Plato, Aristotle, Cicero, Seneca, Plutarch," that encourage vanity, rebellion, and anarchy; in their place will be books, such as works by Hobbes and perhaps Thucydides, that promote rational fear, obedience to the state, and hence peace.[25] Such an education will impose an artificial order on the naturally chaotic human soul by enabling the rational fear of death to triumph once and for all over the vain love of honor. It will thereby enable the artificial state to triumph once and for all over the natural state of war.

One may still object that a certain fear could undermine the state whose goal is peace at any price and whose premise is that death is the greatest evil: the fear of eternal damnation (compare *Leviathan*, xv, 200, with xxix, 371; see Johnston 1986, 98–101, 112–3). Hobbes acknowledges that "it is impossible a Commonwealth should stand, where any other than the Soveraign, hath a power of giving greater rewards than Life; and of inflicting greater punishments, than Death" and it is therefore "a thing worthy to be well considered, of all men that desire (by obeying Authority) to avoid the calamities of Confusion, and Civill war, what is meant in holy Scripture, by *Life Eternall,* and *Torment Eternall*" (*Leviathan*, xxxviii, 478, emphases in original). He also admits that "no man can serve two masters: nor is he less, but rather more a master, whom we believe we are to obey for fear of damnation, than he whom we obey for fear of temporal death" (*De Cive* 6.11). Here, too, however, Hobbes finds a solution to the problem of anarchy and rebellion (in this case, in the name of God and the afterlife) in education.

Hobbes contends that ignorance is the primary cause of that "Feare of things invisible [that] is the naturall Seed" of religion. He proposes to remove that cause by enlightening the people, by teaching what he claims to be the truth about God and the afterlife: "The will of God is not known save through the state"; the head of state, or sovereign, alone properly determines what constitutes "Sinne"; the sovereign alone is "God's Prophet" and the interpreter of Scripture; most important, the soul is not immortal.[26] At the same time, Hobbes proposes to weaken the irrational fear of divine punishment after death by enhancing, again through education, the rational fear of death, especially violent death. Insofar as education reproduces the experience of the state of nature, we will feel "the continualle feare, and danger of violent death," we will grasp the truth that death is the greatest evil, and we will worry about the afterlife as little as human beings do in the state of nature.[27] In this way, Hobbes hopes that enlightenment will arm the minds and hearts of human beings against those religious beliefs and passions that threaten the state and, therewith, the peace.

Hobbes's belief that the threat of anarchy can be overcome once and for all is based, then, on his contention that the experience of insecurity inspires in humans a rational fear of death, weakens the vanity and love of honor that can lead them to despise death, and teaches them to support the state whose primary aim is to avoid anarchy at all costs. If education can artificially reproduce for human beings who are at peace the effects and lessons that ensue from the natural state of war, then it should be possible for humans always to support the state and avoid civil war. In this way, the state, that "Artificiall Man," can enjoy "an Artificiall Eternity of Life," and through it human beings can obtain that "perpetuall . . . security" they seek (*Leviathan*, xix, 247–8; see xxi, 272; xxix, 363; *De Cive,* Epistle Dedicatory 91).

SOME QUESTIONS CONCERNING HOBBES'S SOLUTION TO THE PROBLEM OF ANARCHY

A number of features of Hobbes's account of human nature and anarchy may reasonably lead one to wonder about his belief that the state is the definitive solution to the problem of anarchy. In the first place, it seems that the security provided by the state can only be "perpetuall" as long as the members of the state recognize that the threat of anarchy is perpetual. If the fear of anarchy fades, then vain hopes and longings for honor will burst forth, attachment to the state will be

[24] On this point see also Johnston 1986, 92–3, 101, 120–33, 213.

[25] *De Cive* 13.9, 12.3; see also 12.12; *De Homine* 13.7; *Leviathan*, i, 87; xxi, 267–8; xxix, 369–70; xxxi, 407–8; xlvi, 685–703; and Review and Conclusion, 727–8.

[26] *Leviathan*, xi, 167–8 (see xii; xxx; *De Homine* 14.13); *De Homine* 15.3 (see 14.4); *Leviathan,* xxvii, 337–8 (compare with xiii, 187–8; xv, 216); xxxvi, 467–9; xl, esp. 502–5 (see xxvi, 330–4; xxxii–xxxiii; xlii, 604–5; xliii); xxxviii; xliv, 636–57; xlvi, 691–2; xxxiv, 428 (but consider xv, 206).

[27] See *Leviathan*, xiii, esp. 186; xv, 200. But consider xi, 168; xii, 169–70. Consider also Kraynak 1990, 109–11, 152, 165–6; Manent 1977, 86; Strauss 1953, 198–200.

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undermined, and people eventually will return to the miseries of anarchy. But precisely insofar as the state is successful in rescuing its members from those miseries, will not their fears of anarchy inevitably fade, notwithstanding the efforts of Hobbesian educators to keep those fears strong? Will not students of Hobbes's works be especially tempted to believe that they have progressed irreversibly beyond the danger of savage civil war, given his promises of "immortal peace" and an "everlasting" Commonwealth?[28]

One may also wonder, on the basis of Hobbes's account of human nature, whether the fundamental longing of human beings will or can ever be satisfied by the Hobbesian state. That state is based on the natural human desire for security. But humans flee the state of nature not only to avoid the danger of violent death but also to be free of the fear of violent death. The feature of the state of nature "which is worst of all" is the "continuall feare, and danger of violent death" (*Leviathan,* xiii, 186). Tuck (1996a, xliii; see xxvi) characterizes Hobbes's political philosophy as "the grand Hobbesian enterprise of liberating men from terror." Hobbes maintains that humans turn to the state in order to escape their natural anxiety, in order to feel secure as well as to be secure (see *Leviathan,* xiv, esp. 192). Precisely because they long to be free from fear, and hence from the very possibility of evil and death, humans long not only to preserve themselves but to do so "for ever" (xi, 160–1). Humans establish the state and subject themselves to it "for their perpetuall, and not temporary, security" (xix, 248; see *De Cive* 1.15).

Yet, insofar as humans long for a complete security, insofar as they long not only to avoid violent death but also to be free of the fear of death, they clearly cannot satisfy that longing while living under the Hobbesian state. The state aims to liberate its members from fear but is itself based primarily on fear. "The Passion to be reckoned upon, is Fear," and fear "is the onely thing, (when there is appearance of profit, or pleasure by breaking the Lawes,) that makes men keep them" (*Leviathan,* xiv, 200; xxvii, 343). Leviathan, "that Mortall God," must inspire in its members a terrible fear of punishment (xvii, 227–8; see *De Cive* 5.8; Johnston 1986, 92–3). But furthermore, and more important, the state must continually inspire in its members an enlightening memory and fear of the instructive miseries of the state of nature so they will never forget that no good is greater than peace, that anarchy is worse even than tyranny, and that death is the greatest evil; hence they will always obey the state.[29] As observed above, the price of being secure is feeling insecure. But insofar as humans long for security in its complete sense, both objective and subjective, how can they be satisfied with a state that requires them to feel continuously insecure?

We may pursue this question one step farther. Hobbes suggests that the deepest desire of human beings—that is, of beings burdened by the awareness of their mortality and hence "gnawed on by the fear of death"—is to be free of the fear of death, and hence to enjoy a "perpetuall . . . security." That would seem to lead to the conclusion that human beings can never be "contented" under any political order or, indeed, in any circumstance in this life but only, if at all, in an afterlife (*Leviathan,* xii, 169; xix, 248; xvii, 223). "There is no such thing as perpetuall Tranquillity of mind, while we live here; because Life itself is but Motion, and can never be without Desire, *nor without Feare,* nor without Sense" (vii, 129–30, emphasis added; see Hobbes 1889b, *Human Nature.* 7.5–6). He goes so far as to state in *De Homine* that "the greatest good, or as it is called, felicity and the final end, cannot be attained in the present life" (11.15; see *Leviathan,* xi, 160).

Indeed, Hobbes might appear to echo St. Augustine's argument that, precisely because human beings long for a complete and perpetual security, we cannot be happy in this life, we can only be happy if there is an afterlife, and so we must long with all our hearts for such an eternal life.

> What human being is now able to live as he wishes when life itself is not in his power? Though he wants to live, he is compelled to die . . .. Look at a man living as he wishes because he tortured and commanded himself not to wish what he cannot have and to wish only what he can. As Terence says, "Because you cannot do what you want, want what you can do." Is a person like this happy because he is patiently miserable? . . . Moreover, if the happy life is loved as much as it deserves to be . . . then he who loves it in this way cannot but wish it to be eternal. Therefore, life will be happy only when it is eternal (Augustine 1994, 108 [*City of God* XIV, 25]).

Yet, Hobbes does not call on human beings to devote themselves to the hope of attaining a perpetual security in an afterlife. Instead, he denies that hope and calls on human beings to devote themselves to a state that will provide them with as much security as is possible in this life. Hobbes urges humans to moderate their natural desire for a complete and perpetual security, to be sober in their pursuit of such security, and hence to be satisfied with the incomplete, temporary security that Leviathan, which is after all only a mortal god, can provide (see *Leviathan* xviii, 238–9). But, even by Hobbes's own account, are humans sufficiently reasonable to be content with a security that is mixed with and even based on the insecurity they seek to flee? Will not their natural desire for complete and perpetual security lead them to long and hope for such security and hence look beyond and even rebel against the secular Hobbesian state?

Perhaps it is because the positive desire for complete and perpetual security threatens to point beyond the state that Hobbes emphasizes more the negative counterpart to that desire: the fear of death. The positive desire for perfect security, like any other positive desire, tempts us to yearn for an unseen, mysterious, and actually nonexistent *Finis ultimus* and *Summum Bonum,* for a good the state cannot provide (*Leviathan,* xi, 160–1). The fear of death focuses our mind not only

[28] *De Cive,* Epistle Dedicatory, 91; *Leviathan,* xxx, 378. See also, for example, *Leviathan,* xix, 247–8; xx, 260–1; xxxi, 407–8; Review and Conclusion, 727–8. Consider as well Strauss 1952, 104–7.

[29] See Hobbes 1975, 20; *Leviathan,* xv, 215–6; xviii, 236–9; xx, 260–1; xxvi, 320; xlvi, 699; *De Cive* 1.7.

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on the *Summum malum,* "the greatest of all evils," "the terrible enemy of nature," but also on that evil from which the state can protect us (*De Homine* 11.6; *De Corpore Politico* I.1.6; see *De Cive* 1.7). The "Feare of Death," not the desire for self-preservation, is the primary passion that "encline[s] men to Peace," and therefore inclines men to establish and obey the state.[30] Indeed, the "Obligation of Subjects to the Soveraign, is understood to last as long, and no longer, than the power lasteth, by which he is able to protect them," it would seem, from death (*Leviathan,* xxi, 272; see xxix, 375–6).

But does the fear of death simply incline human beings to obey and support the state? It cannot for the following reason: Even the mightiest of Leviathans cannot protect human beings from death. "The terrible enemy of nature" is an ineradicable, essential part of human nature. The very best the state can do is protect us from one form of death, violent death, in order to give us the security "of living out the time, which Nature ordinarily alloweth men to live" (*Leviathan,* xiv, 190; see xiii, 186; *De Cive* Preface, 103–4). Insofar as the fear of death leads us to become aware of our inevitable mortality, it would seem to lead to the conclusion that it is unreasonable that human beings should devote their life primarily to avoiding death. It cannot be reasonable to devote one's life to avoiding the unavoidable.[31]

The recognition that death is an unconquerable part of nature would seem to lead human beings to hope and strive to live on, in some fashion, after they die, perhaps through posthumous fame, or the salvation of the soul, or the contemplation of eternal truths (see *De Homine* 12.8, 14.12; *De Cive* 16.1; *Leviathan,* xi). It would seem to lead them to regard a life devoted to avoiding death, described by Hobbes as "a perpetuall and restlesse desire of Power after power, that ceaseth onely in Death," as a foolish attempt to escape the inescapable (*Leviathan,* xi, 161; see viii, 139; x, 150). It would seem to lead human beings to the conclusion that the Hobbesian state cannot reasonably command or deserve their complete obedience or loyalty since it cannot live up to its promise to provide them with a "perpetuall" security or protect them from death, but can at best protect them only from violent death (xix, 248; xx, 252; xxi, 272). Indeed, the recognition that death cannot be avoided would seem not only to call into question the reasonableness of the human being who aims above all to avoid death but also to vindicate, in some small measure, the reasonableness of the human being who hopes and strives to live on after death through, for example, a posthumous fame or an afterlife. For such human beings, however unreasonable the hopes they may entertain concerning death, at least face the fact that they must die.

Precisely because the full awareness of the inevitability of death would weaken human beings' attachment to the state and hence to peace itself Hobbes seeks to obscure or even to suppress this truth. For Hobbes, the primary end of philosophy itself is not knowledge or truth but "power," above all the power to avoid the "calamity of a warre with every other man, (which is the greatest evill that can happen in this life)."[32] Hobbes rivets his readers' attention on "violent death," on that form of death from which the state can protect us and can inflict upon us, and thereby he seeks to inspire in us the fear of that form of death we can avoid if only we obey the state (*Leviathan,* xiii, 186). The fear of death as such points beyond the state to the awareness of our mortality and ultimately to heroic or religious hopes or philosophic resignation, but the fear of *violent* death points to our immediate need for protection and hence to the state.

At the same time, Hobbes blurs the distinction between violent death, which is avoidable, and death as such, which is not. For example, in *De Corpore Politico* (I.1.6), he calls death "the terrible enemy of nature," as though it were not essential to our nature. In *De Cive* (1.7), he states that "every man . . . shuns what is evil, but chiefly the chiefest of natural evils, which is death," as though it were possible ultimately to shun death. In chapter 13 of *Leviathan* he first identifies the "continuall feare, and danger of *violent* death" as the passion that all feel in the state of nature and then goes on to identify "Feare of Death" as the primary passion that inclines humans to peace (186, 188, emphasis added). Hobbes encourages us not to think about—or, as he might say, to dwell uselessly upon—the fact of our mortality; we must rather act as though death were avoidable and even believe, or at least feel, that death as such is avoidable (*Leviathan,* xxxi, 407–8). He encourages us to focus on avoiding death in the here and now rather than on seeking to live on after death. That focus will strengthen our attachment to the state and save us from the miseries of anarchy (xiv, 190; see also, e.g., xiii, 188).[33]

Paradoxically, insofar as reason entails foresight, insofar as it resembles "those prospective glasses, (namely Morall and Civill Science,)" that enable human beings "to see a farre off the miseries that hang over them," reason itself ultimately threatens to undermine the state and the peace (*Leviathan,* xviii, 239; see *De Homine* 12.1). Our rational capacity to "see farre off" must lead us to realize that ultimately we will die, that because the state cannot ultimately protect us from death, we must look beyond the state whose goal

[30] *Leviathan,* xiii, 188. See also xiv, 200; xx, 251–2; xxvii, 343. Compare Strauss 1952, 15–8.

[31] But consider Hobbes's apparent defense of the reasonableness of devoting oneself to avoiding death in *De Corpore Politico* I.1.6: "And forasmuch as necessity of nature maketh men to will and desire *bonum sibi,* that which is good for themselves, and to *avoid* [emphasis added] what is hurtful; but most of all, the terrible enemy of nature, death, from whom we expect both the loss of all power, and also the greatest of bodily pains in the losing; it is not against reason, that a man doth all he can to preserve his own body and limbs both from death and pain." See Johnston 1986, 35–6; Kraynak 1990, 197–8. Kateb (1989, 373) goes so far as to claim that Hobbes "says next to nothing as to why staying alive is the highest good."

[32] *De Corpore* 1.6–7; *Leviathan,* xxx, 376; xlvi, 682. See *Leviathan,* xv, 211 (cf. xiii, 183–4), 215–6; xviii, 232–3; xxvi, 322–3; xxxi, 407–8; *De Cive,* Preface, 102–4; 2.1–2; 3.19; 3.31; Johnston 1986, 56; Ryan 1996, 211.

[33] For somewhat different accounts of this point, consider Kraynak 1990, 109–10; Manent 1977, 78–84.

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is peace at all costs. As Hobbes himself points out, the security and contentment of human beings under the Hobbesian state are based on a certain dimming of our foresight, a certain curbing of our reason, and hence on a certain unreason. "That man which looks too far before him, in the care of future time, hath his heart all the day long, gnawed on by feare of death, poverty, or calamity; and has no repose, nor pause of his anxiety, but in sleep" (*Leviathan,* xii, 169). But the man who does not look "too far before him," who does not think about the death that surely awaits him and hence about his mortal nature, is in a sense already asleep. By suggesting that human beings should suppress awareness of their mortality, Hobbes suggests that a certain sleep of reason, or science, or philosophy is necessary for human "repose."

To clarify this point, it is helpful to contrast Hobbes with Socrates, who also uses the image of wakefulness and sleep. Plato's Socrates suggests in the *Apology* (29a1–b7, 34b6–35a7) and the *Phaedo* (64a4–6) that the fundamental difference between philosophers and other humans is their posture toward death. Genuine philosophers practice nothing but dying and being dead; they do nothing but contemplate their mortal nature and urge others to do the same. Socrates compares them to wakeful and awakening gadflies. Nonphilosophers tend to be oblivious to their inevitable mortality. Socrates compares them to a sleeping horse who is angered when the gadfly awakens him. For Socrates, the wakeful, philosophic life is the best way of life for a human being, and the sleepy, unphilosophic, unexamined life is not worth living.[34] Not only is it possible for human beings to face and be reconciled to the truth, even and especially the harsh truth about their mortality, but also such human beings lead the best and happiest life. Hobbes, however, suggests that the wakeful, rational awareness of the truth of our mortality leads to anxiety without "pause" and eventually to religious longings and hopes that will, in turn, unleash the miseries of war.[35]

Apparently because philosophy reminds us of the truth of our mortality and thereby weakens our attachment to the state, Hobbes generally attacks philosophy, attacks the "Leasure" that is "the mother of *Philosophy,*" and praises the unphilosophic life, namely, the life of work.[36] He argues that the question central to political philosophy, the question of what is the best regime, should not even be raised. "The present [regime] ought *alwaies* to be preferred, maintained, and accounted best; because it is against both the Law of Nature, and the Divine positive Law, to doe *anything* tending to the subversion thereof" (*Leviathan,* xlii, 577, emphases added). He agues as well that "disobedience may lawfully be punished in them, that against the Laws teach even *true* Philosophy" (*Leviathan,* xlvi, 703, emphasis added). To be sure, in the Author's Epistle to the Reader of *De Corpore* (Hobbes 1889a),[37] Hobbes praises philosophy as a divine activity: "Imitate the creation: if you will be a philosopher in good earnest, let your reason move upon the deep of your own cogitations and experience: those things that lie in confusion must be set asunder, distinguished and every one stamped with its own name and set in order; that is to say, your method must resemble that of creation" [see also *De Corpore* 1.7].

Yet, even here, by comparing the philosopher to the creative, biblical God, Hobbes suggests that the proper goal of philosophy is not to understand and face the world as it truly is—by reflecting, for example, on the truth of our mortality—but, rather, to impose order on the chaotic natural world by acquiring and projecting power, much as Leviathan, "that Mortall God," imposes order on chaotic human nature (*Leviathan,* xvii, 227). Hobbes goes on to point out: "The *end* or *scope* of philosophy is that we may make use to our benefit of effects formerly seen . . . for the commodity of human life . . .. The end of knowledge is power" (*De Corpore* 1.6, emphasis in original). Similarly, it seems, partly because reason leads us to foresee our inevitable death and look beyond the state, Hobbes suggests that irrational creatures are more peaceful and contented than we are. In a certain sense, reason, and therefore our very humanity, is a curse, an enemy of our peace and contentment (*Leviathan,* xvii, 226; xii, 169; *De Cive* 5.5). The goal of the modern, Hobbesian state, the goal of peace and security, ultimately requires us to suppress not only our religious hopes and longings but also, to some extent, our very reason. The state that is based on our fear of violent death is based on a forgetting, not only of eternity but also of mortality.[38]

Hobbes's solution to the problem of anarchy requires a mean between unreason and reason, a mean, that is, between a defective and an excessive foresight. Humans who are at peace must look far enough into the future to see that, without the absolute power of the state, they will suffer the miseries of civil war, among "which is worst of all, continuall feare, and danger of violent death." But they must not look so far into their individual future that they recognize death is inevitable and the state cannot save them from it, lest such a recognition inspire religious passions and hopes that undermine the state. This mean will be achieved by giving humans who are at peace an education which reproduces for them the instructive experience of the state of war. Only if human beings feel truly insecure will they truly appreciate the security the state provides (see *De Homine* 11.14). And only if human beings fear *violent* death above all will they view the state as their supreme protector. Hobbes's fundamental hope is that

[34] Plato 1977a, *Phaedo* 64a4–6; *Apology of Socrates* 30e1–31a7, 38a1–b1. See Plato 1976, *Laws* 808b3-c2; 1978, *Republic* 514a1–16e2.

[35] See *Leviathan,* xii, 168–9; xxxvi, 469; xxxviii, 478–9; *De Cive* 6.11, 12.5, 18.14; *De Homine* 13.6.

[36] *Leviathan,* xlvi, 683 (emphasis in original); *De Homine* 11.11. For Hobbes's attacks on philosophy, consider *Leviathan,* iv, 105–6; v, 113–4; xv, 215–6; xxi, 267–8; xxvi, 322–3; xxix, 369–70; xxxi, 407–8; xlvi, 683–703; *De Cive,* Epistle Dedicatory, 91–2; 1.2, 12.3–4; *De Homine* 14.4.

[37] Hereafter cited as *De Corpore;* all references at to the Molesworth edition (Hobbes 1889a).

[38] Cf. Strauss 1953, 176; 1959, 55. Consider as well Strauss 1952, 127 n. 2 and 107.

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the direct or indirect experience of the state of war will produce in human beings a salutary fear of violent death that will enable them to escape from the state of war once and for all. But is that hope reasonable?

THUCYDIDES: THE HOPE FOR IMMORTALITY AND THE ENDURING THREAT OF ANARCHY

Thucydides offers an alternative understanding of the problem of anarchy. Although he was Hobbes's favorite classical author, unlike Hobbes, Thucydides believes the problem is essentially insoluble. "Many harsh things befell the cities on account of civil war, such as happen and will *always* happen so long as the nature of human beings is the same" (3.82.2, emphasis added). This emphatic statement is the clearest reference in the book to the opening claim that "as many as wish to consider clearly both the things that have happened and the things that once again will happen in the same or a similar way, in accordance with that which is human," will judge his work about the Peloponnesian War "useful" and "a possession for all time" (1.22.4). According to Bolotin (1987, 17), "the most obvious lesson of the work as a whole, for statesmen and others alike, is the sobering one that as long as our species remains, we must reckon on a human nature that will again and again, when given the chance, overpower the fragile restraints of law and justice."[39] But why does Thucydides, when examining the apparently same phenomenon of civil war as Hobbes, not conclude with Hobbes that it is possible to escape from civil war once and for all by establishing a state aimed above all at peace? Why does he conclude that such an escape is impossible?

Like Hobbes, Thucydides emphasizes the ubiquity of the threat of death in his account of civil war: "Every form of death was present" (3.81.5). Yet, in striking contrast to Hobbes, he maintains that the continuous threat of violent death does not inspire in those who experience it a "continualle feare . . . of violent death" and a consequent rational and self-interested inclination toward peace (*Leviathan,* xiii, 186, 188). That threat inspires instead such warlike passions as violent and savage anger, fierce partisanship, and an overpowering desire to commit acts of vengeance, and these passions in turn deepen the disintegration of political society and increase the threat of violent death.

It is especially puzzling that the civil wars do not, according to Thucydides, provoke in those who live through them a self-interested desire for peace, since he suggests that the immediate cause of conflict was the self-interested desire for gain and honor, along with the effect of the war between Athens and Sparta on domestic politics within the Greek cities. After describing the horrors of the wars, Thucydides explains that "the cause of all these things was the desire to rule, on account of acquisitiveness and the love of honor, from which arose the zeal of those who have been plunged into the love of victory" (3.82.8; see 82.1–2). It would appear, however, that no one's self-interest is ultimately served by the death, destruction, and collapse of society entailed by the civil war.

Even though self-interested passions are the immediate cause of the civil wars, and certain violent acts during them, such as the preemptive attacks by "those of meaner judgment" against their more resourceful opponents, may be motivated by the self-interested desire for security as well as by partisan passion (3.83.3; see 82.6–8), once those wars begin the violence seems to take on a life of its own and the "zeal" (3.82.8) which arises generally seems to overwhelm calculations of interest. Euben (1990, 187) claims that "men have gone mad" in the civil wars. Orwin (1988, 835, 845; see 1994, 181) characterizes the conflict as "a frenzied struggle to exceed one's rival at excess itself" and the men in it as "swept away by the torrent of violence . . . to prefer vengeance upon their fellow citizens to their own safety." I argue, however, that although Thucydides' account suggests that people became savagely moralistic and ultimately self-destructive, his account also indicates that their behavior was not simply "mad" or senselessly selfless; rather, it reflected their half-conscious, self-interested desire to overcome the threat of death that surrounded them precisely by demonstrating their noble superiority to self-interest.

Thucydides explains that the civil wars in Corcyrea and throughout Greece led to a moral revolution. The new moral code that emerged elevated "courage," or rather the "uncalculating" willingness to risk and even sacrifice one's life, over moderation and prudence (3.82.4) and elevated loyalty to one's party over loyalty to family, the laws of the city, the divine law, and concern for oneself (82.4–6). Far from inspiring a general fear of violent death, the civil war inspired an especially powerful admiration for the willingness to suffer death. Human beings came to celebrate the passionate man who dares to defy death and despises calculations of safety and self-interest as a truly courageous and "manly man" and scorned the prudent concern for life and limb as specious cowardice, "unmanly," and timorous (82.4–5). The ubiquity of the threat of death in the civil wars led humans to praise most emphatically the man who seems to be free from and superior to the desire for self-preservation and to condemn most sharply the one who seems to be enslaved to the fear of death.

But people did not simply praise human beings who were suicidal. Those who embodied the new moral virtues had to be willing not only to die but also to do so for the sake of a just cause, namely, their political party. They had to display greater devotion to the party than to their kin, the laws of their city, or their oaths to the gods, or even to themselves. They had to be willing to dare all and sacrifice all for the sake of the party (3.82.6). Thucydides emphasizes that these partisans did not genuinely care about justice or the common good (see esp. 81.4, 82.8, 84). Nevertheless, inasmuch as party is defined, ostensibly, by devotion to a specific kind of regime—be it oligarchic or democratic—and hence to a specific understanding of justice, these fanatically self-righteous partisans, who were willing

[39] See also Connor 1984, 103–5; Euben 1990, 186; Orwin 1988, 833.

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not only to kill but also to be killed for the sake of their party, evidently exhibited, *in their own view of themselves,* a noble and selfless devotion to justice (consider 3.70, 81.5, 82.4–8).

These two elements of the new morality—the willingness to sacrifice one's life and the zealous devotion to what one believes is "justice"—are brought together most vividly in what seems to be the overriding passion of the participants in the civil wars, namely, their passion for committing acts of vengeance. Again, Thucydides stresses how much injustice was committed as a result of this vengefulness (see esp. 3.84). Most of the cruelty and savagery of the civil wars seems to have been caused by the desire for revenge (see 3.81, 82.3, 7–8, 84; 4.47.3–48; Johnson 1993, 42). Nevertheless, it is important to keep in mind that the passion for vengeance is, *from the viewpoint of the one who seeks vengeance,* a passion for justice, since it necessarily entails seeking to punish what is thought to be a previous injustice. Earlier in the book, Sthenelaidas emphasizes that the Spartans should seek vengeance against Athens because of its unjust attacks on their allies (1.86). Similarly, Cleon calls for vengeance against the rebellious Mytilineans because of the tremendous injustice they committed against Athens (3.38.1, 39, 40.4–8).[40] Furthermore, Thucydides indicates that, during the civil war, the desire to commit acts of vengeance eclipsed human beings' attachment to physical well-being and even to life itself. "To avenge oneself against someone was valued more than never to have suffered [injustice] oneself" (3.82.7). He appears to suggest that human beings were willing and even eager to sacrifice their very life to avenge what they believed to be injustice and consequently that they exhibited, according to their own self-righteous self-understanding, a zealous, uncalculating, selfless, and hence noble devotion to what they believed to be justice.[41]

Yet, precisely by observing that "to avenge oneself against someone was valued more than never to have suffered [injustice] oneself," Thucydides indicates that people were not genuinely motivated by anger at injustice or a selfless concern for justice (3.82.7).[42] He indicates unmistakably that the desire for vengeance was not provoked by first suffering an injustice or, indeed, any harm. The desire to avenge oneself was not motivated by righteous indignation at all. Orwin (1994, 179) contends that during the civil wars, "in a strange but familiar paradox, men become heedless of their lives in their very rage at those who threaten these." But according to Thucydides, people did not truly rage at those upon whom they sought to inflict vengeance. They preferred to suffer injustice and then take revenge than not suffer injustice at all. They believed it was better to be wronged and to avenge that wrong than never to be wronged at all. They welcomed and presumably sought being victims of injustice as a pretext to inflict vengeance. Their apparently zealous, noble, and selfless desire to serve justice by punishing injustice was a pose or a facade that masked—not only from others but also from themselves—their true, self-interested motive. What was that motive? How was it served by affirming to others and themselves that they were so devoted to justice?

Thucydides suggests that the continuous threat of violent death, rather than sobering and frightening human beings, as Hobbes maintains, actually imbues them with a passionate desire to persuade others and themselves that they are superior to such self-interested concerns as the fear of death. War is a violent teacher not because it teaches a rational fear of violent death but rather because it teaches humans a violent, angry, seemingly selfless but actually self-interested passion for justice (3.82.2). But, especially in view of Hobbes's account, it is difficult to understand why the terrible experience of anarchy, in which "every form of death was present," does not lead human beings to cling to dear life at all costs and eventually establish a state aimed at securing peace at all costs.

Thucydides' account suggests that people did not cling to dear life during the conflict precisely because of the ubiquity of death. The terrible insecurity of civil war led them to sense in an especially powerful way their own human fragility and mortality. It made them realize that security for human beings is "hopeless," so they despaired of avoiding the unavoidable, at least by their own efforts alone (3.83.1–3). The war forced them to face "necessity," above all the necessity of death (3.82.2), but they did not calmly resign themselves to it. On the contrary, it aroused in them a violent anger, not toward any specific injustice, but with their overall predicament (3.82.2; see 3.84). Human beings responded to the "necessity" of death with anger, but their anger shows that they did not truly recognize or accept that necessity. Their awareness of the overpowering threat of death provoked in them an overpowering desire to overcome that threat. Their awareness of their mortality awakened or intensified in them a longing to escape the ills attendant upon their mortal nature and hence a longing for immortality. Moreover, their anger suggests that they actually cherished a hope of somehow overcoming their mortal nature. Anger at

[40] See Connor (1984, 82–89, esp. 85) on "Cleon's justice of revenge"; Orwin 1994, 143–8, esp. 147.

[41] I cannot altogether agree with Connor's (1984, 99) description of the civil war as "moral anarchy" in which "the only principle is the calculation of self-interest" (see also Forde 1989, 142; Slomp 1990, 577–8). It seems to me that Connor underestimates the fanatical "zeal" with which the participants in the civil war engaged in what he calls "Revolutionary Newspeak" (101; cf. Orwin 1988, 834–5), as well as the moralistic character of their partisan zeal and passion for vengeance noted by Thucydides (3.82); hence, Connor does not clarify sufficiently the nature of their self-interested hopes and longings. Also, although I agree with Cogan's (1981, 64, 149–55) emphasis on what he calls the "ideological" beliefs of the participants, it seems to me he underestimates the self-regarding hopes underlying their moralism.

[42] Cogan (1981, 149–54), Connor (1984, 95–105, 244–5), Pouncey (1980, esp., 33, 35, 147), and Slomp (1990, 577–8) do not pay sufficient attention either to this remarkable and crucial statement or to the crucial importance of vengeance in the civil wars. Even the valuable discussions of this statement by Euben (1990, 187–8), Johnson (1993, 42–3), and Orwin (1988, 837, 845; 1994, 179, 183) do not pay sufficient attention to the calculating, self-interested, and hopeful character of this passion for vengeance.

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an evil seems to presuppose the hope that the evil can be overcome.[43] Indeed, even though Thucydides states that people believed security was "hopeless," he immediately adds that people took precautions so as "not to suffer," which indicates they somehow hoped to secure themselves against suffering (3.83.1–3).

What was the focus of the hope to escape or overcome death? What is the relation between that hope and the desire to affirm to others and themselves that they are superior to such narrowly self-interested desires as self-preservation and are selflessly devoted to justice? According to Thucydides, these human beings in the midst of civil war instinctively pinned their hopes on the only beings who could possibly protect them from "every form of death," namely, the deathless or immortal gods, and they sought to strengthen those hopes by reassuring themselves that they are noble, just, and hence deserve divine favor.

Thucydides points most clearly to the hope for divine favor during the Corcyrean civil war when he observes: "To avenge oneself against someone was valued more than never to have suffered [injustice] oneself" (3.82.7). What is especially remarkable about this claim is that people preferred to suffer injustice and then take revenge rather than not suffer injustice at all. On the one hand, this preference is bewildering; those who suffer injustice are harmed, even mortally, whereas those who do not suffer are not.[44] On the other hand, victims of injustice who then punish the wrong-doers may believe they have more reason to hope for divine assistance than those who do not suffer injustice. The experience of injustice can inspire the hope and even the confidence that the gods will assist you, since the gods are supposed to assist those who are wronged (see 5.104, 7.77.1–4 and Aristotle *Rhetoric* 2.5.20–22). Furthermore, by punishing a wrong-doer, you perform an apparently just deed, affirm your own justice, and presumably render yourself worthy of divine favor (see, e.g., 1.86.5, 1.118.3; cf. 7.18). By stating that people preferred to suffer injustice and then avenge it rather than not suffer injustice at all, Thucydides indicates that people were motivated not by a genuine anger at injustice but by an overriding desire to win divine assistance; they somehow expected to save themselves from death by clearly and emphatically suffering and punishing injustice.

Thucydides makes it clear that the participants in the civil war violated sacred oaths as well as divine law and so were not pious in any formal sense (3.82.6–8, 84). In their eagerness to display their courage, loyalty to party, and passion for vengeance, they clearly defied the letter of religion. Nevertheless, by indicating that their moralism was not sincere—was not motivated by righteous indignation—but instead was histrionic and self-interested, Thucydides suggests they cherished in their heart an implicitly religious hope for immortality. Their instinctive reaction to the death surrounding them was to seek to affirm, through their courage, loyalty to party, and passion for vengeance, that they were morally superior to the self-interested concern for life and so were somehow deserving of a fate better than death. Their response to the seemingly invincible threat of mortality was to demonstrate to one and all their noble superiority to cowardice, weakness, and fear, and therewith their worthiness of immortal rewards. They acted on the implicit assumption that there are immortal beings who will somehow recognize their nobility and moral virtue and who will somehow enable them to overcome the threat of death. Although their moralism is not explicitly religious, it is guided by an implicitly religious hope for immortality.

The hope for immortality, as Thucydides presents it, does not simply consist of the hope for eternal happiness for the soul, as it does in the Christianity familiar to Hobbes. The hope for happiness in the hereafter was a part of Greek piety and is evident in Thucydides' work from the widespread concern for the recovery and proper burial of corpses.[45] But the hope for immortality, as Thucydides portrays it, takes at least two other forms. One is the hope of living on through a city or nation that is protected by the gods forever, which, for example, the Melians express when they insist that the gods who have protected their city for seven hundred years will continue to do so indefinitely (5.112; see 2.36.1–2). The other is the hope of living on in the memory of others by winning the divine reward of eternal fame, which Pericles and the Athenians cherished (see 2.41–3, 64, 6.31–2). Thucydides suggests that at the core of the hope for immortality is the hope that one can somehow overcome one's mortal nature and live on after death by affirming one's justice, nobility, or piety and thereby winning the favor of the immortal gods. It is this hope which Hobbes believes can be checked by the fear of violent death, and it is this hope which Thucydides believes is stronger than and indeed inflamed by the threat of violent death.

The civil wars are, to Thucydides, a microcosm of the war between Sparta and Athens. The danger of violent death was broadly felt by all the participants over the course of the conflict. Throughout his account of the war, Thucydides suggests that the threat and awareness of death do not dampen but rather inflame the hope for immortality. In a general way, the hope to satisfy one's greatest desires cannot be mastered by the threat of even capital punishment. "Human beings are wont, when they desire a thing, to give in to unreflecting hope but to deny with imperious reasoning what they do not care for" (4.108.4). Similarly, Diodotus responds to

[43] See 3.45.4. Consider the efforts of Diodotus to calm the Athenians' anger at the Mytolineans who rebelled by arguing that they were compelled by their nature to do so (3.45; see 3.36, esp. 36.2; 3.39–40). Hobbes (*De Homine* 12.4) notes, "If, when one is pressed or assaulted by evil, a sudden hope is conceived that the evil may be overcome by opposition and resistance, the passion ariseth that is called anger."

[44] As Johnson (1993, 42) puts it, "it is not in one's true interest to be reckless or to risk one's life to kill a rival." But Thucydides suggests one might think otherwise if one thinks it is just to do so and believes in gods who reward the just with immortality.

[45] Consider, for example, Homer 1957, *Odyssey* 4.561–69, 11.601–3, 6.172–4; Sophocles 1979, *Antigone* 74–7, 450–70, 897–902; Plato 1978, *Republic* 330d1–331b7; 1977a, *Apology of Socrates* 39e1–41c7; 1977b, *Crito* 54b2–c8; 1977c, *Phaedo* 63c4–7, 72d6–e2; Thucydides 1963, 4.42–4, 97–9, 7.75.1–4; Xenophon 1968, *Hellenica* 1.6.24–7.35; and Fustel de Coulanges 1900, 11–2.

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Cleon's argument that the threat of violent death will stifle humans' destabilizing hopes with the thesis that "hope and passionate desire are upon everyone, desire leading, hope following, desire contriving the plan, hope supposing the bounty of fortune, both together do the most harm, and being invisible, they are stronger than the terrible things seen" (3.45.5–6).

The Athenian ambassadors at Melos shed light on that thesis by suggesting that humans' "invisible" hope may be so powerful because humans cherish the hope that the invisible gods will satisfy their greatest longings: "Do not resemble the many, who, when they may still be saved by human means, once they are pressed and the manifest grounds for hope abandon them, betake themselves to the invisible ones, to divination and oracles and such things which, together with hopes, cause ruin" (5.103). The Athenians lament that, when pressed by the threat of destruction, as the Melians are, humans are especially inclined to hope that the gods will help them overcome that threat. And the Melians do end up affirming that the gods, who have protected Melos for seven hundred years, will continue to do so (5.112).

Thucydides suggests more specifically, through the case of Pericles and the Athenians, that the awareness of death inflames the longing and hope to live on after death through the attainment of immortal glory. In his last speech, which immediately follows the deadly plague at Athens, Pericles declares that "all things by nature . . . decline" (2.64.3). With these philosophic words—and also with his general silence about the gods (see 2.13.5)—he seems to call on the Athenians to eschew whatever hopes for immortality they may cherish and to reconcile themselves to their mortal nature. Yet, in the same breath and indeed throughout his speeches, Pericles argues, as do the Athenian envoys at Sparta and Melos, that the Athenians are so noble, so generous and superior to calculations of profit or safety, that their city deserves an "eternal" fame (2.64.3–6; see 2.36, 39, 40.1, 4–5, 41–3; 1.76.3–77, 5.91, 105.3, 107, 111.1–2). Pericles seems to respond to the philosophic thought that all things by nature perish by affirming his hope that nature can somehow be overcome and the Athenians can somehow win the immortal glory they deserve.

This hope seems to be, albeit implicitly and half-consciously, a pious hope. By claiming that the Athenians *deserve* the reward of eternal glory, Pericles expresses the belief or hope that they will get what they deserve and hence that the world is such that human beings get what they deserve. He must therefore believe or hope that there are gods who ensure rewards in accordance with desert. Furthermore, by claiming that the Athenians deserve in particular the reward of "eternal" glory but at the same time claiming that all things "by nature" decline, Pericles must believe—albeit implicitly and semiconsciously—that there are supernatural and eternal beings who have it in their power to confer eternal rewards on mere mortals.[46] His awareness of human mortality does not lead him to cling to dear life at all costs or to reconcile himself to his mortal nature; rather he embraces the implicitly pious hope for immortal glory. Indeed, so little does Pericles accept human mortality that, with one exception, he doggedly avoids referring directly to death or the dead in his Funeral Oration (2.43.6; see Orwin 1994, 19; Strauss 1964, 229).

The Athenians as a whole seem to respond to the death and destruction the war inflicts on them by looking more and more explicitly to the gods to bestow on them the reward of immortal glory. Throughout the war they betray an increasingly intense desire to purify the sacred island of Delos in order, it seems, to win the favor of the gods (see 1.8.1, 2.54, 3.104, 5.1, and esp. 5.32.1–2). Furthermore, the emergence of the superlatively pious Nicias as a respected and trusted leader in Athens evidently reflects a growing desire by Athenians as a whole to gain divine favor for their city (see 4.42–4, 7.50, 77, 86). Finally, on the eve of their most glorious military expedition to conquer Sicily, the Athenians zealously persecute those accused of religious crimes and attempt to purify their city of all impiety presumably to enlist the gods' help (6.27–32, 47–53, 60–1). Indeed, it is only after the Athenians initiate their campaign to purge their city of impiety that Thucydides says they had the "greatest hope" for success in Sicily (6.31.6; see 6.32.1–2). Their experience of war seems to intensify their longing for immortality and their hope that, by demonstrating their zealous piety, they can win the divine reward of immortal glory.

Thucydides highlights most clearly the relation among the threat of violent death, moral self-assertion, and religious hope through the example of the Melians. In their effort to subject Melos to imperial rule, the Athenian ambassadors attempt to achieve a peaceful surrender by repeated and brutal threats of complete destruction at the hands of the overwhelmingly superior Athenian forces (see 5.87, 89, 91–2, 101, 103). This strategy backfires. Rather than instill in the Melians a rational fear of violent death, the threats inspire in them what they insist is a *reasonable* hope that the gods will lead them to victory. "For we are pious men standing against men who are unjust" (5.104; see 1.86.5). In the face of violent death the Melians dig in their heels and affirm their own justice, by word and by deed, in the hope that the gods will save their city from destruction, as they have done for seven hundred years (5.112).[47] The participants in the civil wars, moved by a similar hope, respond to the threat of violent death by affirming their own nobility and justice by word and by deed (see 5.85–7, 91–3, 101–4, 112, and 3.81.5–82).

According to both Thucydides and Hobbes, humans respond to the continuous threat of violent death by seeking to escape it. But Hobbes contends they will seek to escape through purely human means, by establishing and supporting a state aimed at peace at all

[46] Consider Strauss (1964, 229): "There is something reminding of religion in Athenian imperialism."

[47] Consider especially Bolotin 1987, 19, 28; see also Connor 1984, 149–50; Orwin 1994, 110. For accounts that argue for—and overstate—the reasonableness of the Athenians' speeches but not their deeds at Melos, consider Cogan 1981, 89–90; Palmer 1992, 73.

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costs, whereas Thucydides contends they will seek to escape by somehow overcoming their mortal condition, by living on after their death—either through their city, or through their glory, or in an afterlife—and by winning the gods' favor through the vehement affirmation of their own nobility, or piety, or justice. Both Hobbes and Thucydides identify the longing for immortality as the deepest human desire. They both recognize that it cannot be satisfied by the state or by any merely human institution (if it can be satisfied at all), that it points beyond the realm of politics, and that it therefore threatens to undermine political life. Hobbes maintains this desire can be tamed either by the sobering experience of civil war or by an education that reproduces that experience. The primary effect of that experience is to convince human beings that violent death is the *summum malum,* the avoidance of violent death is the greatest good we can reasonably hope to attain, and the state which protects us from such death deserves our absolute obedience and support. Because Hobbes believes the fear of violent death can control the longing for immortality, he believes the state can provide mortal human beings with an "immortal peace." Thucydides, in contrast, suggests not only that the longing for immortality is more powerful than the fear of violent death but also that the continuous threat of violent death, by deepening our sense of our mortality, intensifies our longing and therewith our hope for immortality.[48]

CONCLUSION

At the dawn of the century there seems to be increasing dissatisfaction with the modern secular state, and it is tempting to conclude that Hobbes's hope that the Leviathan might constitute the definitive solution to the problem of anarchy is less reasonable than Thucydides' belief that this problem can never be solved. This conclusion might seem especially dispiriting because Thucydides seems to hold a harsher and bleaker view of human nature than does Hobbes (see esp. Pouncey 1980, 42–4, 156–7). Whereas Hobbes believes the experience of civil war inclines humans toward peace, Thucydides believes it renders most of them violent and savage. Hobbes offers the hope that anarchy can be removed once and for all and an immortal peace attained; Thucydides claims that anarchy is ineradicable because it is rooted in unconquerable human nature. Hobbes views the fear of violent death as, actually or potentially, the most powerful human passion and as a check on the destabilizing longing for immortality; Thucydides considers that longing invincible, and hence considers anarchy an enduring feature of political life.

It must be stressed, however, that Thucydides believes the problem of anarchy can be effectively addressed to a considerable extent. He would not advocate a universal version of the thesis so sharply attacked by Russell Hardin (1995, 177–8) that the civil wars in the former Yugoslavia are "merely predictable history replaying itself through the horrid psychology of singularly wretched people" rather than "failures of political structures."[49] In the first place, inasmuch as the longing for immortality is the most powerful human passion, Thucydides suggests that the most stable regimes are those, such as Sparta, which cultivate a political or civil religion.[50] As Orwin points out (1994, 183), "the passage on stasis reveals . . . better than any other in the work, how deeply mindful is Thucydides of the benefits of Spartan sobriety. He notes that stasis convulsed, 'so to speak,' all of Hellas; in fact it engulfed Athens but not Sparta" (cf. 1.18.1 with 2.65.11–2, 6.53–61, 8.47–98). Thucydides might argue that regimes which appeal to pious hopes through a unifying civil religion rather than appeal primarily to the individual desire for security will be less vulnerable to the threat of anarchy. A modern version of such an argument is found in Abraham Lincoln's (1989a, 28–36, esp. 30–3) "Address to the Young Men's Lyceum of Springfield, Illinois" on "The Perpetuation of Our Political Institutions"; he argued (in 1838) for establishment of a "political religion" in order to address the growing threat of anarchy in the United States.[51]

But even such regimes as Sparta do not constitute a definitive or "everlasting" solution to the problem of anarchy, of the kind for which Hobbes hopes (*Leviathan*, xxx, 378), since the pious hopes and longings to which such regimes appeal necessarily point beyond the regime and therefore always threaten to undermine it. More generally, Thucydides suggests that extraordi-

[48] One might object that, in the case of the plague, the threat of death leads human beings, according to Thucydides, to immerse themselves in immediate, bodily pleasures and abandon moral and pious concerns (see esp. 2.52.3–53; consider Orwin 1988, 842–3). Yet, Thucydides refers to those "who made pretensions to virtue" during the plague and suggests that their visits to the dying, which only served to spread the plague and hence caused "the most destruction," were motivated by a desire to display their own virtue, perhaps to the gods as well as to other humans (2.51.4–5). Furthermore, he stresses that the Athenians believed the plague had been foretold by an oracle and had been sent by the gods to punish Athens in particular, which quite clearly implies that the plague may have made them, in some ways, more rather than less pious (2.54; see 53.4; consider Palmer 1992, 31). Finally, the plague inspired a desire for vengeance. As Orwin (1988, 843) notes, the Athenians "go so far as to avenge themselves on Perikles for the plague by fining and temporarily deposing him"; more important, they respond vengefully to the Mytilinean revolt, which occurs during the plague (2.59, 65.1–3, 3.3.1, 13.3, 16.1, 36–40, 87; 104). The account by Thucydides of the plague's effects on the Athenians lends support to the thesis that, in his view, the threat of death intensifies the pious longing for immortality, as well as the desire to win divine favor through the vehement affirmation of one's own justice.

[49] Consider as a whole Hardin 1995, 142–82 and 215–31. See also Hassner 1995, 7–20, 335–54.

[50] For a fuller account, see Ahrensdorf 1997, 251–61. See also Euben 1990, 190; Strauss 1964, 146–7. For the Spartans' piety, see 1.86.5, 103.1–2, 118.3, 126–7, 134, 2.74–2–3, 5.16–7, 7.18. But for Thucydides' criticisms of Sparta, see 2.2, 71–4, 3.52–68, 4.80, 8.40.2; and Connor 1984, 126–40. Johnson (1993, 28–32, 137, 212–3) does not give sufficient weight to these criticisms.

[51] For Lincoln's later attempts to appeal to pious longings, consider especially his "Second Inaugural Address" (1989b, 686–7). A letter of Lincoln's (1989b, 522–7, esp. 522–3) from 1863 (on conflict in Missouri) presents what Finley (1963, 182–3) rightly calls a "remarkable parallel" to Thucydides' account of the civil war in Corcyra. On Lincoln and Thucydides, consider Finley 1963, 144–5; Orwin 1994, 26–7.

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nary statesmen, such as Pericles and Hermocrates, can effectively promote unity within their political communities (see 2.34–46, 2.65, 4.58–65, 6.62–3; Johnson 1993, 200). Indeed, Thucydides seeks to provide a political and moral education for his readers—a positive and negative education in wise and humane statesmanship—as is revealed, for example, by his explicit judgments of such leaders as Archidamus, Themistocles, Pericles, Cleon, Brasidas, Peisistratus, Hermocrates, Nicias, and Antiphon.[52] But, as the fate and legacy of these leaders demonstrate, Thucydides does not believe even the greatest statesmen can achieve anything like the "immortal peace" of the Hobbesian project.[53] Thucydides, like Hobbes, encourages his readers to act against inhumanity and folly in the political world as exemplified by Diodotus' efforts to save the Mytilineans from being butchered by the Athenians and to save his fellow Athenians from becoming butchers. Unlike Hobbes, Thucydides encourages his readers to do so with a somber, Diodotean appreciation of the ultimately ineradicable character of inhumanity and folly.[54]

In one sense Thucydides evidently holds a loftier and brighter view of the human condition than does Hobbes. Hobbes maintains that human contentment requires us to suppress our awareness of the truth that we are mortal, lest we be "gnawed on by feare of death" (*Leviathan,* xii, 169), whereas Thucydides suggests, most clearly through his own example, that the awareness of mortality and other harsh truths about our nature can constitute the core of a noble and happy life. As his book shows, Thucydides contemplated the horrible things to which our mortal nature exposes us, relentlessly but humanely, with true compassion for his fellow mortals. His account of the plague reveals that Thucydides faced death squarely, without flinching but also without bitterness.[55] He composed a book that he judged worthy of immortality—a possession for all time—without any hope that it would survive for all time. Thucydides foresaw with perfect clarity but also with perfect equanimity the future destruction of Athens and Sparta, of his entire world, of all that he cared about, apart from the truth.[56] Through his own example, he unobtrusively but unmistakably bears witness to a possibility, and therewith a hope, to which Hobbes never clearly refers or for which he never even allows: the possibility of combining a full, unshrinking awareness of the truth of our mortality with a genuine serenity of spirit and hence the possibility of becoming genuinely reconciled to our mortal, human nature.[57]

[52] See 1.89, 1.138.3, 1.139.4, 2.65, 3.36.6, 4.81, 6.54.5–7, 6.72, 7.86, 8.68.1–3.

[53] Compare, for example, 2.34–46 with 47–54 and 65.

[54] See 3.36, 41–9. See especially 3.45 and compare with, for example, 4.108.4 as well as 3.82–4, esp. 3.82.2. Consider as well the character and career of Demosthenes within the book.

[55] See esp. 2.47–54, above all 48.3, 51.6. See as well 3.70–84 (cf. 1.22.4 with 3.82.2); 1.23.1–4. See Aubrey's (1975, 156) reference to Hobbes's "extraordinary Timorousness." But consider as well Warrender's (1983, 8) remarks: "Hobbes always represented himself as a timid man. His verse autobiography relates how his mother gave birth to twins, himself and Fear. In modern times this estimate has been taken too much at its face value. What impressed Hobbes's contemporaries was his courage." Consider also Gert 1972, 30; Trainor 1985, 362; Tuck 1993, 302, 326, 329–30, 335–44; 1996a, xliii–xlv, lii–liii.

[56] See 1.10.1–3 (cf. 1.8.1); see also 1.1–2. For Thucydides' devotion to the truth, see 1.20.3, 22.4.

[57] I disagree with Pouncey's (1980, 150; see xiii, 42–4) conclusion that Thucydides' "intelligence and his strong concentration on the events as they happen have shown him that neither Pericles' ideals for Athens nor Nicias' personal virtue were equal to the demands made by the war itself. The real coldness of Thucydides' unfinished work is that it falls silent without telling us whether he finally found anything to take their place."

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