

PSYCHOLOGICAL EGOISM AND HOBBS

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Many commentators think that Hobbes was committed to psychological egoism. Psychological egoism is a theory of human psychology claiming that all human actions are ultimately motivated solely by one's own self-interest. In this paper, I argue that there are reasons to think that Hobbes was not committed to psychological egoism in any of its plausible formulations.

Keywords: Hobbes – Psychological egoism – Psychological hedonism – Tautological egoism – Motivation

1. The Motivation behind Attributing Psychological Egoism to Hobbes. There are three commonly held interpretations of Thomas Hobbes: (a) that he held a desire (or preference) satisfaction theory of the good; (b) that he held a purely instrumental view of rationality; and (c) that he was committed to psychological egoism. There are now quite a few scholars that reject interpretation (b); namely, that Hobbes held a purely instrumental view of rationality.¹ In this paper, I will show that there are good reasons to reject interpretation (c); namely, that Hobbes was a psychological egoist.² And, as an intermediate step, I will also briefly show that there are good reasons to reject interpretation (a) – namely, that Hobbes held a desire-satisfaction theory of the good, as well.

Psychological egoism is a view that claims that all human actions are motivated, at bottom, exclusively by one's self-interest; it claims that everybody, in the end, is an egoist. This is a very strong claim. It does not merely claim that only some or the majority of human actions are generated from considerations of self-interest; but rather that all human

¹ See Gert (1991) and Chung (2014).

² The following people interpret Hobbes as a psychological egoist. See Butler (1983); Hume (1975); Broad (1950). Kavka (1986) thinks that some textual evidence does suggest that Hobbes was a psychological egoist, but thinks that only a weakened version of psychological egoism, which he calls "Predominant Egoism" is needed for Hobbes's political philosophy to work. McNeilly (1966) thinks that Hobbes was at least committed to psychological egoism in his earlier works. Hampton (1986, pp. 20-24) interprets Hobbes as a psychological egoist who maintains that all of our desires are caused by a "*self-interested*" *bodily mechanism*, and opposes the idea of interpreting Hobbes as a psychological egoist who claims that all of our desires have *self-regarding content*. In other words, according to Hampton, Hobbes does allow people to have certain kinds of other-regarding desires. However, according to Hampton, these other-regarding desires play absolutely no role in Hobbes's political argument that it is not entirely unreasonable to regard Hobbes as a psychological egoist when one is trying to understand his political philosophy.

actions – including the ones that apparently seem to be acts of benevolence as well as those acts that seemingly stem from one’s moral conviction – are ultimately motivated solely by a concern for one’s own exclusive personal good.

The major reason why so many people tend to attribute psychological egoism to Hobbes comes from the following passages:

...of the voluntary acts of every man the object is some good to himself (Hobbes, *Leviathan*, XIV, 8).

For no man giveth but with intention of good to himself, because gift is voluntary, and of all voluntary acts the object is to every man his own good... (Hobbes, *Leviathan*, XV, 16).

For Hobbes, an act is voluntary if and only if it proceeds from one’s will.³ We may think of “the will” simply as a person’s final intention to perform his/her most preferred course of action after his/her deliberation concludes.⁴ So, what the passages above suggest is that, according to Hobbes, everybody, as a matter of fact, aims for his/her own exclusive personal good whenever he/she performs his/her most preferred course of action. As we can see, this sounds pretty close to psychological egoism.

However, psychological egoism is a very extreme let alone a very contestable doctrine. Many people think that it is false, for good reasons. So, to the very extent that Hobbes’s political philosophy relies on psychological egoism, we can say that it is based on a very weak foundation. If there is a way to build up Hobbes’s political philosophy from a less contestable theory of human psychology without relying on psychological egoism, I believe that this will significantly bolster the general plausibility of Hobbes’s political philosophy. This is the aim of this paper. That is, in this paper, I will argue that Hobbes was not actually a psychological egoist in any plausible interpretation of this doctrine.

2. What is Psychological Egoism? – Some Clarifications. So, what is psychological egoism? Here is psychological egoism stated in its most general form:

[Psychological Egoism]: Everybody is ultimately motivated at bottom solely by his/her self-interest.

There are some things that we need to get clear about in order to understand psychological egoism properly.

First, psychological egoism is a doctrine about people’s *ultimate or most basic motivations* for action. It intends to provide an answer to the question: “Why did X act in that way?” According to psychological egoism, there is a unique answer to all such questions: namely, “Because it was in X’s own interest to do so.”

Psychological egoism does not deny that people can sometimes act in seemingly be-

³ “For a voluntary act is that which proceedeth from the will.” (Hobbes, *Leviathan*, VI, 53)

⁴ “In deliberation, the last appetite or aversion immediately adhering to the action, or to the omission thereof, is that we call the WILL.” (Hobbes, *Leviathan*, VI, 53)

nevolent ways. It also does not deny that people can point to certain altruistic reasons to explain their seemingly benevolent actions. What psychological egoism denies is that those altruistic reasons were what really or ultimately motivated such people. According to psychological egoism, regardless of whether one is consciously aware of it or not, one's actions – even those actions that are seemingly benevolent – are ultimately motivated at bottom by one's own self-interest.⁵ This leads to our next characteristic.

Second, one doesn't necessarily have to be *consciously aware* of the fact that one is ultimately motivated by one's self-interest in order for one's actions to qualify as manifestations of psychological egoism. It might be true that everybody is, in fact, ultimately motivated by self-interest, but such motivation might be so deeply embedded within people's subconscious states that not everybody is consciously aware that his/her actions are motivated in this way. Or people might simply be what Gauthier calls "self-maintaining engines"⁶ who are just programmed (like machines) to pursue their own self-interests without always being consciously aware that they are motivated in this way. Psychological egoism would still be true if either one of these two doctrines (or a combination of both) are universally true. This means that psychological egoism has more to do with the *underlying psychological mechanism* rather than the *motivational contents* of one's desires and actions.

Third, psychological egoism is not a doctrine of *achievement*. Although it claims that everybody is ultimately motivated by one's own exclusive self-interest, it does not claim that everybody (or even most people) *actually succeeds* in achieving their own self-interest. This is something that is not that hard to understand if one thinks about the difference between 'mere attempt' and 'actual achievement'.

Such failure to achieve one's self-interest usually occurs when one has one or more false beliefs. For instance, suppose that one is motivated to promote one's physical health (which is, intuitively, a major component of one's self-interest), and, thereby, regularly takes a herbal medicine, which is scientifically proven to be carcinogenic, by falsely believing that the herbal medicine possesses some mysterious powers that contributes to longevity. In such case, one is not really achieving one's best self-interest; quite the contrary. Nonetheless, this does not change the fact that one was primarily motivated by one's self-interest. So, such example is not a counter example to psychological egoism.

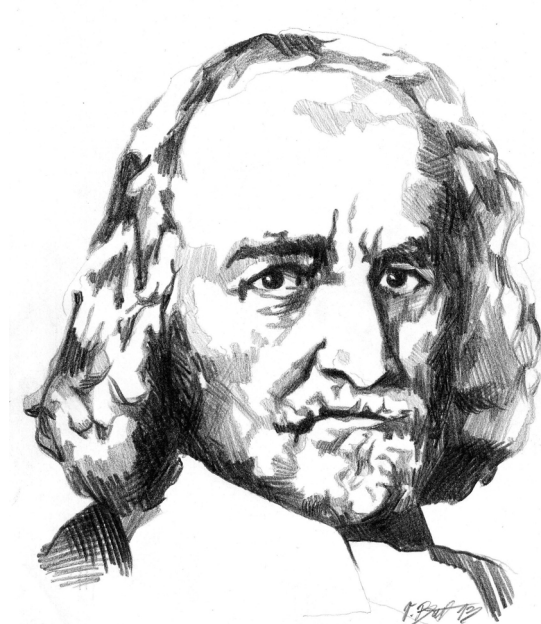
Fourth, psychological egoism is *a descriptive theory of human psychology*; not a normative theory of human psychology. It claims that it is *a matter of fact* that all human motivations are ultimately based on one's exclusive self-interest; not that people's motivations *should be* ultimately based on their exclusive self-interest. There is a standard name

⁵ Drawing from contemporary psychological learning theories (such as that of Hull and Skinner), in one of his earlier papers, Michael Slote suggests that there could be an empirical basis for psychological egoism such that all higher-order drives and motives (e.g. altruistic and benevolent motives) are functionally dependent on a certain number of basically "selfish" unlearned primary drives and motives See Slote (1964).

⁶ See Gauthier (1969: 21).

for the latter type of doctrine which is strictly normative: *ethical egoism*. Ethical egoism claims that, generally speaking, people *should* promote their own exclusive self-interest more than anything else.

The purpose of this section is to see whether Hobbes was a psychological egoist, not whether Hobbes was an ethical egoist. I want to deny that Hobbes was a psychological egoist, or at least, psychological egoism is not needed for his political philosophy. I take no stance on whether Hobbes was an ethical egoist.



Thomas Hobbes

ence of pleasure and the absence of pain exhaust a person's good or well-being.

So, self-interest, according to psychological hedonism, is none other than the experience of pleasure and absence of pain. From this, psychological hedonism can be characterized as follows:

[Psychological Hedonism]: All human actions are motivated ultimately by one's self-interest; namely, by a basic desire to experience pleasure and to avoid pain.

There are some people who have understood psychological egoism in this particular way when they attributed psychological egoism to Hobbes.⁷ However, as long as one's theory

⁷ This seems to be the view of F. S. McNeilly in McNeilly (1966), where he argues that Hobbes was not a psychological egoist after he had wrote *Leviathan* because, unlike Hobbes's earlier works, pleasure no longer plays a central role in his philosophy. Jean Hampton also seems to be interpreting

3. Was Hobbes a Psychological

Egoist? As we have seen, psychological egoism generally claims that all human actions are ultimately motivated by one's self-interest. Different people have different conceptions of in what a person's self-interest consists. And this, in turn, results in slightly different versions of psychological egoism.

3.1. Was Hobbes a Psychological

Hedonist? One version of psychological egoism interprets a person's good in purely hedonistic terms. This is a version that is usually known as *psychological hedonism*. Psychological hedonists define a person's good as the experience of pleasure and the absence of pain. In fact, they go slightly further than this; according to psychological hedonism, the experi-

of the good (or well-being) allows the possibility of things other than the experience of pleasure and the absence of pain to constitute or contribute to one's self-interest, one need not be committed to psychological hedonism in order to be committed to psychological egoism; one can think that all human actions are ultimately motivated by one's own self-interest even if one thinks that not all human actions are motivated by a basic desire to experience pleasure and avoid pain.

There are grounds to think that Hobbes was not a psychological hedonist. For Hobbes, a person's ultimate self-interest consists in securing his/her long-term self-preservation.

Moreover, *the greatest of goods* for each is his/her own *preservation*. For nature is so arranged that all desire good for themselves. Insofar as it is within their capacities, *it is necessary to desire life, health*, and further, insofar as it can be done, security of future time. (Hobbes, *De Homine*, XI, 6, emphasis added)

Note that actions that best secure one's prospects for long-term self-preservation need not be *pleasurable*. For example, exercising regularly might be a good way to maintain physical health, but exercise is not always a pleasurable thing to do even when it is obvious that it would make the person healthier.

Furthermore, it is clear that Hobbes did not think that the fact that somebody is experiencing pleasure, by itself, guarantees that the person is achieving something that is truly good for him/her. According to Hobbes, there exists people who experience intense pleasure by conquering and having superior power over other people; namely, the glory-seekers.⁸ However, Hobbes emphatically denies that these glory-seekers are people who are seeking what is truly advantageous for them;⁹ which is their long-term self-preservation. In fact, he calls this type of people "mad."¹⁰

So, not only did Hobbes not think that the experience of pleasure and the absence of pain exhausts a person's self-interest, but he also did not think that pursuing pleasure can always be regarded as a case of pursuing one's real self-interest. Therefore, we can at the very least say that Hobbes was not a psychological hedonist. However, this isn't yet sufficient to show that Hobbes was not a psychological egoist, since it might still be the case that Hobbes thought that all human actions are ultimately motivated by a basic desire to

Hobbes as a psychological hedonist when she claims that Hobbes is committed to the view that all of our desires are ultimately produced by pleasure-producing and pain-avoiding physical mechanisms. Hampton thinks that Hobbes is not committed to the view that every human desire has a *self-regarding motivational content*. However, her interpretation is still a version of psychological egoism (more specifically, psychological hedonism) according to our current framework. See Hampton (1986: 23-24).

⁸ "Joy arising from imagination of a man's own power and ability is that exultation of the mind which is called GLORYING..." (Hobbes, *Leviathan*, VI, 39)

⁹ As we will later see, these people are the main culprits of the state of nature descending into a state of universal war.

¹⁰ "The passion whose violence or continuance maketh *madness* is ... great vain-glory... (Hobbes, *Leviathan*, VIII, 18, emphasis on "madness" is mine)

promote one's own self-interest, (and, thereby, was committed to psychological egoism), even though he thought that such actions may not always result in pleasurable (as well as less painful) experiences.

3.2. Hobbes's Dictum and Tautological Egoism. Now, many places within Hobbes's text seem to suggest that Hobbes was committed to the following doctrine:

[Hobbes's Dictum]: Everybody is motivated by his/her current desires or preferences; that is, everybody always aims to satisfy his/her current desires or preferences whenever he/she acts.¹¹

The doctrine, as it is stated, is not a version of psychological egoism. It is merely a theory of motivation. The reason why Hobbes's Dictum is not yet a version of psychological egoism is because it is not supplemented with a theory of self-interest or personal good. It claims that people in general are motivated by their current desires and preferences; however, it is silent on the issue of whether satisfying these desires and preferences will be actually good for the people in question.

So, there is an apparent way for Hobbes's Dictum to become a version of psychological egoism – namely, by being combined with, what is called, *the desire-satisfaction theory of the good*. According to the desire-satisfaction theory of the good, it is always good for a person to satisfy his/her current desires or preferences. When one supplements Hobbes's Dictum with the desire-satisfaction theory of the good, this would virtually be claiming that everybody is motivated by his/her own self-interest – namely, to satisfy his/her current desires and preferences. This is a version of psychological egoism that is sometimes called “tautological egoism.”¹²

The adjective “tautological”, here, is purposely used to express reluctance to acknowledge tautological egoism as a genuine version of psychological egoism. This is understandable because tautological egoism does not in any way restrict the type of desires or preferences that somebody may have in order for him/her to count as an egoist. Suppose that you are a saint who greatly sacrificed your own personal well-being to advance some humanitarian cause. A tautological egoist will say that you are an egoist, a selfish person, rather than a selfless person; this is because you preferred to advance such humanitarian cause yourself, and by acting accordingly, you satisfied such preferences, which amounts to your own good. So, as long as people are motivated by their desires and preferences, we can clearly see that tautological egoism is virtually non-falsifiable.

One should note at this point that being supplied with any other theory of self-interest than the desire-satisfaction theory of the good will not make Hobbes's Dictum a version of psychological egoism. Suppose that one is a hedonist. Then, as long as one thinks that there can be certain desires the satisfaction of which is not always pleasurable,

¹¹ “Hobbes's Dictum” is a name that Nick Sturgeon has suggested for me to use.

¹² See Gert (1967) and “Introduction to Thomas Hobbes” contained in Hobbes (1991) and Kavka (1986: Chapter 2).

one is not a psychological egoist even when one accepts Hobbes's Dictum.

So, was Hobbes committed to Hobbes's Dictum? It seems so. Consider how Hobbes defines voluntary action. According to Hobbes, "a voluntary act is that which proceedeth from the will" (Hobbes, *Leviathan*, VI, 53) and the will is simply "the last appetite in deliberating" (Hobbes, *Leviathan*, VI, 53). In other words, what Hobbes is basically saying here is that every voluntary action proceeds from one's final preferences that emerge after one's practical deliberation process concludes. This is basically Hobbes's Dictum.

However, as we have just seen, the only way for Hobbes's Dictum to imply psychological egoism is for it to be combined with the desire-satisfaction theory of the good. Then, the question is whether Hobbes was committed to the desire-satisfaction theory of the good. Many people think that he was.¹³

However, I would like to claim that proper reading of Hobbes shows that, unlike what people commonly think, Hobbes was not actually committed to the desire-satisfaction theory of the good. There are two ways to show that Hobbes did not endorse the desire-satisfaction theory of the good.

1. Show that there is something that Hobbes thought to be objectively good for a given individual regardless of whether or not he/she prefers or desires it.
2. Show that there are certain things that Hobbes thought to be objectively bad for a given individual even when he/she prefers or desires it.

Here is a short argument for 1. For Hobbes, there are clearly people who prefer glory over their self-preservation; namely, *the vain-glorious* people.¹⁴ Hobbes makes it clear that only some and not all people fit into this category.¹⁵ Nonetheless, as we have seen previously, Hobbes thinks that achieving long-term self-preservation is the greatest good for everybody, including the people who prefer glory over their self-preservation. This means that, for Hobbes, there is something that is objectively good for somebody regardless of whether or not he/she desires or prefers it.

Here is a short argument for 2. For Hobbes, any passion or desire that makes people act in ways that are inconsistent with the achievement of their long-term self-preservation is *madness*.¹⁶ Clearly, Hobbes did not think that the satisfaction of the desires or prefer-

¹³ See Railton (1986), contained in Railton (2003: 49), Gauthier (1984: 51), Hampton (1986: 29 emphasis added).

¹⁴ "Also, because there be some that taking pleasure in contemplating their own power in the acts of conquest, which they pursue farther than their security requires" (Hobbes, *Leviathan*, XIII, 4) "Vain-glorious men ... are inclined to rash engaging..." (Hobbes, *Leviathan*, XI, 12).

¹⁵ "In the state of nature there is in all men a will to do harm, but not for the same reason or with equal culpability. One man practices the equality of nature (...) this is the mark of *modest man* (...) Another, supposing himself superior to other, wants to be allowed everything (...) that is the sign of an *aggressive character*. In his case, the will to do harm derives from *vainglory*." (Hobbes, *On the Citizen*, I, 4 emphasis added)

¹⁶ "... all passions that produce strange and unusual behavior are called by the general name of madness." (Hobbes, *Leviathan*, VIII, 20)

ences of people who suffer madness would be good for them. Furthermore, Hobbes's discussion of "the fool"¹⁷ suggests that Hobbes thought that it is bad to satisfy the preferences of people who sacrifice the prospects for securing their long-term self-preservation at the expense of short-term gain. (Presumably, this is why Hobbes calls such people a "fool.") This means that Hobbes did not think satisfying just any kind of preferences or desires would be good for the individual.

I believe that these two arguments show that Hobbes was not committed to the desire-satisfaction theory of the good, at least in its most simplistic form. And, since Hobbes's Dictum can be interpreted as a form of psychological egoism only when it is combined with the desire-satisfaction theory of the good, the fact that Hobbes was committed to Hobbes's Dictum alone does not make Hobbes a psychological egoist.

3.3. What Psychological Egoism is for Hobbes and whether He Endorsed It.

Remember that psychological egoism generally claims that everybody ultimately seeks (either consciously or unconsciously) to achieve their own self-interest. I have explained that different versions of psychological egoism can arise depending on in what one thinks a person's self-interest consists. As we have seen, Hobbes thinks that a person's real self-interest (or real good) consists in the achievement of the person's own long-term self-preservation. This means that, for Hobbes, psychological egoism would amount to be claiming the following:

[What "Psychological Egoism" Claims for Hobbes]: All human actions are ultimately motivated by one's self-interest; that is, all human actions are always motivated at bottom by a desire to achieve one's long-term self-preservation.

So, in order to see whether Hobbes was committed to psychological egoism, we would have to see whether Hobbes endorsed the above claim.

We can see that glory-seeking people, of which Hobbes acknowledges the existence, have the potential to falsify the claim that Hobbes had endorsed psychological egoism as it is formulated above. As we have seen, glory-seekers are the type of people who pursue power and glory even at the very expense of their long-term self-preservation. So, obvi-

"The passion whose violence or continuance maketh madness is either great vain-glory, which is commonly called *pride* and *self-conceit* or great dejection of mind." (Hobbes, *Leviathan*, VIII, 18, emphasis on "madness" is mine)

¹⁷ The fool hath said in his heart: "there is no such thing as justice"; and sometimes also with his tongue, seriously alleging that: "every man's conservation and contentment being committed to his own care, there could be no reason why every man might not do what he thought conduced thereunto, and therefore also to make or not make, keep or not keep, covenants was not against reason, when it conduced to one's benefit." He does not therein deny that there be covenants, and that they are sometimes broken, sometimes kept, and that such breach of them may be called injustice; but he questioneth whether injustice, taking away the fear of God (for the same fool hath said in his heart there is no God), may not sometimes stand with that of reason which dictateth to every man his own good. ... you may call it injustice, ..., yet it can never be against reason... (Hobbes, *Leviathan*, XV, 4).

According to Hobbes, "This specious reasoning is nevertheless false." (Hobbes, *Leviathan*, XV, 4)

ously, these people are not achieving their real self-interest – namely, their long-term self-preservation – when they act. However, as we have seen, psychological egoism is not a doctrine of achievement. It is perfectly consistent with psychological egoism that people generally fail to achieve their real self-interest as long as they are ultimately motivated by it.

This means that we would have to distinguish between *two types* of glory-seekers. The first type of glory-seekers are the type of people who are, indeed, ultimately motivated by a basic desire to secure their own long-term self-preservation (that is, their *real self-interest*), but falsely believe that displaying typical glory-seeking behaviors is the best way to achieve their long-term self-preservation. The second type of glory-seekers are the type of people who display typical glory-seeking behaviors because they are motivated at bottom by a basic desire or passion for (*vain*) *glory*, which is, according to Hobbes, not their *real good* (*self-interest*).

If I can show that Hobbes thought that there are at least some people who seek glory in the second type of way, then this suffices to show that Hobbes was not a psychological egoist in our current understanding of the doctrine. Let's revisit Hobbes's general discussions of glory and vain-glory:

Joy arising from imagination of a man's own power and ability is that exultation of the mind which is called Glorifying... (Hobbes, Leviathan, VI, 39)

Also, because there be some that taking pleasure in contemplating their own power in the acts of conquest, which they pursue farther than their security requires" (Hobbes, Leviathan, XIII, 4)

Vain-glorious men ... are inclined to rash engaging... (Hobbes, Leviathan, XI, 12)

The passion whose violence or continuance maketh madness is ... great vain-glory... (Hobbes, Leviathan, VIII, 18, emphases on "madness" and "great vain-glory" are mine)

Here, we can clearly see that Hobbes is referring to people who are ultimately motivated by the passion or desire for glory itself; this is different from *falsely believing* that seeking glory is the best way to achieve one's long-term self-preservation. We can further see that Hobbes does not think of glory as something that constitutes one's *real self-interest* (or *real good*); he denounces the passion for glory as being a major cause of *madness*.

So, we can clearly see that Hobbes thought that these second type of glory-seekers are a real possibility. Actually, not only does Hobbes think that these second type of glory-seekers are a real possibility, but he also thinks that these second type of glory seekers actually exist, and as it turns out, the existence of such glory-seekers is essential to Hobbes's political philosophy.¹⁸ So, according to Hobbes, not everybody is ultimately motivated by their real self-interest, which is their long-term self-preservation; some are

¹⁸ They are the main culprits for the state of nature dissolving into a universal state of war.

ultimately motivated by a passion for glory which is Hobbes deems to be a representative case of madness. Therefore, Hobbes did not hold psychological egoism.

Then, how are we supposed to make sense of the typical passages that apparently seem to suggest that Hobbes was committed to psychological egoism? Let's go back to the major passages which many people think give support for thinking Hobbes as a psychological egoist.

...of the voluntary acts of every man the object is some *good to himself*. (Hobbes, *Leviathan*, XIV, 8)

For no man giveth but with intention of good to himself, because gift is voluntary, and of all voluntary acts the object is to every man his own good... (Hobbes, *Leviathan*, XV, 16)

Here, we must remind ourselves that Hobbes has explicitly distinguished between *real good and apparent good* (or what is merely *called good*.)¹⁹ Therefore, the term "good" in these passages can be interpreted to mean either of two things: (1) an individual's *real good* (i.e. real self-interest) or (2) an individual's *apparent good* (i.e. what seems to be self-interest, but not always so.)

If the term "good" in these passages denote an individual's *real good*, then we would have to say that Hobbes was, indeed, asserting psychological egoism in the above passages. Remember that a voluntary action, for Hobbes, simply denotes an action that proceeds from one's final preferences after deliberation. The passages above would, then, basically be saying that whenever people act in their most preferred way, they always ultimately seek to achieve their real good (i.e. real self-interest), namely, their long-term self-preservation. This is psychological egoism for Hobbes.

However, as we have just seen, this conflicts with Hobbes's acknowledging the existence of vain-glorious people who do not ultimately pursue their real self-interest or real good. If one pursues such interpretation, one has no choice but to say that Hobbes was just plainly inconsistent.

However, we have an alternate option. We could interpret the term "good" in the above passages as denoting an individual's *apparent good*. An apparent good, for Hobbes, is something that the individual just happens to prefer; it is *apparently* good because the things that people just happen to prefer are not always *really* good or in the best interest of the person in question. Suppose that we interpret the term "good" in the above passages as denoting an individual's apparent good. Then, this combined with Hobbes's definition of voluntary act as an act "that which proceedeth from the will" (Hobbes, *Leviathan*, VI, 53) as well as his definition of the will as "the last appetite in deliberating"

¹⁹ "... good (like evil) is divided into *real* and *apparent*." (Hobbes, *De Homine*, XI, 5)

"Whence it happens that inexperienced men that do not look closely enough at the long-term consequences of things, accept what appears to be good, not seeing the evil annexed to it; afterwards they experience damage. And this is what is meant by those who distinguish good and evil as *real* and *apparent*." (Hobbes, *De Homine*, XI, 5)

(Hobbes, *Leviathan*, VI, Section 53) would imply that the sentence, “of all voluntary acts the object is to every man his own good”, would virtually be expressing the same proposition as the sentence, “For every human being, the basic aim of acting in one’s most preferred way is to obtain what one happens to prefer.” In other words, what Hobbes is claiming in the above passages is that everybody is motivated by his/her desires. This is just Hobbes’s Dictum, and, as we have seen, Hobbes’s Dictum does not imply psychological egoism.

In order to show that this, indeed, is a better interpretative strategy, we would have to show that interpreting the term “good” as denoting an individual’s apparent good does not lead us to any similar inconsistency that interpreting the term as denoting an individual’s real good does. And, we can see that it, indeed, does not.

Let’s go back to behaviors of the second type of glory-seekers. When these glory-seekers acted voluntarily in typical glory-seeking ways, they were obviously not aiming to achieve their own real good. However, we can still say that the glorious outcomes that were sought by these glory-seekers when they acted voluntarily (i.e. when they acted in their most preferred way) were, despite its being not really good for them, something that *was at least what they most preferred*. As we have seen, for Hobbes, something that one happens to most prefer at a given moment is one’s apparent good. Therefore, we can say that when these second type of glory-seekers acted voluntarily by acting in their most preferred way, their basic aim was to achieve their *apparent* or *seeming good*. So, we can say that, for Hobbes, everybody, including *even* these second type of glory-seekers, seek their (apparent) good when they act voluntarily.

This is exactly what Hobbes would be saying in the above passages if we interpret the term “good” as denoting an individual’s apparent good. And this seems to be the only way to make the above passages consistent with what Hobbes says about the existence of the second type of glory-seekers who obviously do not aim to achieve their long-term self-preservation, which, according to Hobbes, is their real self-interest.

So again, there is a critical difference between, on the one hand, people who display glory-seeking behaviors because they mistakenly believe that such behaviors are conducive to securing their long-term self-preservation, and, on the other hand, people who display glory-seeking behaviors because they are influenced and ultimately motivated by their strong passions for glory and power. Hobbes would be a psychological egoist only if everybody who displayed glory-seeking behaviors fit into the first category. However, not only did Hobbes thought that there are glory-seeking people who fit into the second category, but the existence of glory-seekers of the second type is essential for Hobbes’s political philosophy.²⁰

In short, Hobbes did not endorse psychological egoism. The many passages that make it seem that he is advancing psychological egoism can be explained away by interpreting them as stating Hobbes’s Dictum. And, Hobbes’s Dictum does not imply psycho-

²⁰ See Chung (2015)’s game-theoretic analysis of Hobbes’s state of nature to understand how the existence of glory-seekers plays a key role in dissolving Hobbes’s state of nature into a state of universal war.

logical egoism unless it is combined with the desire-satisfaction theory of the good – a doctrine that Hobbes rejects.

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