



## Reconsidering Hobbes's Account of Practical Deliberation\*

Laurens van Apeldoorn

Assistant Professor, Leiden University College, Leiden University  
P.O. Box 13228, 2501 EE The Hague, Netherlands  
E-mail: L.C.J.van.Apeldoorn@phil.leidenuniv.nl

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### Abstract

Thomas Hobbes has been frequently criticised for his account of deliberation that purportedly consists merely of, in his own words, an 'alternate succession of appetite and fear' and therefore lacks the judgement and reflection commentators think is essential if he is to provide an adequate treatment of practical rationality. In this paper Hobbes's account of deliberation is analysed in detail and it is argued that it is not vulnerable to this critique. Hobbes takes so-called 'mental discourse' to be partly constitutive of the process of practical deliberation, and this provides the cognitive judgement and reflection that critics have claimed it lacks.

### Keywords

Thomas Hobbes, deliberation, practical reason, prudence, science

One of the more succinct definitions of deliberation given by Thomas Hobbes can be found in *The Elements of Law* (1640) where he writes that the 'alternate succession of appetite and fear, during all the time the action is in our power to do, or not to do, is that we call deliberation'.<sup>1</sup> Appetites and aversions are the 'unperceived beginnings' of voluntary action, and can be thought of as desires, strivings or motivations that have the power to put the human body in motion. Does this mean that Hobbes believes that the

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<sup>1</sup> T. Hobbes, *The Elements of Law: Natural and politic*, ed. with a preface by F. Tönnies (London: Simpkin, Marshall, and Co, 1889) I.12.1, 61. Cf. T. Hobbes, *The Questions Concerning Liberty, Necessity, And Chance*, in *The English Works of Thomas Hobbes*, 11 vols., ed. S. W. Molesworth, (London), V, 360, where he equates 'deliberations' with 'alternate succession of contrary appetites'.

considerations on which we act can be reduced to such desires or strivings?<sup>2</sup> Many interpreters have thought so.<sup>3</sup> They are strengthened in this opinion by Hobbes's explicit statements to the effect that (non-human) animals deliberate like humans. '[H]orses, dogs, and other brute beasts', Hobbes ensures his readers, 'do demur oftentimes upon the way they are to take: the horse, retiring from some strange figure he sees, and coming on again to avoid the spur.'<sup>4</sup> This, they argue, confirms their suspicion that the mental activity that takes place during deliberation, on Hobbes's understanding, amounts to no more than the passive endeavours that cause horses to eat hay and dogs to fight over a bone. In this account of deliberation there is no reflection, no judgement, no evaluation, but merely alternating bodily attraction and repulsion that causes an action.<sup>5</sup>

One commentator who has forcefully made this objection is Patrick Riley. He maintains that

Hobbes does not always distinguish rational mental processes from physio-logical-psychological ones, that being "averse" in general cannot explain the

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<sup>2</sup> I use 'deliberation' and 'practical deliberation' interchangeably, mostly for stylistic reasons. Hobbes only speaks of 'deliberation'.

<sup>3</sup> To quote some contemporary examples: J. Hampton, *Hobbes and the Social Contract Tradition* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986), 19: 'deliberation is not understood as involving a debate between practical reason and desire about how we should act. On the contrary, the debate in a deliberation appears to be between or among desires alone'. S. Darwall, 'Normativity and projection in Hobbes' 'Leviathan', *Philosophical Review*, 109:3(2000), 331 fn.31, maintains that 'Hobbes makes no place for critical reflection in his account of deliberation', and continues to say that 'Hobbes's critics, both early modern and contemporary, argue that agency involves far more than thoughts related to a succession of desires; it requires as well the capacity to gain critical distance on desires and so make them, and thus one's actions, one's own.' T. Irwin, *The Development of Ethics: From Suarez to Rousseau* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), 105: 'Hobbesian Deliberation and will, in his account, result from yielding successively to a sequence of appearances about different options, without any rational assessment of their value.' S. Frost, *Lessons of a Materialist Thinker* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2008), 10: 'Although it depends upon our imaginative consideration of the possible consequences of our choices, deliberation itself is a passionate process rather than an intellectual one'; D. Eggers, 'Liberty and Contractual Obligations in Hobbes', *Hobbes Studies*, 22:1(2009), 80: 'According to Hobbes, the process of deliberation consists in nothing other than the alternating succession of "appetite" and "fear", and the will is nothing other than that inclination which ultimately gains the upper hand in this process.'

<sup>4</sup> *The Questions Concerning Liberty, Necessity, And Chance*, 78. See also *Ibid.*, 95: 'For though men and beasts do differ in many things very much, yet they differ not in the nature of their deliberation.'

<sup>5</sup> As Hobbes explains 'when it is determined, that one thing shall be chosen before another, it is determined also for what cause it shall so be chosen, which cause, for the most part, is deliberation or consultation, and therefore consultation is not in vain'. (*Ibid.*, 255.)

reasons which one may have for having an “aversion” to something. Having a reason for aversion – an averse “opinion” – is not the same as being determined by “aversion” as a general psychological cause.<sup>6</sup>

Appetites and aversions, according to Riley, are not in themselves intelligibly related to things in the world; they are blind to facts in a way that we would think reasons are not. More specifically, he maintains that a reason must include an ‘opinion’ or cognitive consideration that aversion as mere striving is lacking. This provides grounds for denying that we can reduce reasons to aversions and acting on a reason to acting on an aversion.

In taking this view Riley sides with Bishop John Bramhall, Hobbes’s interlocutor in *The Questions Concerning Liberty, Necessity and Chance* (1656). Bramhall objects to Hobbes’s account of deliberation on similar grounds. When Hobbes defends his view that horses, like humans, deliberate, Bramhall replies: ‘If the horse did deliberate, he should consult with reason, whether it were more expedient for him to go that way or not; he would represent to himself all the dangers both of going and staying, and compare the one with the other, and elect that which is less evil.’<sup>7</sup> Deliberation, Bramhall emphasizes, means to consider alternative courses of action and to assess the likely consequences, which is hardly comparable to experiencing bodily drives such as appetites and aversions.

Some of Hobbes’s phrasings invite this interpretation. A close reading of the relevant passages however shows that Hobbesian deliberation can, and usually does (at least in the case of humans), include cognitive judgement and reflection of the type that Riley, Bramhall, and others take to be essential. Furthermore, it shows that Hobbes makes a number of relevant distinctions with regard to the capacities of humans and other animals, which put into proper perspective his claims to the effect that beasts deliberate as humans.<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> P. Riley, *Will and Political Legitimacy* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1982), 34. In the footnote following this passage Riley refers to T.H. Green, *Prolegomena to Ethics* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1906), 102–4, where Green argues that motives cannot be merely natural (causes) because they are motives to a self-consciousness and self-consciousness is not a natural event. This reference seems to imply that Riley is driven by a different concern than he actually makes explicit in this passage. What Riley says in this passage is that Hobbes does not distinguish adequately between cognitive and emotive elements when describing deliberation. Green is concerned with the necessary role of self-consciousness when characterising motives and/or reasons. That is an issue beyond the scope of the present paper.

<sup>7</sup> Bramhall, quoted in *The Questions Concerning Liberty, Necessity, And Chance*, 83.

<sup>8</sup> In this paper I focus largely on Hobbes’s mature account of deliberation as outlined in *Leviathan*, and draw on his other works where instructive. For an argument for taking

The paper proceeds as follows: In sections 1 and 2 it is argued that deliberation, in Hobbes's view, always includes and is partially constituted by 'mental discourse', which is his term for thought or judgement. In sections 3 and 4 it is shown that his descriptions of 'prudence' and 'reason', which Hobbes takes to be the two forms of mental discourse humans can engage in, can plausibly be understood as descriptions of deliberation. Finally, in section 5, it is concluded on the basis of this reconsideration of practical deliberation that what we would call practical reasons, for Hobbes, are best understood as cognitive judgements about 'the good and evil consequences, and sequels of the action whereof we deliberate'.

It should perhaps be noted that this paper does not speak to other concerns one might have with regard to Hobbes's treatment of practical rationality. Not considered, in particular, is the worry that a materialistic and deterministic conceptual framework is inappropriate for a theory of action.<sup>9</sup> This issue can be bracketed because it is independent of the particular account of deliberation Hobbes develops. That is to say, if the worry is justified this is so regardless of whether he takes deliberation to consist of an alteration of appetites and aversions, or he takes deliberation to include reflective, cognitive judgements. A second issue that is not discussed is Hobbes's account of the nature of goodness. Some commentators have for example thought that his conception of practical rationality stumbles over the view that goodness can be equated to pleasure.<sup>10</sup> In this paper I do not take a stance on this issue. I argue that practical deliberation is partially constituted by judgements of the good and evil consequences of our actions. Whether Hobbes's analysis of 'good and evil' in these judgements is satisfactory is a further question. In short, this paper has the limited aim of clarifying the relationship between cognitive judgement and practical deliberation in Hobbes's theory of action.

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*Leviathan* as central text in this regard see, W. Sacksteder, 'Hobbes's Science of Human Nature', *Hobbes Studies*, 3:1(1990), 37. For the view that there is little development and change in the various versions of his theory of action, see J. Overhoff, *Hobbes's Theory of the Will: Ideological Reasons and Historical Circumstances* (Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 2000), 11.

<sup>9</sup> Classic treatments of this worry can be found in A.E. Taylor, *Thomas Hobbes* (London: Archibald Constable, 1908); R.S. Peters, *Hobbes* (London: Pelican Books, 1956); R.S. Peters and H. Tajfel, 'Hobbes and Hull - Metaphysicians of Behaviour', *The British Journal of the Philosophy of Science* 8:29 (1957), 30-44.

<sup>10</sup> E.g. T. Irwin, *The Development of Ethics: From Suarez to Rousseau*, 114. For a reply to this kind of view, a reply I take to be consistent with the views expressed in this paper, see S. Darwall, 'Normativity and projection in Hobbes' 'Leviathan'.

## I. Deliberation in *Leviathan*

Let us start by looking at Hobbes's definition of deliberation in *Leviathan* (1651). He writes:

When in the mind of man, Appetites, and Aversions, Hopes, and Feares, concerning one and the same thing, arise alternately; and divers good and evill consequences of the doing, or omitting the thing propounded, come successively into our thoughts; so that sometimes we have an Appetite to it; sometimes an Aversion from it; sometimes Hope to be able to do it; sometimes Despaire, or Feare to attempt it; the whole summe of Desires, Aversions, Hopes and Fears, continued till the thing be either done, or thought impossible, is that we call Deliberation.<sup>11</sup>

This definition of deliberation is quite elaborate, even if it does not seem carefully constructed. It can be used as the basis of an exploration of deliberation, by tracing the various concepts that feature in this passage, starting with the notion of appetites and aversions, often mentioned by Hobbes in off-hand comments elsewhere. Both appetites and aversions are, according to Hobbes, endeavours. In his mechanical reconstruction of the human psychology endeavours are the infinitesimally small movements in the animal body that can, when unobstructed and stimulated, put the body in motion. Motions that are the result of endeavours are called voluntary motions as opposed to vital motions. The difference between vital and voluntary motions is the engagement of the mind. Vital motions, such as the beating of the heart or the workings of the digestive system, 'begun in generation, and continued without interruption through their whole life'.<sup>12</sup> Voluntary motions are distinguished by the fact that they are in accordance with the way it was 'first fancied in our minds'.<sup>13</sup> This is clarified by Hobbes when he writes that 'because *going, speaking, and the like* Voluntary motions, depend alwayes upon a precedent thought of *whither, which way, and what*; it is evident, that the Imagination is the first internall beginning

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<sup>11</sup> T. Hobbes, *Leviathan*, 2nd revised student edition, ed. with an introduction by Richard Tuck (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 44. See also, *Questions Concerning Liberty, Necessity, And Chance*, 401/2: 'For the whole deliberation is nothing else but so many wills alternatively changed, according as man understands or fancieth the good and evil sequels of the thing concerning which he deliberateth whether he shall pursue it, or of the means whether they conduce or not to that end, whatsoever it be, he seeketh to obtain.'

<sup>12</sup> Hobbes, *Leviathan*, 37.

<sup>13</sup> Hobbes, *Leviathan*, 38.

of all Voluntary Motion.<sup>14</sup> Appetites and aversions have their origin in the imagination and are therefore dependent on a prior thought.<sup>15</sup>

This explains why appetites and aversions have what one could call an intentional object. Hobbes expresses this intentionality when he says that an endeavour, ‘when it is toward something which causes it, is called Appetite, or Desire ... when the Endeavour is fromward [away from] something, it is generally called Aversion.’<sup>16</sup> The intentional object of an appetite or aversion is this ‘something’, and given by the imagination that preceded it. In an important respect such endeavours are not blind but emerge in concert with thoughts, imaginations or appearances. This means that when Hobbes describes deliberation as alternating appetites and aversions, he must imply the presence of alternating imaginations to provide the intentionality inherent in having an endeavour toward or away from something.

The plausibility of this interpretation can be defended by looking at some of the other elements of Hobbes’s definition of deliberation. Hobbes makes clear that deliberation also includes opinions about the consequences of the contemplated action. The ‘divers good and evill consequences of the doing, or omitting the thing propounded, come successively into our thoughts; so that sometimes we have an Appetite to it; sometimes an Aversion from it.’<sup>17</sup> The suggestion seems to be that the considerations about the good and evil consequences of the contemplated action result in an appetite or an aversion to the contemplated action. The presence of such thoughts is also implied by the presence of ‘hopes, and fears, concerning one and the same thing’ in course of deliberation. Hobbes defines the passion of hope as ‘Appetite, with an opinion of attaining’, and fear is an ‘Aversion, with an opinion of Hurt from the object’.<sup>18</sup> This means that the presence of hopes and fears in deliberation ensures the presence of opinions about the things that are hoped and feared.

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<sup>14</sup> Hobbes, *Leviathan*, 38.

<sup>15</sup> In *Leviathan* Hobbes merely states this position, and does not further explain the workings of it. In *The Elements of Law*, I.12.1, 61, he couches it in causal terms and explains that ‘external objects cause conceptions, and conceptions appetite and fear’. When an external object causes some motion in our senses and our brains, we experience a conception. This motion, however, ‘not stopping there, but proceeding to the heart’ (*Ibid.*, 7.1, p.28) causes there an appetite or aversion. Cf. R. Rudolph, ‘The Micro-Foundations of Hobbes’s Political Theory: Appetites, Emotions, Dispositions, and Manners’, *Hobbes Studies*, 4:1(1991), who argues that the idea that ‘passions are caused by conceptions’ is a consistent feature of Hobbes’s psychology and remains unchanged from *The Elements of Law* onwards.

<sup>16</sup> Hobbes, *Leviathan*, 38.

<sup>17</sup> Hobbes, *Leviathan*, 44.

<sup>18</sup> Hobbes, *Leviathan*, 41.

These considerations support the claim that the appetites and aversions that alternate in deliberation arise in concert with imaginations, and in particular with opinions about the aims we have – the ‘good and evil consequences of doing’ – and the attainability of our aims.<sup>19</sup> One can therefore suggest that deliberation, besides being an alternation of appetites and aversions, is what Hobbes calls a ‘Mentall Discourse’ or ‘Trayne of Thoughts’, that is to say, ‘the succession of one Thought to another’.<sup>20</sup> Both animals and humans are said to have such successions of thoughts, which can in certain instances be no more sensations of things and the memories of those images in imagination. This might therefore seem like an innocuous suggestion but it has far-reaching consequences. If true, it would mean that a complete account of Hobbesian deliberation must include a discussion of ‘mental discourse’ in its various forms, which includes chapters 3, 4, and 5 *Leviathan* on mental discourse, reason, and science, respectively.<sup>21</sup> It would

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<sup>19</sup> Philip Pettit has recently argued for a similar reading of Hobbes on deliberation. However, his argument is at least partly based on a different passage that, I believe, does not actually support the conclusion we share. In the passage in question Hobbes draws an analogy between deliberation as alternating appetite and making up one’s mind as alternating opinion. Hobbes says, ‘as the last Appetite in Deliberation, is called the Will; so the last Opinion in search of the truth of Past, and Future, is called the Judgement’. (*Leviathan*, 47.) This leads Pettit to conclude that when we will something it is on the basis of both an endeavour and a belief. (P. Pettit, *Made with Words* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2008), 17–8) But this cannot be what Hobbes means in this particular passage. Deliberation, as Hobbes emphasizes, can only be about future actions (*The Elements*, I.12.1, 61; *Leviathan*, 44) whereas Hobbes is here referring to judgements about past and future. It therefore seems more likely that Hobbes is merely providing an analogy with deliberation, perhaps to strengthen the idea that he can make sense of (theoretical) judgment as a materialistic and determined process. Cf. Gautier, *The Logic of Leviathan: the Moral and Political Theory of Thomas Hobbes* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1969), 10–13.

<sup>20</sup> *Leviathan*, 20.

<sup>21</sup> That might be the case is not always noted. For example, McNeilly, in his otherwise excellent treatment of *Leviathan*, only briefly mentions the definition of deliberation quoted above, which, in his judgement does not allow for the distinction between a rational will and non-rational desires, and concludes by saying that ‘[t]hat is what Hobbes has to say about deliberation and the will in *Leviathan*, and it is not very much’. (McNeilly, *The Anatomy of ‘Leviathan’* (London, 1968), 122.) However, the discussion so far seems to imply that Hobbes has a lot more to say about deliberation, he just does not say it in the chapter in which we find the definition of deliberation. This is also implied by the order of the chapters in the first part of *Leviathan*, in which Hobbes introduces increasingly complex elements in order to explain the psychology of humans. He starts with sense, which is constitutive of all mental life of humans and non-human animals. Then he moves on to imagination, which is derived from sense, and allows for thought of things without them being immediately present. Then he discusses trains of imaginations, which, according to Hobbes, allow for basic cognitive abilities such as regulated mental discourse and prudence. In chapters 4 and 5

also mean that Hobbes's statements to the effect that animals, like humans, deliberate, cannot be used to support the reading of Hobbes that is criticised in this paper. If mental discourse provides the intentional object of endeavours in deliberation, Hobbes can distinguish human deliberation from that of animals by showing how its character is determined by the mental discourse that is associated with it. In the rest of the paper this suggestion will be further developed and defended. My aim is to show that it answers the objections of Riley and Bramhall mentioned above, as it provides Hobbes's account of deliberation with the cognitive and reflective component they have claimed it lacks.

## II. Regulated Mental Discourse and Deliberation

In chapter 3 of *Leviathan*, Hobbes makes a distinction between regulated and unregulated or 'wandering' mental discourse. When the mind wanders, our thoughts 'seem impertinent one to another as in a Dream'. But in regulated mental discourse our thoughts are directed to some particular aim or end. According to Hobbes, regulated mental discourse

... is more constant; as being *regulated* by some desire, and design. ... From Desire, ariseth the Thought of some means we have seen produce the like of that which we ayme at; and from the thought of that, the thought of means to that mean; and so continually, till we come to some beginning within our own power ... *Respice finem*; that is to say, in all your actions, look often upon what you would have, as the thing that directs all your thoughts in the way to attain it.<sup>22</sup>

The example of regulated mental discourse that Hobbes uses to introduce the concept in this passage is quintessentially practical. Hobbes is speaking about finding an action 'within our own power', and he urges us to apply the maxim 'respice finem' to our conduct. That is not to say that all mental discourse that is governed by some guiding passion is practical. He believes that one of the passions capable of regulating otherwise unstructured thought is the desire to know or to understand. This passion is called

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he discusses language, reason and science; science being trains of imaginations but transformed by language allowing for much greater certainty. It is at that point, in chapter 6, that Hobbes introduces deliberation and will. This suggests that everything that preceded it (sense, imagination, mental discourse, language, and reason) is necessary for an adequate explanation of the phenomenon discussed in that chapter.

<sup>22</sup> Hobbes, *Leviathan*, 21.

curiosity, which forms the foundation of all scientific enquiry and is defined as the ‘Desire, to know why, and how’.<sup>23</sup> This passion he believes to be unique to humans, and he states that humans are distinguished ‘by this singular Passion from other Animals; in whom the appetite of food, and other pleasures of Sense, by praedominance, take away the care of knowing causes’.<sup>24</sup> Through curiosity humans are drawn away from directly practical concerns and, unlike animals that are preoccupied with food and other base pleasures, direct their thoughts to finding ‘the cause and beginning of everything that ariseth new unto him’.<sup>25</sup> Even this curiosity, as will become clear below, can fruitfully be employed in practical deliberation when we are considering the consequences of our actions.

Looking more closely at his account of regulated mental discourse one sees that Hobbes distinguishes two forms. On the one hand, he speaks of trains of thought in which ‘when of an effect imagined, wee seek the causes, or means that produce it’.<sup>26</sup> This is the type of mental discourse that is described in the passage where regulated mental discourse is first introduced. When we desire something, we may seek the means that are in our power to satisfy that desire. Or, as he says elsewhere, ‘the Thoughts, are to the Desires, as Scouts, and Spies, to range abroad, and find the way to the things Desired’.<sup>27</sup> Thus, given some effect we try to find the causes. On the other hand, he speaks of mental discourse in which we try to find the effects of some given cause. This happens ‘when imagining any thing whatsoever, wee seek all the possible effects, that can by it be produced; that is to say, we imagine what we can do with it, when wee have it’.<sup>28</sup> In this latter kind of regulated mental discourse the thing in question can be either an object or an action. We can imagine the consequences of our actions, as well as the possibilities of using a thing we might acquire in the future. When this mental discourse is about a thing it can induce in us new appetites and aversions. By imagining all the ‘possible effects’ of a thing, new and previously unknown passions might be induced in us. This leads Hobbes to note that ‘this is a curiosity hardly incident to the nature of any living creature that has no other Passion but sensuall, such as are hunger, thirst,

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<sup>23</sup> Hobbes, *Leviathan*, 42.

<sup>24</sup> Hobbes, *Leviathan*, 42.

<sup>25</sup> Hobbes, *The Elements of Law*, I.9.18, 45.

<sup>26</sup> Hobbes, *Leviathan*, 21.

<sup>27</sup> Hobbes, *Leviathan*, 53.

<sup>28</sup> Hobbes, *Leviathan*, 21.

lust, and anger.<sup>29</sup> When this mental discourse is about actions he calls it foresight or prudence:

Sometime a man desires to know the event [i.e., consequences] of an action; and then he thinketh of some like action past, and the events thereof one after another; supposing like events will follow like actions. As he that foresees what will become of a Criminal, re-cons what he has seen follow on the like Crime before; having this order of thoughts, The Crime, the Officer, the Prison, the Judge, and the Gallows. Which kind of thoughts, is called *Foresight*, and *Prudence*, or *Providence*; and sometimes *Wisdom*.<sup>30</sup>

In this example the person imagines the effects his action will have by imagining some 'like action past'. Hobbes calls these thoughts 'prudence', although he usually speaks about prudence, as he probably should, as a capacity of individuals to have such thoughts.<sup>31</sup> I will come back to prudence shortly, but at this point what needs stressing is that the various examples that Hobbes gives of regulated mental discourse are practical, i.e. they are concerned with reflections about our actions. Either we consider which actions can help us to secure some given end, or we consider the consequences of some given action. From now on I will use the phrase 'considering the consequences of our actions' to refer to both these forms of regulated mental discourse. The question is whether, and how, these considerations are related to the endeavours that put our body into motion. After all, the seemingly practical nature of these examples notwithstanding, the case for treating them as instances of deliberation rests on being able to show that these thoughts provide in Hobbes's view the intentional object of appetites and aversions in deliberation. This would be the case if, in his own example, the thought of the gallows would lead to an aversion to committing the crime in deliberation (that is to say, if it would lead to an aversion with the intentional object provided by a thought of the crime) while we consider these consequences. In one revealing passage he suggests that this is indeed how we should think of the appetites and aversions in deliberation. He writes that

...in Deliberation, the Appetites, and Aversions are raised by foresight of the good and evil consequences, and sequels of the action whereof we Deliberate; the good or evil effect thereof dependeth on the foresight of a long chain of

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<sup>29</sup> I Hobbes, *Leviathan*, 21.

<sup>30</sup> Hobbes, *Leviathan*, 22. Hobbes is here redefining foresight, prudence, providence and wisdom as meaning the same thing, although Hobbes tends to reserve the term wisdom for particularly astute or far ranging foresight and associates it with reasoning and science.

<sup>31</sup> E.g. Hobbes, *Leviathan*, 23, 37, 52, 87.

consequences, of which very seldom any man is able to see to the end. ... so that he who hath by Experience, or Reason, the greatest and surest prospect of Consequences, Deliberates best himselfe.<sup>32</sup>

One can understand this as a further elaboration of the claim that all voluntary actions depend on some 'precedent thought'. The intentional object of the appetites and aversions in deliberation is provided by thoughts in mental discourse about the consequences of our actions.

This passage supports the reading that regulated mental discourse about the consequences of our actions are instances of deliberation if we read the phrase 'foresight of the good and evil consequences' as referring to the *process* of finding out the good and evil consequences of our actions in mental discourse. This can be denied. It could be argued that the phrase refers only to the *conclusions* of that process. This would mean that in deliberation we take into account the consequences of our actions, but that finding out the consequences of our action itself is not an instance of deliberation. For support of this reading one might refer to those passages where Hobbes uses the analogy of weighing to characterise deliberation. 'In this comparison', Hobbes writes, 'the objects, means &c, are the weights, the man is the scale, the understanding of a convenience or inconvenience is the pressure of those weights, which incline him now one way, now another'.<sup>33</sup> The 'understanding' only seems to enter as a predetermined weight to be taken into account in deliberation.<sup>34</sup>

It is unlikely that Hobbes could consistently defend that view. Given that he provides a causal account of the relationship between thoughts and passions he seems committed to the view that (other things equal) the same thought causes the same passion.<sup>35</sup> This implies that when he admits that

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<sup>32</sup> Hobbes, *Leviathan*, 46. It should be noted that I have up to now not spoken about Hobbes's understanding of 'reason', and the reference to reason, which I believe is significant in this context, will be explained below.

<sup>33</sup> Hobbes, *Questions Concerning Liberty, Necessity, And Chance*, 326.

<sup>34</sup> Note that this objection grants the central claim of the paper that Hobbes takes practical deliberation (in humans) to involve cognitive reflection about the consequences of our actions. Indeed, one can quote Hobbes who continues the passage just cited by saying that: 'It is therefore to little purpose that he saith, the understanding is not weighed.' (Hobbes, *Questions Concerning Liberty, Necessity, And Chance*, 326) The critic (in this case Bishop Bramhall) must admit that the considerations in the understanding are taken into account in deliberation. I nevertheless want to defend the stronger, and perhaps more controversial claim, that instances of regulated mental discourse about the consequences of our actions are not merely *taken into account* in deliberation but are themselves *instances* of what Hobbes would call deliberation.

<sup>35</sup> Hobbes, *Leviathan*, 38.

appetites and aversions are raised by conclusions of mental discourse, as he does in the above quoted passage, he is committed to allowing appetites and aversions to be raised too by mental discourse that is ongoing. To return to Hobbes's example once more, the thought of the gallows will most likely produce an aversion in the would-be criminal, and this is so regardless of whether he is still thinking through the possible consequences of his actions or whether he is 'weighing' the conclusions of these contemplations. And since Hobbes gives no indication that some appetites and aversions are part of deliberation while others are not,<sup>36</sup> it is more probable that he took all mental discourse in which we consider the consequences of our actions and that produce appetites and aversions in us as instances of deliberation.

Hobbes himself uses the term 'deliberation' in conformity with this reading. For example, when he explains why a person who rashly and without much forethought commits a crime is still culpable, he writes that this so because 'all the time between the first knowing of the Law, and the Commission of the Fact, shall be taken for a time of deliberation; because he ought by meditation of the Law, to rectify the irregularity of his Passions continually'.<sup>37</sup> To consider whether an action is lawful is to consider the consequences of a contemplated action and an exercise of regulated mental discourse. In *Questions Concerning Liberty Necessity and Chance* he equates deliberation with 'some consideration and meditation of what is likely to follow'<sup>38</sup> and claims that in deliberation appetites and aversions arise 'according as man understands or fancieth the good and evil sequels of the thing concerning which he deliberateth whether he shall pursue it, or *of the means whether they conduce or not to that end*'.<sup>39</sup> This, again, implies that Hobbes takes deliberation to include those moments of regulated mental discourse where we consider whether some action conduces to a particular end.

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<sup>36</sup> Indeed, since they are all equally endeavours they are physiologically and phenomenologically indistinguishable. With regard to the latter it means that it cannot from introspection be decided which endeavours would belong to deliberation. With regard to the former it means that they equally have the power to put the body in motion. But any action that follows the will (the last appetite before the action) Hobbes considers deliberated and voluntary. (Hobbes, *Questions Concerning Liberty, Necessity, And Chance*, 81)

<sup>37</sup> Hobbes, *Leviathan*, 210. In *Questions Concerning Liberty, Necessity, And Chance*, 350, he makes the same point even more explicitly: the criminal 'had time enough to deliberate whether the action were lawful or not'.

<sup>38</sup> Hobbes, *Questions Concerning Liberty, Necessity, And Chance*, 79.

<sup>39</sup> Hobbes, *Questions Concerning Liberty, Necessity, And Chance*, 401/2. My italics.

I conclude therefore that the descriptions of regulated mental discourse about the consequences of our actions are descriptions of deliberation. Deliberation can have the form of weighing, in Hobbes's metaphor, the various consequences of our actions. But we deliberate too when we figure out the likely consequences of our actions and various appetites and aversions are raised in us in anticipation of the many possibilities that we think about. This means that the nature of practical deliberation can be further studied by looking more closely at the various forms of regulated mental discourse that Hobbes distinguishes.

### III. Mental Discourse based on Experience

Hobbes maintains, in one of the passages already cited, that 'he who hath by experience, or reason, the greatest and surest prospect of consequences, deliberates best himself'. Experience and reason are then the two ways in which a person can identify causes and consequences. Hobbes distinguishes experience and reason elsewhere as two ways to acquire knowledge and calls the resulting kinds of knowledge respectively prudence and science. 'As much Experience, is *Prudence*', he explains, 'so, is much Science *Sapience*. For though wee usually have one name of Wisdome for them both, yet the Latines did always distinguish between *Prudentia* and *Sapientia*; ascribing the former to Experience, the latter to Science.'<sup>40</sup> Experience was already mentioned above, when Hobbes discusses how we can in deliberation foresee the likely consequences of our actions by imagining the consequences of 'like actions before'. Reason is discussed in chapter 5 of *Leviathan*, and forms the basis of 'science'. I will discuss experience and reason in turn, beginning with the former.

Experience allows us to form expectations of the future on the basis of knowledge of past events. As Hobbes explains in a passage already quoted: a person 'thinketh of some like action past, and the events thereof one after another; supposing like events will follow like actions.' This capacity is developed through the ability to recognise events as a sign for some other event. Such a sign can be a consequence of some cause, so that when we encounter it we remember the cause that likely preceded it. The sign can also be the cause, so that we are reminded of the likely effect that is to follow. The more experience we have of things following one another in this

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<sup>40</sup> Hobbes, *Leviathan*, 36.

way ‘the less uncertain is the Signe’.<sup>41</sup> Such prudence is dependent on ‘much Experience and Memory of the like things, and their consequences heretofore’.<sup>42</sup> Differences in prudence will reflect the difference in experience people have, so that prudence usually comes with age.<sup>43</sup> Nevertheless, because of the inductive and particular (as opposed to universal) character of such knowledge it can never form the basis for infallible derivations. Hobbes warns in the *The Elements of Law* that ‘[t]hough a man hath always seen the day and night to follow one another hitherto; yet can he not conclude they shall do so, or that they have done so eternally. Experience concludeth nothing universally.’<sup>44</sup> The mental discourse that, as in the example given by Hobbes above, leads one to consider the crime, the prison, the judge, and the gallows, is based on knowledge of the past. Although the resemblance of the action being deliberated with some action in the past might be a reliable sign, it cannot be more than that. There is no certainty that the gallows will always follow the commission of a crime.

This need not be a bone of contention for those who would otherwise want to object to Hobbes’s account of deliberation. The existence of certain epistemological limitations to one’s practical deliberations seems inherent to the human condition. What does seem a problem for Hobbes is that he takes such prudence to be shared by both humans and animals. Even though Hobbes claims that one of the forms of regulated mental discourse, namely reasoning, is unique to humans he also believes that animals can deliberate and have some prudence. He explicitly notes that animals also engage in deliberation about means to given ends.<sup>45</sup> And he claims that ‘[t] here be beasts, that at a year old observe more, and pursue that which is for their good, more prudently than a child can do at ten.’<sup>46</sup> This means that even though we have shown that deliberation, according to Hobbes, does not merely consist of alternating passions, one might doubt that deliberation includes cognitive judgements properly speaking, if one takes such judgements to be unique to humans.

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<sup>41</sup> Hobbes, *Leviathan*, 22.

<sup>42</sup> Hobbes, *Leviathan*, 52.

<sup>43</sup> See A. Vanden Houten, ‘Prudence in Hobbes’s Political Philosophy’, *History of Political Thought*, 23:2(2002), for an argument that Hobbes is inconsistent when he claims that people are generally equally prudent, while he recognises great differences in judgement and fancy between individuals. Prudence, according to Vanden Houten is to a great extent determined by one’s judgement.

<sup>44</sup> Hobbes, *The Elements of Law*, I.4.10, 16.

<sup>45</sup> Hobbes, *Leviathan*, 21.

<sup>46</sup> Hobbes, *Leviathan*, 23.

We can provide an answer to this worry by emphasising the transformative nature of the passion of curiosity and language in prudential deliberation. One reason why humans are more prudent than animals, Hobbes observes, is their curious nature, as they are keen to inquire into the causes and effects of their environment. Man surpasses ‘all other animals in this faculty, that when he conceived any thing whatsoever, he was apt to inquire the consequences of it, and what effects he could do with it.’<sup>47</sup> The knowledge they accumulate as a result is further enhanced by their superior memory. He explains that,

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>48</sup>

Thus, because of the passion of curiosity man enquires, and because of memory man remembers how the events succeeded one another as a result of which he is more prudent than any animal could ever be. What makes this superior memory possible? The answer is that humans are endowed with the ability of speech and language.<sup>49</sup>

Like many of his contemporaries such as Francis Bacon and René Descartes, Hobbes takes the view that thought precedes, and can be independent of, language.<sup>50</sup> Language is taken as the expression of thought, rather than as a constitutive element of thinking.<sup>51</sup> Hobbes therefore considers the shift from mental discourse to verbal discourse a matter of

<sup>47</sup> Hobbes, *Leviathan*, 34.

<sup>48</sup> Hobbes, *Leviathan*, 76.

<sup>49</sup> In *The Elements of Law*, I.9.18, 45, Hobbes suggests that curiosity is the cause of ‘the invention of names’, and thereby the origin of language. Hobbes does not elaborate on this suggestion. But it does, interestingly enough, connect the two distinguishing human capacities identified in this paragraph.

<sup>50</sup> I. Hacking, *Why does Language matter to Philosophy?* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1975), 16. See F. Bacon, ‘The Advancement of Learning’, in Brian Vickers (ed.), *Francis Bacon: A Critical Edition of the Major Works* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996). Descartes, *Rules for the Direction of the Mind*, ed. Errol E. Harris (London: George Allen & Unwin, 1957). See also H. Dawson, ‘Hobbes, Language and Philip Pettit’, *Hobbes Studies*, 22:2(2009), 220.

<sup>51</sup> This has led Tom Sorell, *Hobbes* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1986), 85, to argue that Hobbes misconstrues what it is to think. Hobbes seems to believe that thinking is a procession of phantasms, produced by sense and imagination. But in this way, Sorell maintains, Hobbes makes ‘the medium of thinking and the organization of thinking too simple a by-product of sense.’

translation. He maintains that '[t]he generall use of Speech, is to transfer our Mentall Discourse, into Verbal; or the Trayne of our Thoughts, into a Trayne of Words'.<sup>52</sup> Words are signs for thoughts or imaginations; so that when I encounter a word I will be reminded of the thought the word signifies, in the same way that a cloud is a sign of rain. Presumably, this would mean that thoughts have all the properties we usually believe words to have, such as meaning and reference. The translation of thought to language has two primary functions. First, it allows us to express our thoughts to others. Words are then, what he calls, 'Signes' of thoughts, by which individuals are able to 'signifie ... one to another, what they conceive or think of each matter, and also what they desire, feare, or have any other passion for.'<sup>53</sup> Understanding such signs is to have the thought or phantasm raised in one's mind; it is 'nothing else, but conception caused by speech'.<sup>54</sup> Hobbes considers this use of language to be of great benefit to mankind, not in the least because it makes possible contracts and covenants that form the basis of political association.<sup>55</sup> The second use of words is as 'Markes, or Notes of remembrance',<sup>56</sup> as convenient ways of remembering our thoughts ourselves. It is this second function of language that is most germane to deliberation.

While Hobbes claims that prudence is common to human and animals, and claims that thinking is possible without the use of language, he is able to distinguish the deliberation of humans (based on prudence) by underlining the role that language plays in helping us to remember thoughts. One of the reasons speech is 'the most noble and profitable invention' of mankind, is that it allows 'men [to] register their Thoughts; recall them when they are past'.<sup>57</sup> In particular, he explains how language can help us in the regulated mental discourse about the consequences of our actions. He writes that one of the uses of speech is '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'.<sup>58</sup>

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<sup>52</sup> Hobbes, *Leviathan*, 25.

<sup>53</sup> Hobbes, *Leviathan*, 25.

<sup>54</sup> Hobbes, *Leviathan*, 30.

<sup>55</sup> Hobbes, *Leviathan*, 24: 'without which, there had been amongst men, neither Common-wealth, nor Society, nor Contract, nor Peace, no more than amongst Lyons, Bears and Wolves.'

<sup>56</sup> Hobbes, *Leviathan*, 25.

<sup>57</sup> Hobbes, *Leviathan*, 24.

<sup>58</sup> Hobbes, *Leviathan*, 25.

In a striking passage in *The Elements of Law*, Hobbes describes how the invention of marks, and thereby of language, can be considered the birth of human kind. He writes that

... one conception followeth not another, according to our election, and the need we have of them, but as it chanceth us to hear or see such things as shall bring them to our mind. The experience we have hereof, is in such brute beasts, which, having the providence to hide the remains and superfluity of their meat, do nevertheless want the remembrance of the place where they hid it, and thereby make no benefit thereof in their hunger. But man, who in this point beginneth to advance himself above beginneth to rank himself somewhat above. the nature of beasts, hath observed and remembered the cause of this defect, and to amend the same, hath imagined and devised imagined or devised. to set up a visible or other sensible mark, the which when he seeth again, seeth it again. may bring to his mind the thought he had when he set it up.<sup>59</sup>

This passage reinforces the interpretation that is defended here. Language and curiosity are the two qualities that set humans apart from other creatures, and both these qualities are indispensable to good deliberation that is based on prudence. Partly because of their curiosity and partly because of the ability to use words as marks for remembrance, humans have a capacity to consider the consequences of their actions far exceeding that of animals. As the result of curiosity they are not as animals are, limited to ‘judge what is good and bad for them by their senses’ and to the ‘enjoying of their quotidian food, ease, and lusts’. Through language humans can put to memory ‘the order, consequence, and dependence of the things they see’, and bring this knowledge to bear when deliberating.

#### IV. Mental Discourse based on Reason

If one is not yet convinced that Hobbes has sufficiently distinguished the practical deliberation of humans from that of animals in the preceding discussion, then we may now turn to his discussion of reason, where he leaves no room for doubt on this score. He explicitly maintains that reason is dependent on the use of language, which is, as we saw above, a distinguishing mark of humans. ‘Reason’, Hobbes writes, ‘is nothing but *Reckoning* (that is, Adding and Subtracting) of the Consequences of general names agreed upon for the *marking* and *signifying* of our thoughts.’<sup>60</sup> It is a skill

<sup>59</sup> Hobbes, *The Elements of Law*, I. 5.1, 17.

<sup>60</sup> Hobbes, *Leviathan*, 32.

that, unlike prudence that is developed with experience, can only be acquired 'by method and instruction'.<sup>61</sup> Language and the 'apt imposing of names' are prerequisites for success in reasoning, and so are careful calculations, as only an 'orderly Method in Proceeding' can lead to reliable outcomes.<sup>62</sup> If done well, reasoning leads to scientific knowledge, surpassing prudence in generality and certainty.<sup>63</sup>

How is such reasoned mental discourse distinguished from prudential mental discourse? Hobbes explains that 'whereas Sense and Memory are but knowledge of Fact, which is a thing past, and irrevocable; Science is the knowledge of Consequences, and dependence of one fact upon another'.<sup>64</sup> Whereas prudence is inductive knowledge based on past experience, science is knowledge of the causes and consequences of things. Scientific or philosophical knowledge can be acquired either by 'Reasoning, from the Manner of the Generation of any thing, to the Properties, or from the Properties to some possible Way of Generation of the same'.<sup>65</sup>

Hobbes maintains that most individuals do not develop the skill of reasoning to any great extent. '[T]he most part of men, though they have the use of Reasoning a little way, as in numbering to some degree; yet it serves them to little use in common life; in which they govern themselves, some better, some worse, according to their differences of experience, quicknesse of memory, and inclinations to severall ends'.<sup>66</sup> Most men, Hobbes thinks, use prudence (aided by language) as opposed to reason. Nonetheless, those who have trained the capacity to reason can use it to guide deliberation analogous to the way prudence can guide deliberation as was established before.

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<sup>61</sup> Hobbes, *Leviathan*, 53.

<sup>62</sup> Hobbes, *Leviathan*, 35.

<sup>63</sup> One should be careful not to conclude that, because Hobbes maintains that the mental discourse structured by reason presupposes language, mental discourse structured by prudence is necessarily without language. Indeed, it was shown above that humans are more prudent than animals mainly because they are able to use words to mark the causes and consequences in prudential deliberation. For example, he approvingly writes that the Greeks 'have but one word *logos*, for both Speech and Reason; *not that they thought there is no Speech without Reason; but no Reasoning without Speech*' (Hobbes, *Leviathan*, 29, my italics).

<sup>64</sup> Hobbes, *Leviathan*, 35.

<sup>65</sup> Hobbes, *Leviathan*, 458. Note that we see here again the two forms of regulated mental discourse distinguished above: 'when imagining any thing whatsoever, we seek all the possible effects' and when 'of an effect imagined, we seek the causes'

<sup>66</sup> Hobbes, *Leviathan*, 36.

Some commentators have denied this. They have maintained that reason and the resulting knowledge that Hobbes calls ‘science’ cannot be part of, or feature in, practical deliberation. They have even denied that reasoning in Hobbes’s understanding is a form of mental discourse. John Deigh, for example, distinguishes reason and prudence as two distinct faculties, where reason is ‘a faculty, whose operations are entirely formal’<sup>67</sup> and operates independently of all human desires, whereas prudence is ‘mental discourse regulated by some desire or design.’<sup>68</sup> Deigh argues that because the laws of nature are derived from reason, that is, from ‘reckoning’ and the calculation of ‘consequences of general names’<sup>69</sup> the laws of nature are merely formal principles and independent of any claims about the proper ends of human action. The laws of nature are conclusions derived from ‘general names’, not from ends to means.

Even though thinking is quite radically transformed through the use of language, there is little to say in favour of the Deigh’s interpretation on this score. Hobbes is very clear that ‘besides Sense, and Thoughts, and the Trayne of thoughts, the mind of man has no other motion; though by the help of Speech, and Method, the same Facultyes may be improved to such a height, as to distinguish men from all other living Creatures.’<sup>70</sup> Reasoning is described by Hobbes as an ability that is acquired through the proper use of language and can be improved by industry. Furthermore, it is described as an operation of the human mind. It must therefore be an improved form of mental discourse.<sup>71</sup> We can also, with Jeffrey Barnouw, point to the following passage from chapter 5 of *Leviathan*:

I have said before,... that Man did excel all other Animals in this faculty, that when he conceived any thing whatsoever, he was apt to enquire the consequences of it, and what effects he could do with it. And now I adde this other degree of the same excellence, that he can by words reduce the consequences he findes to general Rules ... that is, he can Reason, or reckon, not only in number; but in all other things, wherof one may be added unto, or substracted from another.<sup>72</sup>

<sup>67</sup> J. Deigh, ‘Reason and Ethics in Hobbes’s *Leviathan*’, *Journal of History of Philosophy*, 34:1(1996), 39.

<sup>68</sup> Deigh, ‘Reason and Ethics’, 41.

<sup>69</sup> Deigh, ‘Reason and Ethics’, 40.

<sup>70</sup> Hobbes, *Leviathan*, 23.

<sup>71</sup> K. Hoekstra, ‘Hobbes on Law, Nature, and Reason’, *Journal of the History of Philosophy*, 41:1(2003), 117 makes the same point.

<sup>72</sup> Hobbes, *Leviathan*, 34, quoted in J. Barnouw, ‘Reason as Reckoning: Hobbes’s Natural Law as Right Reason’, *Hobbes Studies*, 21:1(2008), 46.

In this passage Hobbes asks his readers to bring to mind how curiosity and language can transform deliberation because it makes one ‘apt to enquire’ the consequences of one’s actions. Now he calls reason an ‘other degree of the same excellence’. This suggests that science is, like experience, acquired by means of regulated mental discourse. And it suggests too, that reasoning, like prudence, can be a form of deliberation. This is intimated by the reference to the practical character of the ‘excellence’ that is discussed in this passage. It is also the implication of the argument, provided above, that alternating appetites, on the one hand, and regulated mental discourse about the consequences of our actions, on the other, are both constitutive of the process of deliberation. Reason allows us to use this capacity to identify general rules that may profitably be relied on as principles in one’s daily affairs. And this, Hobbes claims elsewhere, is another ability that sets humans apart from other creatures:

[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. ... So that it is not merely the nature of man, that makes him worthier than other living creatures, but the knowledge that he acquires by meditation, and by the right use of reason in making good rules of his future actions.<sup>73</sup>

It is slightly ambiguous whether Hobbes is speaking in this passage in particular of the benefits of reason, or whether he thinks that we can identify general rules also on the basis of prudential deliberation. One consideration in favour of the latter view is that the passage starts with the now familiar claim that the advantages of humans over animals consist in ‘the use of speech, by which men ... 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.’<sup>74</sup> That seems to suggest that it is the use of language as such, and not the particular of use of language in reasoning, that allows us to come up with general rules. The distinction between reason and prudence would then lie in the reliability of the rule, in the former case being certain and based on calculations of consequences, whereas in the latter case uncertain and based on past experience. Alternatively, one might think that only reasoning allows us to *identify* rules (after all it is the ability to identify ‘general Rules’ in the passage above that is the ‘other degree of the same excellence’). But someone without the use

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<sup>73</sup> Hobbes, *The Questions Concerning Liberty, Necessity, And Chance*, 186/7.

<sup>74</sup> Hobbes, *The Questions Concerning Liberty, Necessity, And Chance*, 186.

of reason, but with the use of language, could still *understand* and *apply* it in his or her practical deliberations.<sup>75</sup>

Regardless of how we settle this issue, in so far reasoning and scientific knowledge regards the consequences of our actions and raises appetites in us it is partially constitutive of deliberation. It does so when the intentional object of appetites and aversions is provided by the kind of regulated mental discourse that Hobbes calls reasoning. In fact, when Hobbes introduces science, he again uses an example of practical deliberation. He writes that

Science is the knowledge of Consequences, and dependance of one fact upon another: by which, out of that we can presently do, we know how to do something else when we will, or the like, another time: Because when we see how any thing comes about, upon what causes, and by what manner; when the like causes come into our power, we see how to make it produce the like effects.<sup>76</sup>

Science is knowledge of causes and effects, and allows us the ‘greatest and surest prospect of consequences’. That is why, as Hobbes puts it in the Review and Conclusion of *Leviathan*, ‘in all Deliberations, and in all Pleadings, the faculty of solid Reasoning, is necessary’.<sup>77</sup>

## V. Practical Reasons

In the previous sections I have reconsidered Hobbes’s account of ‘deliberation’ and argued that it is a mistake to think that such deliberation is limited to alternating appetites and aversions. Rather, it is partly constituted by what he calls ‘regulated mental discourse’. The thoughts or judgements that feature in mental discourse provide the intentional objects of the appetites and aversions, something Hobbes expresses by saying that the latter are caused or ‘raised’ by the former. For animals mental discourse consists of little more than sense impressions with some memory of things past.

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<sup>75</sup> This latter reading is implied in Hobbes’s treatment of the laws of nature in *Leviathan*. They are such general rules identified through reasoning. (*Leviathan*, 110.) Because not all people have developed the capacity of reason Hobbes has to admit that they will not all be able to identify the laws themselves. His answer is that though ‘this may seem too subtle a deduction of the Lawes of Nature, to be taken notice of by all men; whereof the most part are too busie in getting food, and the rest too negligent to understand; yet to leave all men unexcusable, they have been contracted into one easie sum, intelligible, even the meanest capacity; and that is, Do not that to another, which thou wouldest not have done to thy selfe’ (Ibid., 109.)

<sup>76</sup> Hobbes, *Leviathan*, 35/36.

<sup>77</sup> Hobbes, *Leviathan*, 483.

The resulting deliberation, Hobbes admits, can display prudence but only to a limited degree. Due to their curiosity and capacity of speech humans can engage in mental discourse that is far superior in judgement and reflection. In his analysis of mental discourse on the basis of prudence and reason he shows that humans can truly have judgements about the ‘divers good and evil consequences of the doing, or omitting the thing propounded’.

The conclusion to draw from this is two-fold. First, it has implications for Hobbes’s conception of practical reasons. This is not the place to develop a complete analysis of practical reasons, as this would have to include issues that have been set aside in this paper, including Hobbes’s mechanistic approach to the theory of mind and his account of goodness. What we can say, however, is that it is false, as Riley supposed, that Hobbes takes appetites and aversions as ‘physiological-psychological’ causes of our actions. Rather, it is more appropriate to say that we act on the basis of judgments concerning the likely good and evil consequences of our actions. Practical reasons, for Hobbes, are cognitive judgements. This is in conformity with Hobbes’s physiology in which voluntary actions, as was already noted, ‘depend always upon a precedent thought of *whither, which way, and what*’. Although actions are caused by endeavours, endeavours are caused by thoughts. It is also in conformity with his descriptions of the role of opinion and judgement in determining human actions. As Hobbes writes, ‘the Actions of men proceed from their Opinions; and in the well governing of Opinions, consisteth the well governing of men’s Actions’.<sup>78</sup> In *The Questions Concerning Liberty, Necessity, And Chance* he emphasizes the ‘last dictate of the judgement’ (instead of the ‘last appetite’) as the cause of human actions. For example, he writes that ‘[t]he last dictate of the judgment concerning the good or bad that may follow on any action ... may be said to produce the effect necessarily’.<sup>79</sup> While the will is the last appetite, ‘it is impossible to will anything that appears not first in his understanding to be good for him’.<sup>80</sup> And this means that ‘the will of a passionate and peevish fool doth no less follow the dictate of that little understanding he hath, than the will of the wisest man followeth his wisdom’.<sup>81</sup> These ‘dictates of the understanding’ are the ‘reasons’ or ‘opinions’ that, on Riley’s argument, are insufficiently clearly present in Hobbes’s analysis.

<sup>78</sup> Hobbes, *Leviathan*, 124.

<sup>79</sup> Hobbes, *The Questions Concerning Liberty, Necessity, And Chance*, 105. See also, *Ibid.*, 292, 317, 318, 323.

<sup>80</sup> Hobbes, *The Questions Concerning Liberty, Necessity, And Chance*, 234.

<sup>81</sup> Hobbes, *The Questions Concerning Liberty, Necessity, And Chance*, 234.

The second conclusion to draw is that Hobbes can defend the reflective nature of practical deliberation.<sup>82</sup> It is true that animals hardly reflect on their predominant desires ‘for food, and other pleasures of sense’ while they deliberate. However, due to curiosity and the capacity of language, Hobbes takes it, we are apt to consider and take into account the consequences of our actions. While we deliberate we consider the various actions that are open to us, and the various consequences of these actions. We judge these consequences, some as good and some as evil, and we do so by reference to further consequences these actions might have. In this process judgements about the good and evil consequences are not taken at face value. Instead, they are considered in the light of other judgements about further consequences and other alternatives. And this process of deliberation determines the appetites and aversions on which we act. As Hobbes puts it in *The Elements of Law*:

the propounding of benefits and of harms, that is to say, of reward and punishment, is the cause of our appetite and of our fears, and therefore also of our wills, so far forth as we believe that such rewards and benefits as are propounded, shall arrive unto us. And consequently, our wills follow our opinions, as our actions follow our wills.<sup>83</sup>

The will follows our opinions of the ‘benefits and harms’ that are likely to follow. Such considerations are dependent on, as Hobbes puts it in a passage already quoted, ‘the foresight of a long chain of consequences, of which very seldome any man is able to see to the end’. Thus, not only do we act on the basis of judgements about the good and evil consequences of our actions, these judgements are reflective in so far as they are based on and take into account judgements of these long chains of consequences. We can again bring to mind Bramhall’s objection to Hobbes. Bramhall claims that deliberation, properly speaking, requires a person to consider ‘whether it were more expedient for him to go that way or not; he would represent to himself all the dangers both of going and staying, and compare the one with the other, and elect that which is less evil’.<sup>84</sup> This, I would conclude, is as good a summary of Hobbesian deliberation as any.

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<sup>82</sup> That is contrary to Irwin’s opinion that with regard to the options open to the actor there is no ‘rational assessment of their value’. (Irwin, *The Development of Ethics*, 105)

<sup>83</sup> Hobbes, *The Elements of Law*, I.12.6, 63.

<sup>84</sup> Bramhall, quoted in Hobbes, *The Questions Concerning Liberty, Necessity, And Chance*, 83.