



## Rationality and Freedom in Hobbes's Theory of Action

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## Rationality and Freedom in Hobbes's Theory of Action

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### Summary

Thomas Hobbes's theory of action seems to give up on the idea that actions are 'up to us'. Thomas Pink has argued that this counter-intuitive stance should be understood as the implication of his radical assault on the scholastic Aristotelian model of action. Hobbes rejects the existence of the immaterial soul. This means that he must also reject the existence of so-called elicited acts of the will, which form the primary locus of human agency. In this paper an alternative interpretation is presented. It is argued that Hobbes's fundamental disagreement with the scholastic tradition is not over the existence of elicited acts of the will but over scope and productiveness of mechanical explanation. Hobbes aims to give an account of human actions as in our control and as 'up to us' while at the same time applying and defending his mechanical mode of analysis. This paper contributes to the contextualisation of Hobbes's views and furthers our understanding of his theory of action.

**Keywords:** Thomas Hobbes; agency; reason; Thomas Aquinas; Francisco Suárez.

### Contents

1. Introduction . . . . .	603
2. The Scholastic Model of Action . . . . .	606
3. Hobbes's Critique of the Scholastic Model . . . . .	608
4. Freedom of the Will . . . . .	610
5. Practical Reason . . . . .	612
6. Freedom and Responsibility . . . . .	618
7. Conclusion . . . . .	620

### 1. Introduction

A widely shared concern about Thomas Hobbes's theory of action is that it fails to account for the idea that actions are 'up to us'. In *Leviathan* (1651), *De Homine* (1658), and other works where Hobbes develops his moral psychology, commentators find repeated attempts to reduce any purposefulness and intelligent engagement with the world to mechanical, efficiently caused corporeal motions. According to this orthodox interpretation, willing is not a distinctive mental operation capable of responding to practical reasons and expressing human agency. Rather, the will is a non-rational appetite or urge necessitated by the mechanical workings of the mind. It can therefore be attributed to humans as well as non-human animals. The same goes for voluntariness and freedom. Voluntary actions are actions that are in conformity

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with and follow the will. But since willing merely consists in being attracted or repulsed, all behaviour is voluntary insofar as it is intentional. Freedom is defined in terms of the absence of physical constraints. Humans are free if they are unconstrained to act on whatever appetite happens to be strongest after deliberation. Hobbes brushes aside as absurd and meaningless more robust definitions of freedom, for example in terms of control over one's actions or the ability to determine oneself. There is nothing that escapes causal necessitation in nature, and all human actions are ultimately the result of the aggregate of external forces that put the body in motion.<sup>1</sup>

The consistency of Hobbes's position might be commendable, commentators observe, but as an account of human agency it is hardly satisfactory. Bishop John Bramhall, who debates Hobbes while they are both exiled in Paris in the 1640s, is among the first to object. Bramhall simply cannot understand why Hobbes would attribute the same freedom to humans as he does to beasts. This freedom must be

a liberty as is in little children before they have the use of reason, before they can consult or deliberate of anything. Is not this a childish liberty; and such a liberty as is in brute beasts, as bees and spiders, which do not learn their faculties as we do our trades, by experience and consideration? This is a brutish liberty.<sup>2</sup>

Present-day critics by and large share Bramhall's assessment. Hobbes 'falls short of providing sufficient conditions for free action', maintains one commentator, because he must consider behaviour that is the product of compulsion or addiction voluntary and free.<sup>3</sup> Others call Hobbes's theory of action 'rash'<sup>4</sup> and 'exceedingly crude'.<sup>5</sup> We cannot reduce agency to a passive occurrence, these critics argue, if we are to give an account of the way well-disposed adults are in control of their actions in a way that beasts, young children, and the mentally infirm are not. Even Michael Oakeshott, certainly one of the more sympathetic of Hobbes's interpreters, concludes that his writings are 'completely devoid of a satisfactory philosophy of volition'.<sup>6</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Authors who in various forms present this orthodox interpretation include Terence Irwin, *The Development of Ethics: From Suárez to Rousseau* (Oxford, 2008), 104–13; Vere Chappell, 'Introduction', in *Hobbes and Bramhall on Liberty and Necessity*, edited by Vere Chappell (Cambridge, 1999), xii–xiii; Thomas Spragens, *The Politics of Motion: The World of Thomas Hobbes* (Lexington, 1973) 65–71; Patrick Riley, *Will and Political Legitimacy* (Cambridge, 1982), 34; James Harris, *Of Liberty and Necessity: The Free Will Debate in Eighteenth-Century British Philosophy* (Oxford, 2005), 8; Paul Russell, 'Pessimists, Pollyannas, and the New Compatibilism', in *The Oxford Handbook of Free Will*, edited by Robert Kane (Oxford, 2001), 229–56 (233); Jürgen Overhoff, *Hobbes's Theory of the Will: Ideological Reasons and Historical Circumstances* (Lanham, MD, 2000), 78; Bernard Gert, 'Hobbes's Psychology', in *The Cambridge Companion to Hobbes*, edited by Tom Sorell (Cambridge, 1996), 157–74 (172); Robert Sleigh Jr., Vere Chappell and Michael Della Rocca, 'Determinism and Human Freedom', in *The Cambridge History of Seventeenth-Century Philosophy*, edited by Michael Ayers, Daniel Garber, Roger Ariew and Alan Gabbey (Cambridge, 1998), 1195–1270.

<sup>2</sup> John Bramhall, quoted in Thomas Hobbes, *The Questions Concerning Liberty, Necessity, and Chance*, in *The English Works of Thomas Hobbes*, edited by William Molesworth, 11 vols (London, 1839–45), V, 40.

<sup>3</sup> David Shatz, 'Free Will and the Structure of Motivation', *Midwest Studies in Philosophy*, 10 (1986), 451–82 (452). For similar arguments, see Gary Watson, 'Free Action and Free Will', *Mind*, 96 (1987), 145–72 (147); A. I. Melden, *Free Action* (London, 1961), 6; Robert Kane, *A Contemporary Introduction to Free Will* (Oxford, 2005), 93.

<sup>4</sup> Paul Benson, 'Freedom and Value', *The Journal of Philosophy*, 84 (1987), 465–86 (467).

<sup>5</sup> Gary Watson, 'Free Agency', *The Journal of Philosophy*, 72 (1975), 205–20 (206).

<sup>6</sup> Michael Oakeshott, *Hobbes on Civil Association* (Oxford, 1975), 158. It should however be noted that Oakeshott became progressively more hesitant to put forward his critique of Hobbes's account of the will expressed so self-confidently in 1937; see Patrick Riley, 'Michael Oakeshott as a Critic of Hobbes's Theory of the Will', *Revista Di Storia Della Filosofia*, 59 (2004), 359–367.

In an important series of recent works Thomas Pink has further reinforced this interpretation of Hobbes's theory of action.<sup>7</sup> Pink provides, for the first time, a historical contextualisation of Hobbes's theory of action of the kind that has proven so successful for other parts of Hobbes's corpus. This allows him to present a novel account of the reasons why Hobbes might have been led to the view outlined above. He argues that we should understand Hobbes's views on human agency in response to opponents writing in the scholastic Aristotelian tradition, such as Bishop Bramhall. Hobbes's primary objective in that exchange is to defend his metaphysics, and specifically his commitment to materialism and determinism, as set out most fully in *De Corpore* (1655). Hobbes adopts those parts of the scholastic view, Pink suggests, that can be rendered consistent with those commitments but discards everything else that cannot. Since traditional conceptions of rationally informed human agency require the attribution of undetermined acts of the immaterial soul, Hobbes is forced to reject such conceptions in full. What he is left with is the category of intentionality, which, as his scholastic opponents agree, can be attributed to both humans and beasts and is compatible with material and deterministic explanation.

Pink's account thus amounts to a powerful and sophisticated defence of the orthodox interpretation and for that reason alone warrants close attention. In what follows I examine his argument. I first outline Pink's account of the scholastic position (section 2) and Hobbes's reaction to it (section 3). I then raise a number of concerns: I argue that Pink offers insufficient evidence for his case with regard to Hobbes's views on the freedom and voluntariness of the will (section 4) and practical reason (section 5). Finally I draw attention to textual evidence that contradicts Pink's analysis (section 6). The conclusion of my analysis is that Hobbes's rejection of scholastic theories of action is not as radical as Pink has supposed. This conclusion brings into doubt both the orthodox interpretation of Hobbes's theory of action and the objections raised against it by Bramhall and present-day critics. Considerations of space prevent me from offering a full alternative account of Hobbes's theory of action. Still, this discussion should go a fair way towards unsettling the orthodox interpretation and furthering our understanding of Hobbes's theory of action.

<sup>7</sup> Thomas Pink, 'Reason and Agency', *Proceedings of the Aristotelian Society*, 97 (1997), 263–80; Thomas Pink, 'Action and Self-Determination', *Intellectica*, 36 (2003), 247–59; Thomas Pink, 'Suárez, Hobbes and the Scholastic Tradition in Action Theory', in *The Will and Human Action: From Antiquity to the Present Day*, edited by Thomas Pink and Martin Stone (London, 2004), 127–53; Thomas Pink, *Free Will: A Very Short Introduction* (Oxford, 2004); Thomas Pink, 'Action, Will and Law in Late Scholasticism', in *Moral Philosophy on the Threshold of Modernity*, edited by Jill Krayer and Risto Saarinen (Dordrecht, 2005), 31–50; Thomas Pink, 'Self-Determination and Moral Responsibility from Calvin to Frankfurt', in *Reason, Faith and History*, edited by Martin Stone (Aldershot, 2008), 145–64; Thomas Pink, 'Thomas Hobbes', in *A Companion to the Philosophy of Action*, edited by Timothy O'Connor and Constantine Sandis (Oxford, 2010), 473–80; Thomas Pink, 'Thomas Hobbes and the Ethics of Freedom', *Inquiry*, 54 (2011), 541–63; Thomas Pink, 'Freedom and Action without Causation: Noncausal Theories of Freedom and Purposive Agency', in *The Oxford Handbook of Free Will*, edited by Robert Kane, second edition (Oxford, 2011), 349–65.

## 2. The Scholastic Model of Action

Pink identifies a general model of action as fundamental consensus in medieval action theory. This model has a number of distinctive features. First and foremost is what Pink calls the ‘dual structure’ of human agency. Human actions are understood to involve two stages.<sup>8</sup> In the first stage we decide, will, or intend to do something. For example, I might decide to raise my arm. These events—my willing, intending, choosing, etc.—are so-called ‘elicited acts’ of the will. In the second stage we perform the intended action. Thus, having first decided to raise my arm, I now raise my arm. Such subsequent acts are called ‘commanded acts’ because they are prompted or commanded by an elicited act of the will. They involve the exercise of capacities external to but controlled by the will—such as the movements of the bodily organs—in accordance with what the will has decided or intended.<sup>9</sup>

Both commanded and elicited acts can be voluntary and free. In the case of commanded acts this is so simply because, and insofar as, they follow an elicited act.<sup>10</sup> Pink calls this a ‘motivation based account’ of voluntary actions, since it presupposes a prior elicited act by which the action is motivated.<sup>11</sup> The conditions for the voluntariness and freedom of elicited acts are a great deal more complex. This is so in part because it requires us to consider the division between voluntarism and intellectualism in scholastic theories of action.

For Thomas Aquinas, who can plausibly be read as an intellectualist, fully voluntary human agency in elicited acts of the will requires a specific kind of engagement of practical reason.<sup>12</sup> He is willing to attribute a form of imperfect voluntariness to the behaviour of non-human animals. Such imperfect voluntariness requires the cognition of an end, and this is a capacity we find in irrational animals that pursue things on the basis of their senses and their natural estimative power. Perfect voluntariness, however, requires not only the cognition of an end but also, as he puts it, ‘knowing it under the aspect of end, and the relationship of the means to that end’.<sup>13</sup> This is something only rational

<sup>8</sup> Pink, ‘Suárez, Hobbes and the Scholastic Tradition’, in *Will and Human Action*, edited by Pink and Stone, 129. This is a very rough distinction, as Pink would readily admit. There are two immediate complications. It is customary, first, to identify various kinds of acts of the will and several kinds of acts of the intellect; for a schematic account in the case of Aquinas, see Eleonore Stump, *Aquinas* (London, 2003), 289–90. Secondly, for Aquinas, commanded acts are ultimately commanded not by the will but by the intellect; see Thomas Aquinas, *Summa theologiae*, translated by the English Dominican Fathers (London, 1912–36), IaIIae, q17a1. See also Stump, *Aquinas*, 290; Alan Donagan, ‘Thomas Aquinas on Human Action’, in *The Cambridge History of Later Medieval Philosophy*, edited by Norman Kretzmann, Anthony Kenny, Jan Pinborg, and Eleonore Stump (Cambridge, 1982), 642–54 (649 and following).

<sup>9</sup> For example, Aquinas, *Summa theologiae*, IaIIae q6a4.

<sup>10</sup> Pink, ‘Suárez, Hobbes and the Scholastic Tradition’, in *Will and Human Action*, edited by Pink and Stone, 132. Compare Francisco Suárez, *On Efficient Causality: Metaphysical Disputations 17, 18, 19* (New Haven, CT, 1994), XIX.5, paragraph 3; Aquinas, *Summa theologiae*, IaIIae q1a1.

<sup>11</sup> Pink, ‘Suárez, Hobbes and the Scholastic Tradition’, in *Will and Human Action*, edited by Pink and Stone, 132.

<sup>12</sup> It is also possible to defend a voluntaristic interpretation of Aquinas. Some of his observations suggest his willingness to attribute the kind of indifference to the will associated with voluntarism. For example, Aquinas maintains that ‘[t]he will is mistress of its own act, and to it belongs to will and not to will. But this would not be so, had it not the power to move itself to will’; see Aquinas, *Summa theologiae*, IaIIae q9a3. These and other claims have led several commentators to maintain that Aquinas adopts a form of voluntarism—for example, see David Gallagher, ‘Free Choice and Free Judgment in Thomas Aquinas’, *Archiv für Geschichte der Philosophie*, 76 (1994), 247–77. For a largely negative discussion of several of these views, see Jeffrey Hause, ‘Thomas Aquinas and the Voluntarists’, *Medieval Philosophy and Theology*, 6 (1997), 167–82. Pink also proposes an intellectualist reading of Aquinas; see Pink, ‘Suárez, Hobbes and the Scholastic Tradition’, in *Will and Human Action*, edited by Pink and Stone, 130.

<sup>13</sup> Aquinas, *Summa theologiae*, IaIIae q6a2.

beings are capable of, who have the capacity to cognise universals by means of their intellect. This also guarantees the freedom of elicited acts of the will. For Aquinas, the will necessarily follows the commands of the intellect.<sup>14</sup> It is true that the will can influence the intellect in its operations—for example, by directing it to deliberate further about the desirability of some course of action. However, in these cases, the will is again dependent on a prior judgement of the intellect. In every particular instance, then, it can but will what the intellect judges best. Nevertheless, the intellect allows humans to consider a variety of different courses of action

because this judgement, in the case of some particular act, is not from a natural instinct, but from some act of comparison in the reason, therefore he acts from free judgment and retains the power of being inclined to various things.<sup>15</sup>

Thus, Aquinas concludes, 'forasmuch as man is rational is it necessary that man have a free-will'.<sup>16</sup>

Francisco Suárez, who proposes the voluntaristic account of human agency that Pink presents as archetypical example of the scholastic model of action, agrees with Aquinas that the engagement of the intellect is required for fully voluntary and free agency. He maintains that reason is a necessary condition and forms the 'root of freedom'.<sup>17</sup> However, he also requires the will to be

an active faculty that has control over its own action in such a way that it has it within its power to exercise that action and not to exercise it, and consequently, to elicit one action or another – that is, opposite – action.<sup>18</sup>

Only if the will elicits actions that are 'self-willed through a virtual and inherent self-reflexion' can they properly be said to be fully voluntary and free.<sup>19</sup> Such a will is free, Suárez maintains, because 'with all the things required for acting having been posited, it is able to act and able not to act'.<sup>20</sup> Contrary to Aquinas, then, Suárez allows the will to operate in measure independently of the intellect. Despite this disagreement about the precise relationship between the intellect and will, Pink claims, these philosophers are united in viewing elicited acts of the will as cases of intentional action. He terms it a 'practical reason-based conception' of voluntary agency since elicited willing essentially involves the capacity to be moved by practical reasons.<sup>21</sup>

The emphasis in this model lies then squarely on the elicited acts of the will. This is most apparent from the fact that human freedom is taken to be dependent on the presence of elicited willing. Pink calls human freedom a 'multi-way power', a power to produce a

<sup>14</sup> For example, Hause, 'Aquinas and the Voluntarists', 178.

<sup>15</sup> Aquinas, *Summa theologiae*, Ia q83a1.

<sup>16</sup> Aquinas, *Summa theologiae*, Ia q83a1.

<sup>17</sup> Suárez, *Metaphysical Disputations*, XIX.1, paragraph 13.

<sup>18</sup> Suárez, *Metaphysical Disputations*, XIX.2, paragraph 18.

<sup>19</sup> Suárez, quoted in Pink, 'Suárez, Hobbes and the Scholastic Tradition', in *Will and Human Action*, edited by Pink and Stone, 133.

<sup>20</sup> Suárez, *Metaphysical Disputations*, XIX.4, paragraph 8.

<sup>21</sup> Pink, 'Suárez, Hobbes and the Scholastic Tradition', in *Will and Human Action*, edited by Pink and Stone, 127; Pink, 'Action, Will and Law', in *Moral Philosophy*, edited by Krave and Saarinen, 35.

variety of effects without being necessitated to one particular effect in advance.<sup>22</sup> This is a power ‘to do otherwise’ that ‘leaves our action up to us or within our control’.<sup>23</sup> Pink is drawn to a libertarian understanding of this power, though he recognises the possibility of analysing it in compatibilist terms.<sup>24</sup> Our freedom, so understood, depends on the presence of elicited acts of the will. We are free and in control of what we do because, and insofar as, we can decide, intend, or will to do it.

### 3. Hobbes’s Critique of the Scholastic Model

Pink maintains that Hobbes’s theory of action can best be understood as an elaborate assault on this scholastic model of action. Hobbes accepts the scholastic account of commanded acts: acts are voluntary by virtue of their relation to a prior motive or will. In other words, he agrees that the act of raising my hand is voluntary when I have a prior motivation or will to raise my hand. However, he rejects the existence and intelligibility of elicited acts of the will, argues Pink, because he is committed to a thoroughgoing metaphysical materialism and determinism. In the scholastic model, elicited acts are located in the immaterial and immortal soul. Since, as Aristotle argues, the intellect must be separate from the body, the will must be immaterial insofar as it is responsive to reasons.<sup>25</sup> Hobbes rejects the ‘[e]xistence of an Incorporeal Soule, Separated from the Body’ as incoherent and absurd.<sup>26</sup> Furthermore, his commitment to universal causal necessitation leads him to deny the conceptual coherence of faculties that are not subject to efficient causality: ‘all events have necessary causes’,<sup>27</sup> he claims, which he takes to entail that ‘there is no such thing as freedom from necessity’.<sup>28</sup> Hobbes’s ontological commitments, then, force him to reject the existence of the complex, rationally motivated elicited acts of the will. Hobbes must deny the dual nature of human agency and the second-order acts of the will that are central to it.<sup>29</sup> But he can retain the rest of the scholastic model if he replaces elicited acts with simple non-rational appetites or pro-attitudes. In doing so he jettisons in one fell swoop everything he takes to be ontologically

<sup>22</sup> Pink, ‘Hobbes’, in *Companion to Philosophy of Action*, edited by O’Connor and Sandis, 474; Pink, ‘Hobbes and the Ethics of Freedom’, 545.

<sup>23</sup> Pink, ‘Hobbes and the Ethics of Freedom’, 545. He also associates it with what Aristotle calls *eph’hemin*: that something is in our power to do; see Pink, ‘Hobbes and the Ethics of Freedom’, 544. This is slightly puzzling because, for Aristotle, something being up to us is equal to it being voluntary—but voluntariness for Aristotle includes the behaviour of animals; see Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, translated by Roger Crisp (Cambridge, 2004), 1111b30.

<sup>24</sup> ‘For provided the existence of the power is admitted, compatibilism about its nature is not of itself any threat to the scholastic view of the power’s ethical significance’; see Pink, ‘Hobbes and the Ethics of Freedom’, 557. I take Aquinas to have presented such a compatibilist defence of multi-way powers.

<sup>25</sup> Aristotle, *De Anima*, translated by D. W. Hamlyn (Oxford, 1968), 429a18ff.

<sup>26</sup> Thomas Hobbes, *Leviathan* (Cambridge, 1996), 466.

<sup>27</sup> Hobbes, *Questions Concerning Liberty*, in *English Works*, V, 406.

<sup>28</sup> Hobbes, *Questions Concerning Liberty*, in *English Works*, V, 424.

<sup>29</sup> ‘Hobbes’s model of voluntary agency is singular in structure, not dual. [...] There is no second order agency of the will – of our motivation itself’; Pink, ‘Suárez, Hobbes and the Scholastic Tradition’, in *Will and Human Action*, edited by Pink and Stone, 146. This means that Hobbes, in Pink’s interpretation, rather than allowing a reconceptualisation of elicited acts of the will (for instance in terms of an alternative conception of practical reason), denies that they are acts at all.

suspect in the scholastic account of human agency. As Pink concludes in what I refer to as the Interpretative Principle,<sup>30</sup>

Hobbesian voluntary agency is nothing more than the scholastics' motivation-based imperated [commanded] agency – only now merely motivated, not imperated by some rational psychological authority. Hobbes, in his own eyes, had preserved the solid motivation-based core of scholastic action theory, removing the extraneous practical reason-based category of elicited acts. In so doing he had abandoned a link between the voluntary and a faculty-based rational psychological order that was fundamental to Suárezian action theory.<sup>31</sup>

The Interpretative Principle is very powerful indeed. It promises to explain a number of controversial features of (the orthodox interpretation of) Hobbes's position. Above all, it explains why he can no longer conceptualise willing, deciding, choosing, etc., as intentional actions. Since he has given up on the category of elicited acts of the will, he must claim that such occurrences are things that happen to us. It is not 'up to us' to will or not to will, which Hobbes expresses by denying that the will is voluntary. Instead, it resembles a bodily urge. In one provocative passage he compares the will to the desire to eat. Neither the desire to eat or the will are in our control, he maintains: 'nor can a man more determine his will than any other appetite, that is, more than he can determine when he shall be hungry and when not'.<sup>32</sup>

Consequently, neither is Hobbes able to retain the traditional account of human freedom as expressing that actions are 'up to us'. Freedom, understood as a multi-way power requires the existence of elicited acts of the will. But he has rejected their existence and therefore must deny that actions are 'up to us'. Instead, he associates freedom with the exercise of commanded acts of the will:

As if it were not freedom enough for a man to do what he will, unless his will also have power over his will, and that his will be not the power itself, but must have another power within it to do all voluntary acts.<sup>33</sup>

This leads him quite naturally to his account of freedom as the absence of obstacles to doing what one wants: 'true liberty, which doth not consist in determining itself, but in doing what the will is determined unto'.<sup>34</sup>

Finally, since actions are not 'up to us', Hobbes must develop an alternative defence of practices of moral praise and blame. He does so by denying that praise and blame requires freedom as a multi-way power. We do not praise or blame because we hold

<sup>30</sup> I term it an 'interpretative principle' because it underlies and shapes Pink's interpretation of Hobbes's theory of action in fundamental ways. It is also itself an interpretation, and the purpose of the present paper is to show that this interpretation wrong.

<sup>31</sup> Pink, 'Suárez, Hobbes and the Scholastic Tradition', in *Will and Human Action*, edited by Pink and Stone, 150. See also Pink, 'Action, Will and Law', in *Moral Philosophy*, edited by Krayer and Saarinen, 47; Pink, 'Freedom and Action without Causation', in *Oxford Handbook of Free Will*, edited by Kane, second edition, 353.

<sup>32</sup> Hobbes, *Questions Concerning Liberty*, in *English Works*, V, 34, quoted in Pink, 'Suárez, Hobbes and the Scholastic Tradition', in *Will and Human Action*, edited by Pink and Stone, 146. Pink calls it a 'favourite Hobbesian example', suggesting that Hobbes uses it often. I have, however, only been able to locate this one instance.

<sup>33</sup> Hobbes, *Questions Concerning Liberty*, in *English Works*, V, 51, quoted in Pink, 'Suárez, Hobbes and the Scholastic Tradition', in *Will and Human Action*, edited by Pink and Stone, 148.

<sup>34</sup> Hobbes, *Questions Concerning Liberty*, in *English Works*, V, 35, quoted in Pink, 'Hobbes', in *Companion to Philosophy of Action*, edited by O'Connor and Sandis, 479.

people responsible for their actions and therefore deserve to be praised or blamed. Rather we merely express approval or disapproval and this does not presuppose self-determination or freedom. We blame people, explains Hobbes, ‘because they please us not. I might ask him, whether blaming be any thing else but saying the thing blamed is ill or imperfect’.<sup>35</sup>

These views are familiar from orthodox interpretations of Hobbes’s theory of action. Pink shows how the Interpretative Principle explains them, and how Hobbes’s theory of action, so understood, constitutes a radical break with traditional views. The question is whether the principle is correct. It is certainly uncontroversial to claim that Hobbes’s response to the scholastic theory of action (for example in his debate with Bramhall) is to an important extent shaped by his mechanical mode of explanation in psychology. In addition, Hobbes’s metaphysical commitments have direct implications for several important aspects of the scholastic model of action. Nevertheless, there are reasons to be sceptical of the claim that the Interpretative Principle best captures Hobbes’s response. In what follows I will argue that the evidence that Pink presents is insufficient. Neither Hobbes’s views on free will or his views on rationality support the Interpretative Principle.

#### 4. Freedom of the Will

Hobbes vigorously denies that (what scholastics call) elicited acts of the will, namely, occurrences of willing, intending, choosing, etc., are themselves voluntary or free. Pink takes this as evidence for the Interpretative Principle, since it seems to show that Hobbes has effectively removed the category of elicited acts and replaced them with passive pro-attitudes. If willing, intending, choosing, etc., are not voluntary or free, Pink infers, they cannot be ‘up to us’ or in our control.<sup>36</sup>

In this section I argue that the Pink’s conclusion does not follow. Hobbes’s resistance against attributing freedom and voluntariness to the will does not without further argument support the Interpretative Principle. The reason is that Hobbes’s arguments are without exception directed at the specifically voluntaristic version of elicited acts of the will. This is to be expected, since his most elaborate engagement with the scholastic model of action can be found in his debate with Bishop Bramhall in *The Questions Concerning Liberty, Necessity, and Chance* (1658).<sup>37</sup> At the very start of the debate Hobbes maintains that his disagreement with Bramhall boils down to the question whether ‘there be such a liberty free from necessitation and extrinsical determination to one, or not’.<sup>38</sup> And he maintains that ‘the whole question of free-will is included in this, “Whether the will determine itself?”’.<sup>39</sup> To deny that someone is free to will or has power over the will, for Hobbes, is just to say that ‘his will did not follow his will’.<sup>40</sup> Bramhall presents a view that closely follows Suárez.<sup>41</sup>

<sup>35</sup> Hobbes, *Questions Concerning Liberty*, in *English Works*, V, 52. See also Pink, ‘Hobbes’, in *Companion to Philosophy of Action*, edited by O’Connor and Sandis, 479; Pink, ‘Suárez, Hobbes and the Scholastic Tradition’, in *Will and Human Action*, edited by Pink and Stone, 147.

<sup>36</sup> For example, Pink, ‘Hobbes and the Ethics of Freedom’, 557.

<sup>37</sup> Moreover, whenever Hobbes touches upon the question of free will in his other works, he only considers, and rejects, voluntarism about free will; for example, see Thomas Hobbes, *Elements of Philosophy*, in *English Works*, I, 409. This suggests that Hobbes took the words ‘freedom from necessitation’ in their ‘proper signification’ to signify voluntarism about the will, which allows for the possibility that he would not reject intellectualism, as long as it is not expressed in terms of ‘freedom from necessitation’.

<sup>38</sup> Hobbes, *Questions Concerning Liberty*, in *English Works*, V, 4.

<sup>39</sup> Hobbes, *Questions Concerning Liberty*, in *English Works*, V, 4.

<sup>40</sup> Hobbes, *Questions Concerning Liberty*, in *English Works*, V, 50–51.

<sup>41</sup> As Hobbes does not fail to note; see Hobbes, *Questions Concerning Liberty*, in *English Works*, V, 37.

He echoes Suárez when he maintains that reason 'is the root, the fountain, the original of true liberty'.<sup>42</sup> And, like Suárez, he maintains that the will is its own cause, can reflexively will its own willing, and can therefore operate independently from all necessity. The will, Bramhall writes, 'hath a dominion over its own acts to will or nill without extrinsical necessitation'.<sup>43</sup> Hence when pressed by Hobbes he embraces as uncontroversially true the Suárezian definition of a free agent, according to which, 'when all things are present that are needful to produce the effect, [he] can nevertheless not produce it'.<sup>44</sup>

Hobbes denies the existence of free will so understood. His reconceptualisation of causation requires him to deny that anything existing escapes efficient causality. He must therefore also deny the central feature of voluntarism, namely the conceptualisation of the will as a power to determine itself and as free from outward necessitation. 'I acknowledge this liberty', he says, 'that I can do if I will: but to say, I can will if I will, I take to be an absurd speech'.<sup>45</sup> Any act of the will presupposes some efficient cause, and supposing that the will is its own sufficient cause, merely raises the further question of what was the efficient cause of this act of self-determination. He further denies that we have power over our will. He denies that man is 'the master of his future will' because he is 'not free to will'.<sup>46</sup> Finally he denies the appropriateness of ascribing voluntariness to the will. This too, he maintains, leads to an infinite regress: 'Can any man but a Schoolman think that the will is voluntary? But yet the will is the cause of voluntary actions'.<sup>47</sup> Hobbes is willing to call commanded acts voluntary because they follow the will. But elicited acts of the will cannot be voluntary, since that would suggest that the will follows its own willing, which he considers absurd for the reasons just outlined.

Hobbes's arguments against the freedom and voluntariness of occurrences of willing are thus dictated by his rejection of voluntarism about the will. They do not straightforwardly apply to intellectualist conceptualisations of elicited acts of the will.<sup>48</sup> Aquinas explains the voluntariness and freedom of the will in terms of its responsiveness to the intellect. For Aquinas, elicited acts of the will are free and voluntary because formed in the light of a consideration of alternatives. He does not require that the will is without 'extrinsical necessitation' as Bramhall puts it, maintaining that for an act to be voluntary it must have 'a principle within the agent',<sup>49</sup> but adding that 'it is not necessary that this inward principle be the first principle unmoved by another'.<sup>50</sup> Hobbes's ontological commitments do not require him to reject this condition. Hobbes can agree that willing arises from a principle within the agent since Aquinas admits that it does not have to be a

<sup>42</sup> Bramhall, quoted in Hobbes, *Questions Concerning Liberty*, in *English Works*, V, 40.

<sup>43</sup> Hobbes, *Questions Concerning Liberty*, in *English Works*, V, 386.

<sup>44</sup> Hobbes, *Questions Concerning Liberty*, in *English Works*, V, 385.

<sup>45</sup> Hobbes, *Questions Concerning Liberty*, in *English Works*, V, 39, quoted in Pink, 'Suárez, Hobbes and the Scholastic Tradition', in *Will and Human Action*, edited by Pink and Stone, 150; Pink, 'Hobbes', in *Companion to Philosophy of Action*, edited by O'Connor and Sandis, 477. Compare Hobbes, *Questions Concerning Liberty*, in *English Works*, V, 35: 'this "determining itself," and this, "necessarily is when it is," are confused and empty words'.

<sup>46</sup> Hobbes, *Questions Concerning Liberty*, in *English Works*, V, 189.

<sup>47</sup> Hobbes, *Questions Concerning Liberty*, in *English Works*, V, 327, quoted in Pink, 'Suárez, Hobbes and the Scholastic Tradition', in *Will and Human Action*, edited by Pink and Stone, 148.

<sup>48</sup> Compare Irwin, *Development of Ethics*, 111: insofar as Hobbes 'simply wanted to affirm determinism and compatibilism, he would have no reason to reject Aquinas' conception of freewill, since it is consistent with the compatibilist arguments against Bramhall'.

<sup>49</sup> Aquinas, *Summa theologiae*, I-II, q6a1.

<sup>50</sup> Aquinas, *Summa theologiae*, I-II, q9a4.

principle without some further cause. Hobbes's denial that occurrences of willing, choosing, intending, etc. can be called voluntary therefore does not rule out Aquinas' argument for why they are actions that are in our control and 'up to us'.

The same holds for Hobbes's arguments against the conceptual coherence of 'free will'. Aquinas maintains that free acts require the exercise of a capacity to be swayed by practical reasons.<sup>51</sup> The human will, on Aquinas' interpretation, is a 'rational appetite',<sup>52</sup> an appetite for the good that in any specific instance follows the judgement of the intellect. It is free because it is not a natural instinct, like in sheep that are immediately moved to shun a wolf when they see it, but rather follows 'some act of comparison in reason' and therefore 'retains the power of being inclined to various things'.<sup>53</sup> It is true that Aquinas claims that the will has control over its own actions. Pink quotes Aquinas when he writes that 'we have control both over whether we act or refrain from acting, and whether we will or refrain from willing'.<sup>54</sup> But this is merely to say that human beings can by means of deliberation choose one thing over another. Aquinas, in the words of one commentator, 'captures this idea pithily, if misleadingly, by saying that the will has control over its act'.<sup>55</sup> Hobbes's requirement that the will is necessitated does not rule out this conception of free will, as long as he allows the will to be necessitated by the intellect.

The upshot of the argument in this section is that Hobbes's denial that willing, intending, choosing, etc. are free or voluntary does not, without further argument, entail the conclusion that, for Hobbes, all occurrences of willing are merely passive antecedent causes of action. To draw this conclusion, and in order to vindicate the Interpretative Principle, Pink must show that Hobbes rejects the intellectualist position as exemplified by Aquinas. In the next section, I will argue that his further arguments are unsuccessful in this regard.

## 5. Practical Reason

The Interpretative Principle entails that Hobbes denies that humans have a capacity to consider and act on practical reasons. In the scholastic model humans exercise their practical rationality in elicited acts of the will. Only in elicited willing can humans be receptive to and motivated by practical reasons. In Pink's interpretation, Hobbes adopts the scholastic model of action but replaces the practical reason-based category of elicited acts of the will with passive and non-rational urges or passions.<sup>56</sup> The implication of the Interpretative Principle, then, is strictly speaking that there is no role for practical rationality in Hobbes's theory of action. Hobbes, however, does not deny humans the capacity of reason. He calls mankind a 'rational and most excellent work of nature',<sup>57</sup> and takes the laws of nature, the 'precepts of reason', as practical requirements for all who

<sup>51</sup> Aquinas, *Summa theologiae*, IaIIae q6a1. Compare Pink, 'Suárez, Hobbes and the Scholastic Tradition', in *Will and Human Action*, edited by Pink and Stone, 130.

<sup>52</sup> Aquinas, *Summa theologiae*, IaIIae q8a1.

<sup>53</sup> Aquinas, *Summa theologiae*, Ia q83a1.

<sup>54</sup> Aquinas, *Summa theologiae*, IaIIae q6a3, quoted in Pink, 'Reason and Agency', 267.

<sup>55</sup> Hause, 'Aquinas and the Voluntarists', 178.

<sup>56</sup> As Pink puts it: 'for Hobbes, there is no special and distinct class of reason-involving motivational responses'; see Pink, 'Suárez, Hobbes and the Scholastic Tradition', in *Will and Human Action*, edited by Pink and Stone, 146.

<sup>57</sup> Hobbes, *Leviathan*, ix.

want to leave the wretched conditions of their natural state.<sup>58</sup> This puts Pink in the awkward position of having to defend the fundamentally 'motivation based' nature of Hobbes's theory of action while admitting Hobbes's attribution of rationality to individuals in their practical affairs. 'Granted', he writes, 'humans are rational, as animals are not',<sup>59</sup> and he admits that 'Hobbes does not deny that humans have a distinctive capacity for rationality'.<sup>60</sup> But he dismisses the significance of these claims for Hobbes's theory of action. One may read Pink as providing three arguments for his position. Together they amount to the view that while Hobbes does not reject the existence of practical rationality, he fundamentally reconceives its nature in comparison to his scholastic predecessors. This reconstituted account of practical rationality leaves his account of agency fundamentally motivation based. This can be understood as Pink's way of showing that Hobbes rejects the intellectualist position as exemplified by Aquinas. In this section I will argue that none of these arguments are successful, and that we must therefore reject the Interpretative Principle.

First of all Pink maintains that Hobbes does not treat the capacity to consider and act on practical reasons as a necessary condition for voluntary actions. It is a necessary and sufficient condition for the voluntariness of actions, for Hobbes, that they are motivated by some passion.<sup>61</sup> Regardless of the rationality one can attribute to some actions, the motivational response—and that which makes the agent's action voluntary—is a passion comparable to the sensation of hunger. Thus, Pink argues directly from the claim that actions are 'identified by Hobbes with what he calls *voluntariness* – by which he means the occurrence of action caused and motivated by a prior pro-attitude toward its performance' to the conclusion that 'action can no longer be understood in terms of some distinctive mode of exercising rationality, but becomes identified with the only element of scholastic action theory that survives – the category of "commanded" actions'.<sup>62</sup> Or put differently, since Hobbes classifies actions motivated by non-rational passions as voluntary, while only actions motivated by elicited acts are traditionally considered fully voluntary, this is evidence that Hobbes denies the existence of elicited acts of the will and maintains that decisions, intentions, or choosings are not 'up to us'.

This argument relies on an unstated premise. It is true that Hobbes does not take the capacity for rationality to be a necessary condition for fully voluntary actions as many of the scholastics do. But it does not follow that a voluntary *and rational* action brings no change in the nature of the motivational response. It may be true that Hobbes considers passive urges like hunger not to be 'up to us' but this does not mean that decisions that are made on the basis of considerations of reasons for action are not 'up to us' either. The most we can conclude is that Hobbes does not analyse the alleged difference between various types of motivational responses in terms of voluntariness of the action.

One might of course think that Hobbes follows the scholastic model of action and takes the distinctive rationality of human actions to be expressed in terms of their voluntariness. We would have reason to think this if we could assume the truth of the Interpretative Principle. In that case it would be natural to think that Hobbes would also

<sup>58</sup> Hobbes, *Leviathan*, 91.

<sup>59</sup> Pink, 'Suárez, Hobbes and the Scholastic Tradition', in *Will and Human Action*, edited by Pink and Stone, 144.

<sup>60</sup> Pink, 'Hobbes', in *Companion to Philosophy of Action*, edited by O'Connor and Sandis, 476.

<sup>61</sup> Hobbes, *Leviathan*, 44.

<sup>62</sup> Pink, 'Hobbes', in *Companion to Philosophy of Action*, edited by O'Connor and Sandis, 476.

adopt the scholastic view on the relationship between reason and fully voluntary action. But that would be to assume what needs to be proved. And while Hobbes's position might seem eccentric on this point he is in fact merely reviving the traditional Aristotelian position on the voluntary. Aristotle too takes the class of the voluntary to be broader than the class of the rational. He acknowledges that beasts and young children are capable of voluntary behaviour, but denies them the specific capacity of 'rational choice'.<sup>63</sup> This gives us reason to doubt that Hobbes's views on the character of the 'motivational response' are expressed in his views about the voluntariness of actions.

An analogous problem plagues Pink's second argument. He notes that scholastic philosophers take humans to have a characteristic capacity to be motivated by rational considerations by virtue of the faculties of the immaterial soul not present in animals. Hobbes denies the existence of such faculties. He explains human rationality by reference to language. Language allows humans to develop and communicate thoughts, but they are in all other respects 'just like animal thoughts' and occurring in 'the same corporeal imagination we share with animals'.<sup>64</sup> This implies, maintains Pink, that there is 'nothing about any human motivational responses to cognitions to distinguish them as at all different in kind from animal motivational responses to sensorily or imaginatively based cognitions'.<sup>65</sup> Hobbes takes rationality to be exercised in a corporeal faculty we share with animals, hence ruling out a scholastic account of the exercise of a uniquely human capacity for rationality and an account of elicited acts of the will that make willing 'up to us'.

First of all, this argument confuses two distinct issues. The question under consideration is whether Hobbes's account of human agency is best understood in terms of the Interpretative Principle, and thus whether Hobbes embraces a motivation-based account of agency according to which willing, intending, choosing, etc. are passive occurrences. But this is distinct from the question whether the capacity for practical rationality attributed to humans is corporeal and the exercise of psychological faculties shared by humans and animals. Of course, these issues are not independent in the scholastic model of agency. The model demands that insofar as the faculties of the soul are rational they are immaterial. For Aquinas and Suárez denying humans an immaterial soul implies denying them a capacity for practical rationality. But we cannot assume that Hobbes would agree. In fact, given that he takes humans to be both capable of rationality and as fully corporeal, we have good reason to think that he would not. That is why we must treat it at least as an open question whether Hobbes would take the fact that the faculties involved in human action being continuous with the animal psychology also commits him to a motivation-based account of action.

Secondly, the argument misconstrues the role of language in Hobbes's account of human action and cognition. While corporeal imaginations associated with language are in an ontological sense like animal thoughts, language is unlike animal thought in its function. Language or speech (I use these interchangeably) permits humans to cognise universals and is functionally equivalent in Hobbes's philosophical system as the scholastic intellect.<sup>66</sup> It is common for scholastics to claim that it is impossible to account for

<sup>63</sup> Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, 1111b7.

<sup>64</sup> Pink, 'Suárez, Hobbes and the Scholastic Tradition', in *Will and Human Action*, edited by Pink and Stone, 144.

<sup>65</sup> Pink, 'Suárez, Hobbes and the Scholastic Tradition', in *Will and Human Action*, edited by Pink and Stone, 145.

<sup>66</sup> Compare Cees Leijenhorst, *The Mechanization of Aristotelianism: The Late Aristotelian Setting of Thomas Hobbes' Natural Philosophy* (Leiden, 2002), 94.

abstract thought without the supposition of an immaterial soul.<sup>67</sup> Hobbes's rejection of the existence of immaterial faculties thus seems to undermine the capacity to be guided by distinctively rational considerations. Hobbes answers this objection not by agreeing that there are no distinctions between humans and animals but by pointing out that humans have the capacity of speech. Understanding of something as an instance of a universal consists of having a phantasm combined with the understanding of the general word that refers to it. In this way, Hobbes believes, he can account for abstract thought while only supposing the corporeal faculty of imagination. To cognise a universal is just to remember that a word is a 'mark' or 'sign' for many individual imaginations. In this way Hobbes renders the immaterial intellect superfluous. As he puts it, 'for the understanding of the extent of an universal name, we need no other faculty but that of our imagination, by which we remember that such names bring sometimes one thing, sometimes another, into our mind'.<sup>68</sup> Accordingly, Hobbes maintains, those animals that lack the capacity of speech therefore also 'lack intellect, for intellect is a certain imagination, but one that arises from the agreed signification of words'.<sup>69</sup> This means that while Hobbes eliminates all ontological differentiation between the faculties of humans and beasts this does not entail, as Pink suggests, that there are no functional differentiations. Hobbes attributes to humans a capacity to cognising universals, a capacity that the scholastics associate with the intellect. This means that Pink has not ruled out the possibility that Hobbes allows for changes in the motivational response insofar as humans have the capacity of speech. Like the traditional view that attributes elicited acts of the will to beings with intellect, Hobbes could maintain that willing is 'up to us' insofar as we have the capacity of speech.

Pink's third argument can be read as the further objection that any such functional differentiation with regard to the capacity of speech does not affect the nature of the 'motivational response'. In the scholastic model deliberation is an operation of the immaterial intellect and requires the capacity to cognise universal concepts.<sup>70</sup> This means that non-human animals are incapable of deliberation. Hobbes, Pink argues, rejects this traditional conception. He maintains that deliberation is merely the succession of animal appetites, the 'alternate succession of appetite and fear',<sup>71</sup> and attributes it to humans as well as beasts.<sup>72</sup> Non-human animals deliberate because, like humans, they experience the pushes and pulls of appetites and aversions. The human will is merely the last of such animal appetites in deliberation.<sup>73</sup> Therefore, Pink concludes, there are no 'distinctively reason-involving motivations' in Hobbes's psychology.<sup>74</sup> 'All motivations are mere passions – and, as such, far from being cases of action themselves, they are merely passive antecedent causes of action'.<sup>75</sup> This shows

<sup>67</sup> See, for example, Edward Stillingfleet, *Origines sacrae* (Cambridge, 1701), III.1, 278–79. Others who criticise Hobbes on this basis are Joseph Glanvill and Thomas Tenison; see Samuel I. Mintz, *The Hunting of Leviathan* (Cambridge, 1962), 70–77.

<sup>68</sup> Hobbes, *Elements of Philosophy*, in *English Works*, I, 19–20.

<sup>69</sup> Thomas Hobbes, *Man and Citizen*, edited by Bernard Gert (New York, NY, 1972) 10.1, 38.

<sup>70</sup> For example, Aquinas, *Summa theologiae*, IaIIae q6a2.

<sup>71</sup> Thomas Hobbes, *The Elements of Law, Natural and Politic* (Oxford, 1994), 71. Compare Hobbes, *Questions Concerning Liberty*, in *English Works*, V, 360.

<sup>72</sup> Hobbes, *Questions Concerning Liberty*, in *English Works*, V, 78, 95.

<sup>73</sup> Hobbes, *Leviathan*, 44–45.

<sup>74</sup> Pink, 'Hobbes', in *Companion to Philosophy of Action*, edited by O'Connor and Sandis, 476.

<sup>75</sup> Pink, 'Hobbes', in *Companion to Philosophy of Action*, edited by O'Connor and Sandis, 476.

that Hobbes also rejects the intellectualist account of the way in which elicited acts are in our control since, as Hobbes puts it, ‘no man can determine his own will, for the will is appetite’.<sup>76</sup>

This argument depends on a defective account of Hobbes’s characterisation of deliberation. Elsewhere I have argued that Hobbesian deliberation does not only consist of a succession of appetites but that it also includes a succession of cognitive judgements.<sup>77</sup> Hobbes writes in *Leviathan* that ‘in Deliberation, the Appetites, and Aversions are raised by foresight of the good and evill consequences, and sequels of the action whereof we Deliberate’.<sup>78</sup> Judgements about the consequences of the contemplated action provide the intentional object of the appetites and aversion in deliberation. We may call these considerations ‘practical reasons’. Such practical reasons can be provided by both ‘Reason’ and ‘Experience’, since ‘he who hath by Experience, or Reason, the greatest and surest prospect of Consequences, Deliberates best himselfe’.<sup>79</sup> Reason is the ability to identify general rules by means of the construction of syllogisms.<sup>80</sup> Experience is the ability to form reliable expectations of the future on the basis of knowledge of the past.<sup>81</sup> Such seemingly descriptive considerations become action-guiding if they ‘raise’ appetites or aversions in deliberation.<sup>82</sup> We are therefore not merely moved by a passion or urge but rather act on the basis of our ‘judgement’ or ‘understanding’ of the consequences of our actions.<sup>83</sup>

To say that all events of willing, intending, or choosing are ‘mere passions’ is to overlook that the will is in many instances what in a contemporary terminology is called a motivated as opposed to an unmotivated desire.<sup>84</sup> It is not a brute urge but a desire following the recognition that one has reason to pursue something. We may therefore develop a functional differentiation between humans and animals with regard to their motivational responses based on the types of considerations that motivate them.

It was shown that Aquinas distinguishes the free and fully voluntary actions of humans from the instinctive behaviour of beasts by means of the attribution of intellect. The intellect allows humans to consider contemplated actions in light of the alternatives. They do not follow their instinct but act on the basis of ‘some act of comparison in reason’ and therefore retain ‘the power of being inclined to various things’.<sup>85</sup> Hobbes attributes a robust capacity to contemplate means to ends and thereby to consider actions in light of alternatives to humans on the basis of their capacity for speech. The mnemonic

<sup>76</sup> Hobbes, *Questions Concerning Liberty*, in *English Works*, V, 34.

<sup>77</sup> Laurens van Apeldoorn, ‘Reconsidering Hobbes’s Account of Practical Deliberation’, *Hobbes Studies*, 25 (2012), 143–65.

<sup>78</sup> Hobbes, *Leviathan*, 46. My emphasis.

<sup>79</sup> Hobbes, *Leviathan*, 46.

<sup>80</sup> Hobbes, *Leviathan*, 32.

<sup>81</sup> Hobbes, *Leviathan*, 22.

<sup>82</sup> On one interpretation this is so because ‘all Appetite, Desire, and Love, is accompanied with some Delight [that is, appearance or sense of Good]’; see Hobbes, *Leviathan*, 40. For a defence of this projectivist reading of Hobbes, see Stephen Darwall, ‘Normativity and Projection in Hobbes’ *Leviathan*’, *Philosophical Review*, 109 (2000), 313–47.

<sup>83</sup> For example, Hobbes claims that ‘it is impossible to will anything that appears not first in his understanding to be good for him’; see Hobbes, *Questions Concerning Liberty*, in *English Works*, V, 324. See also Hobbes, *Questions Concerning Liberty*, in *English Works*, V, 77, 105, 292.

<sup>84</sup> See Thomas Nagel, *The Possibility of Altruism* (Princeton, NJ, 1970), 29.

<sup>85</sup> Aquinas, *Summa theologiae*, Ia q83a1.

function of language allows humans to identify things as good on the basis of a consideration of means to ends.<sup>86</sup> As Hobbes puts it,

whereas there is no other Felicity of Beasts, but the enjoying of their quotidian Food, Ease, and Lusts; as having little, or no fore sight of the time to come, for want of observation, and memory of the order, consequence, and dependance of the things they see; Man observeth how one Event hath been produced by another; and remembreth in them Antecedence and Consequence.<sup>87</sup>

Since humans are capable of observing causes and effects (by means of reason or experience enhanced by speech) they are no longer beholden to their natural impulses and can pursue things for the sake of other things. They may act on the basis of a will, intention, or choice that is motivated by an assessment of the good and evil consequences of the action. We may call these 'distinctively reason-involving motivations'<sup>88</sup> or even 'rational appetites' if we mean by this that the appetite is motivated by an assessment of alternative courses of action in deliberation.

It is true that Hobbes explicitly rejects the term 'rational appetite' as appropriate description of the will. 'Nor can it be said of wills, that one is rational, the other sensitive; but of men', he writes.<sup>89</sup> In response we may again distinguish between the ontological and functional aspects of such psychological claims. Hobbes emphasises that human willing consists of animal appetites in an ontological sense. There are no such things as rational appetites if we take this to mean, as his scholastic opponents do, that they are located in the immaterial soul. However, there is a distinction to draw in terms of their function. Whereas some appetites are instinctive urges, other appetites, namely those of well-functioning human beings with the capacity for speech, are motivated by an appreciation of the various likely consequences of the actions they contemplate. We may call those well-functioning human beings rational. After all, of 'men' Hobbes maintains in the passage just quoted we can say that one is rational and the other sensitive.

On the basis of these arguments I conclude that Pink has provided insufficient evidence for the Interpretative Principle. In the previous section it was shown that Hobbes's arguments against attributing freedom and voluntariness to the will do not rule out the intellectualist version of the scholastic model of action. In this section the same conclusion is drawn with regard to Hobbes's reconceptualisation of deliberation and will. Pink thinks that Hobbes cannot agree with the intellectualist on the character of elicited acts of the will because he takes it to be a passive urge, analogous to being hungry. But Hobbes attributes to humans the capacity to consider alternative courses of action by means of the use of language. In Hobbes's account, the will is not necessarily an unmotivated desire in the way that hunger is, but in many cases is a motivated desire that is shaped by, and dependent on, a consideration of alternative courses of action in deliberation. That capacity, according to Aquinas, makes actions 'up to us': '[m]an is

<sup>86</sup> Language allows us 'to Register, what by cogitation, wee find to be the cause of any thing, present or past; and what we find things present or past may produce or effect'; see Hobbes, *Leviathan*, 25.

<sup>87</sup> Hobbes, *Leviathan*, 76. See also Hobbes, *Questions Concerning Liberty*, in *English Works*, V, 186: speech allows men to 'register their thoughts that they perish not, but be reserved, and afterwards joined with other thoughts, to produce general rules for the direction of their actions'. That is why '[m]an excelleth beasts only in making of rules to himself, that is to say, in remembering, and in reasoning aright upon that which he remembereth. They which do so, deserve an honour above brute beasts'.

<sup>88</sup> Pink, 'Hobbes', in *Companion to Philosophy of Action*, edited by O'Connor and Sandis, 476.

<sup>89</sup> Hobbes, *Questions Concerning Liberty*, in *English Works*, V, 365. See also Hobbes, *Leviathan*, 44–45.

master of his acts and of his willing or not willing, because of his deliberate reason, which can be bent to one side or another'.<sup>90</sup> In the next section I will provide some textual evidence for the claim that the same view could be attributed to Hobbes.

### 6. Freedom and Responsibility

Hobbes is not always consistent in putting forward a negative conception of freedom. Pink maintains that Hobbes must associate freedom with the absence of obstacles to doing what one wants (i.e., commanded acts of the will), because he has given up on elicited acts of the will. Hobbes, however, also associates freedom with deliberation. He writes in *The Elements of Law* that deliberation is the 'alternate succession of appetite and fear, during all the time *the action is in our power to do, or not to do*'.<sup>91</sup> Ending deliberation by acting is therefore to give up the freedom we had of being able to do or not do something. It is 'a putting an end to the liberty we had of doing or omitting, according to our own appetite or aversion'.<sup>92</sup> In *De Homine* he observes that a person who deliberates 'hath the liberty of putting aside either choice'.<sup>93</sup> This indicates that a person who deliberates has freedom, understood as a multi-way power, to produce a variety of effects. This power, if it exists, is associated with deliberation, which suggests that it depends on the capacity to consider alternative courses of action.

That Hobbes presumes the existence of such a power is altogether more evident from some of his claims about responsibility and punishment. Pink argues, in conformity with orthodox interpretations, that Hobbes reconceives moral praise, blame and punishment in such a way that they no longer presuppose freedom as a multi-way power and that actions are 'up to us'. While some passages certainly suggest this, other passages directly contradict it. In one passage, which goes to the heart of Hobbes's contract theory of political obligation, Hobbes writes that 'no law can possibly be unjust, in as much as every man makes, by his consent, the law he is bound to keep' and that 'what necessary cause soever precede an action, yet if the action be forbidden, he that does it willingly, may justly be punished'.<sup>94</sup> Laws may be enforced because laws are created by the consent of the individuals themselves. For this reason Hobbes has been praised for being the first to provide a retributivist justification of punishment.<sup>95</sup> This kind of justification, as Patrick Riley observes, presupposes the 'idea of will as moral agency, of the choosing, self-obligating person as a moral person, as a possible subject of duties'.<sup>96</sup> This is inconsistent with Pink's claim that Hobbes self-consciously gives up on the idea that actions are 'up to us'.

<sup>90</sup> Aquinas, *Summa theologiae*, IaIIae q109a2.

<sup>91</sup> Hobbes, *Elements of Law*, 71. My emphasis.

<sup>92</sup> Hobbes, *Elements of Law*, 71. The claim is repeated in Hobbes, *Leviathan*, 44. These are suggestive statements and it might be the case that they can be made consistent with a negative account of freedom. For example, it might be argued that when Hobbes speaks about the power 'to do, or not to do', which could be taken as a reference to a multi-way power, he is in fact speaking of the 'power to do, or the power not to do', two single-way powers; for further discussion, see Philip Pettit, 'Liberty and Leviathan', *Politics Philosophy Economics*, 4 (2005), 131–51; Wolfgang Von Leyden, *Hobbes and Locke* (London, 1982).

<sup>93</sup> Hobbes, *Man and Citizen*, 11.2, 46.

<sup>94</sup> Hobbes, *Questions Concerning Liberty*, in *English Works*, V, 152.

<sup>95</sup> Alan Norrie, 'Thomas Hobbes and the Philosophy of Punishment', *Law and Philosophy*, 3 (1984), 229–320 (318).

<sup>96</sup> Riley, *Will and Political Legitimacy*, 33.

Additionally Hobbes maintains that the capacity to reason forms a necessary condition for such responsibility. Hobbes advances this position most explicitly when he touches on the blamelessness of children. In the Preface of *De Cive* (1647) he maintains that children who act badly on the basis of sensible impulses should not be held responsible 'because, not having the use of reason [*rationis usu*], they are totally exempt from duties'. It is only when they come to an age when reason 'normally accrues to men by nature governed by discipline and experience of harm' and they still act contrary to their duty that they should then be called 'evil'.<sup>97</sup> Elsewhere Hobbes reproaches Bishop Bramhall for maintaining that a child without the use of reason can in certain circumstances be justly put to death. Hobbes finds this view reprehensible, retorting that '[t]he Bishop would make but an ill judge of innocent children', and expresses the hope that 'we shall never have the administration of public justice in such hands as his'.<sup>98</sup> Hobbes's argument for the innocence of the child that kills a man, and for the injustice of capital punishment in that case, is that 'for want of age, [they] have not use enough of reason to abstain from killing'. Consequently, this 'want of reason proceeding from want of age, does therefore take away the punishment, because it taketh away the crime, and makes them innocent'.<sup>99</sup>

In these passages Hobbes does not make explicit what capacity children without the use of reason lack. One may think it is the capacity of syllogistic reasoning, in accordance with the definition of 'Reason' that we find in *Leviathan*.<sup>100</sup> But he admits that 'most part of men' hardly engage in syllogistic reasoning: though 'they have the use of Reasoning a little way', they mostly act on the basis of experience.<sup>101</sup> He would no doubt consider those individuals who act predominantly on the basis of their experience appropriate potential subjects of punishment. I propose therefore that we should take the term 'reason' in this context to have a broader meaning.<sup>102</sup> Hobbes explains that children acquire legal obligations once they understand that their safety depends on their submission to the law: when they have

judgment enough to know that other men are kept from doing mischief to them by fear of the sword that protecteth them, in that very act of receiving that protection, and not renouncing it openly, do [they] oblige themselves to obey the laws of their protectors.<sup>103</sup>

This understanding of the advantages of a system of law depends on the kind of deliberation that speech makes possible: the registration of causes and effects and a judgement about contemplated actions in the light of a consideration of alternatives. That Hobbes may be referring to this capacity with the term 'reason' is also implied in the

<sup>97</sup> Thomas Hobbes, *On the Citizen*, edited by Richard Tuck and Michael Silverthorne (Cambridge, 1998), 11.

<sup>98</sup> Hobbes, *Questions Concerning Liberty*, in *English Works*, V, 356–57.

<sup>99</sup> Hobbes, *Questions Concerning Liberty*, in *English Works*, V, 356–57.

<sup>100</sup> Hobbes, *Leviathan*, 32.

<sup>101</sup> Hobbes, *Leviathan*, 36.

<sup>102</sup> In *Leviathan* there are more passages that seem to presuppose such a broader definition. For instance, Hobbes maintains that man in the state of nature is 'governed by his own Reason' and free to do that 'which in his own Judgement, and Reason' he considers the most appropriate means of self-preservation; see Hobbes, *Leviathan*, 91. See also Hobbes, *Leviathan*, 147. These claims cannot be correct if they refer to the capacity of syllogistic reasoning that most people do not generally use in their practical affairs. Note further that the definition of syllogistic reason speaks of 'REASON, in this sense', indicating that the word may be used in more ways than one; see Hobbes, *Leviathan*, 32, my emphasis.

<sup>103</sup> Hobbes, *Questions Concerning Liberty*, in *English Works*, V, 356–57.

passage from *De Cive*, just quoted, where Hobbes associates reason with being governed ‘by discipline and experience of harm’. On this reading, then, these passages provide evidence for the view that Hobbes thinks it can only be appropriate to blame people for their actions if they are capable of considering the consequences of their actions. This is what one would expect if one thinks that the capacity of speech gives us control over our actions and makes them ‘up to us’. These passages sit uncomfortably with the orthodox interpretation and form further evidence against the Interpretative Principle.

## 7. Conclusion

Pink’s central claim is that Hobbes embraces the scholastic motivation-based account of commanded agency and rejects the existence of practical reason-based elicited agency. This supports the orthodox reading of Hobbesian willing as a passive occurrence that is not ‘up to us’. Hobbes is led to this view, Pink maintains, because he rejects those parts of the scholastic model that do not cohere with his materialistic and deterministic metaphysics. Pink’s work is valuable because it shows the indisputable importance of the scholastic Aristotelian tradition for a contextualisation of Hobbes’s theory of action. I have argued, however, that his interpretation is not borne out by textual analysis. It gives a misleading account of the nature of practical deliberation and the will in Hobbes’s theory of action. It leads us to misunderstand Hobbes’s equation of voluntariness with intentionality, as well as his admission that animals deliberate and have will. In general it overlooks Hobbes’s attempt to develop an account of the way in which actions are ‘up to us’ in terms of the capacity to consider and act on practical reasons that is compatible with a thoroughgoing materialism and determinism.

This is largely due to a premise that Pink never explicitly considers and defends. While he argues that Hobbes radically breaks with the scholastic model of action he assumes that Hobbes agrees with these traditional views that the truth of materialism and determinism implies the non-existence of specifically human faculties and capacities. That is why Hobbes must reduce human agency to the level of animals and can no longer claim that actions are in a meaningful sense ‘up to us’. The alternative suggested in this paper is that Hobbes *does* think that specifically human agency can be accounted for in a mechanistic framework. Hence Hobbes’s fundamental disagreement with the scholastic model is not over the existence of elicited acts of the will, but over the scope and productiveness of mechanical explanation. Hobbes aims to give an account of human actions as in our control and as ‘up to us’ while at the same time applying and defending his mechanical mode of analysis. He does so by introducing in his theory of action elements that are functionally (but not ontologically) equivalent to the scholastic account of human intellect and will. In this way he is able to reconstruct the human functions that are in the scholastic model of action associated with elicited acts of the will. Certainly, there are fundamental worries about the possibility of accounting for human thought and action in mechanistic terms.<sup>104</sup> Nothing in this paper should be taken as alleviating those concerns. And the arguments in this paper do not amount to a full-blown alternative to the orthodox interpretation.

<sup>104</sup> Of the kind raised most pungently by Richard S. Peters and Henri Tajfel, ‘Hobbes and Hull – Metaphysicians of Behaviour’, *The British Journal of the Philosophy of Science*, 8 (1957), 30–44.

Nevertheless, I take it to have shown that Pink's defence of that orthodox interpretation is insufficient to form an obstacle to the development of such an alternative.

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