From soul to mind in Hobbes’s *The Elements of Law*

Alexandra Chadwick

To cite this article: Alexandra Chadwick (2020) From soul to mind in Hobbes’s *The Elements of Law*, History of European Ideas, 46:3, 257-275, DOI: 10.1080/01916599.2019.1697943

To link to this article: https://doi.org/10.1080/01916599.2019.1697943

© 2019 The Author(s). Published by Informa UK Limited, trading as Taylor & Francis Group

Published online: 02 Dec 2019.

Submit your article to this journal

Article views: 1045

View related articles

View Crossmark data
From soul to mind in Hobbes’s *The Elements of Law*

Alexandra Chadwick

Department of the History of Philosophy, University of Groningen, Netherlands

**ABSTRACT**

This paper examines the significance and originality of Hobbes’s use of ‘mind’, rather than ‘soul’, in his writings on human nature. To this end, his terminology in the discussion of the ‘faculties of the mind’ in *The Elements of Law, Natural and Politic* (1640) is considered in the context of English-language accounts of the ‘faculties of the soul’ in three widely-read works from the first half of the seventeenth century: Thomas Wright’s *The Passions of the Minde in Generall* (1604), Robert Burton’s *The Anatomy of Melancholy* (1621), and Edward Reynolds’s *A Treatise of the Passions and Faculties of the Soule of Man* (1640). For Hobbes’s contemporaries, man’s soul conveyed God-like powers to human beings; for Hobbes this is a dangerous idea. Accordingly, he establishes a sharp divide between ‘soul’ and ‘mind’, understanding the two terms to be concerned with two very different things: one with soteriology, the other with mental abilities. Like his contemporaries, Hobbes thought that understanding the faculties reveals the way to live a good life. But unlike them, his moral and political philosophy relies on citizens accepting that they are not like God, rather than looking to restore the ‘divine’ within themselves.

**KEYWORDS**

Thomas Hobbes; mind; soul; faculty psychology

1. Introduction

Hobbes’s preference for the word ‘mind’ instead of ‘soul’ in his writings on human nature has been noted, but the reasons behind this choice of terminology have received little attention.¹ It has been said that Hobbes avoids ‘soul’ because of his materialism,² but this does not tell us very much: other authors, such as Lucretius and Telesio, made use of *anima* in theories which have also been labelled ‘materialist’. And why could a ‘soul’ not be conceptualised as a corporeal entity? Moreover, the explanation is in danger of anachronism, or at least imprecision, by taking the set of views which constitute ‘materialism’ to be given, and losing sight of Hobbes’s own commitments and motivations. In what follows I consider what Hobbes’s use of the vocabulary of mind and soul in English reveals to us about his purpose and priorities, by examining his psychological terminology in *The Elements of Law* (1640) in the context of English-language accounts of the ‘faculties of the soul’ from the first half of the seventeenth century. I shall ask what associations of ‘soul’ caused Hobbes to remove the term from his philosophical psychology in what is, as we shall see, such a meticulous manner. And I shall consider what this excision might tell us about why Hobbes begins his first work of political philosophy with an account of the ‘faculties of the mind’.

---


By 1640, doctrinal controversies, shifts in metaphysical models of the world, and changing disciplinary boundaries had unsettled, though not unseated, scholastic-Aristotelian accounts of the faculties of the soul. Focusing on Hobbes's terminology will help to clarify his relation to that tradition. It is often said that Hobbes rejects faculty psychology. However, investigating Hobbes's transformation of soul to mind demonstrates that rather than ignoring or rejecting a faculty model of human psychology, he reworks it, in order to present a radically different picture of man’s powers. In early modern debates on the soul, different conceptions of human nature were at stake. In their description of the faculties of the soul, I argue, Hobbes's English contemporaries presented an exalted view of human capacities in which man’s soul conveyed ‘divine’ abilities. It is this idea of man which Hobbes, in his account of the faculties of the ‘mind’, sought to overturn. Yet Hobbes shares his contemporaries’ view that knowledge of the faculties is fundamental to ethics and politics.

The argument proceeds as follows. In Section 2, I set out considerations concerning the appropriate linguistic context in which to view Hobbes’s model of the faculties of the ‘mind’ in The Elements of Law (hereafter, The Elements), and identify three English-language sources with which to compare Hobbes’s text. Section 3 outlines the accounts of the ‘faculties of the soul’ presented in these three sources. I establish the claims about men’s abilities which they express, the terms in which they express them, and consider three ways in which their depiction of man’s faculties was intended to serve a moral purpose. Section 4 sets out Hobbes’s alternative account of the ‘faculties of the body, and faculties of the mind.’ It focuses on the terminology he uses, and avoids, in order to highlight the new picture of man’s nature that he presents. In Section 5, I show the rigorous and innovative way in which Hobbes separates the use of ‘mind’ from ‘soul’. Unlike the three English sources, he reserves ‘soul’ for the topic of salvation, and uses only ‘mind’ in relation to the faculties. Section 6 considers why this new concept of mind matters for Hobbes’s practical philosophy: his move from soul to mind reflects his view that the scholastic rational soul gives man the dangerous idea that his abilities are God-like. That there is indeed a new concept of mind that Hobbes, in his account of the faculties of the ‘mind’, sought to overturn. Yet Hobbes shares his contemporaries’ view that knowledge of the faculties is fundamental to ethics and politics.

In short, I shall suggest that in his account of ‘mans natural faculties’ Hobbes ‘abandon[s] all of the conceptual baggage associated with the word “soul” in favour of a radically new term, “mind”’. This is an innovation Paul S. MacDonald, in his History of the Concept of Mind, attributes to Descartes; the argument I present here suggests it could in fact be said of Hobbes. The sharp divide

5I refer to ‘man’ and ‘his’ nature in accordance with Hobbes’s usage.
6Serjeantson, ‘The Soul’.
9Indeed, it could perhaps be said more accurately of Hobbes, since Descartes’s mens retains not only the spirituality and immortality of the anima rationalis, but also preserves the connection with God through the divine image in the intellect and will (John
Hobbes establishes between ‘mind’ and ‘soul’ reflects his view that the two terms are concerned with two different ideas: one with our earthly abilities, and the other with soteriology. By confusing the two, man has overestimated his powers, and placed a false conception of his nature at the centre of moral and political philosophy.

2. The context for Hobbes’s ‘mind’

An instructive context in which to consider Hobbes’s terminology of mind and soul is a group of texts rarely considered in relation to his work: English-language treatments of the faculties and passions of the soul from the first half of the seventeenth century. I shall draw on three texts: Thomas Wright’s *The Passions of the Minde in Generall* (1604), Robert Burton’s *The Anatomy of Melancholy* (1621), and Edward Reynolds’s *A Treatise of the Passions and Faculties of the Soule of Man*, which was published in the same year that Hobbes completed *The Elements*. The English-language context is crucial for establishing the significance of Hobbes’s psychological terminology in *The Elements*, given that the vocabulary of mind and soul in the seventeenth century cannot straightforwardly be translated between the different languages in which relevant discussions took place. Not only was the terminology particularly unstable, but the range of terms available depended on the language in which an author was writing: for example, Latin has *animus, anima, ingenium, mens, spiritus*, whereas English has ‘mind’, ‘soul’ and ‘spirit’, and French must make do with *âme* and *esprit*. By comparing Hobbes’s vocabulary in his presentation of ‘mans natural faculties’ with that of others who discussed the faculties in English, we shall see clearly what he was content to carry over into his own account, and what he saw fit to rephrase or omit.

Furthermore, comparison with these sources gives us access to ways in which ideas of the soul were reflected in the thinking of a wider educated class, outside the narrow group of people directly engaging with Aristotle’s *De anima*. This is important because Hobbes is not addressing the schoolmen in *The Elements*, but those of his countrymen whose reasoning on matters of ethics and politics he believes has been distorted by scholastic confusion. I therefore concentrate on presentations of the soul’s faculties which were prominent in England at the time Hobbes wrote *The Elements*, and which we might therefore reasonably regard him as seeking to challenge by presenting his own faculty psychology. All three texts chosen were popular works that ran to several editions.

This focus has the additional benefit of giving specific content to the otherwise unsatisfactorily vague category of ‘scholastic-Aristotelian’ faculty psychology, against which we can position Hobbes’s new account. It is clear that, within any characterisation of the former, the concept of ‘soul’ had to do a lot of work. It was, first of all, the form of a living body (hence, that which is

---


10The authors I discuss here feature in some recent discussions of early modern psychology which also include Hobbes. For example, Deanna Smid, *The Imagination in Early Modern English Literature* (Leiden: Brill, 2017), 17–21; Schmitter, *Passions and Affections*.

11The 1604 edition is a ‘corrected, enlarged, and … augmented’ edition of Wright’s 1601 work *The Passions of the Minde*.


15Hobbes’s criticism of the schoolmen is stronger and more polemical in *Leviathan* than in *The Elements*. Nevertheless, *The Elements* presents previous philosophy as confused and causing more harm than benefit (see, for example, EL I.13.3).

‘animate’ was that which possessed an anima).\textsuperscript{17} The specifically human soul was, in the words of Aquinas, ‘the principle of intellectual operation’, and an incorporeal substance that, joined with a body, makes a man.\textsuperscript{18} Incorporeality was deemed necessary both to allow for the operations of the intellectual power, and to enable the soul of man to be immortal, as required by Christian doctrine. Further, by virtue of his rational soul man was most clearly drawn in God’s image, enabling him to ascend to a higher level of knowledge than any other mortal creature, and to have the ‘capacity for the highest good’.\textsuperscript{19} The philosophical ingenuity involved in attempting to hold all these functions of ‘soul’ together ensured that the de anima debates over the four centuries between Aquinas and Hobbes bore little resemblance to that caricature, painted by Renaissance and early modern critics, of the schoolmen parroting arguments from authorities. On the contrary, numerous studies have emphasised considerable variations in the division of the faculties themselves, their relation to each other, to the soul, and to the body.\textsuperscript{20} Moreover, anti-Aristotelian views had long been available.\textsuperscript{21} Hence by focusing on particular presentations of faculty psychology close to Hobbes in time and place when he was writing The Elements, we might more accurately highlight Hobbes’s changes and their significance.

There is evidence that Hobbes was directly acquainted with two of the three texts: Wright’s Passions and Burton’s Anatomy feature in the catalogue of the library at Hardwick Hall, which was drawn up by Hobbes in the 1620s, with some additions from the 1630s.\textsuperscript{22} Although Reynolds’s Treatise was published too late to feature in the catalogue, the book is particularly relevant as a comparison with Hobbes’s ideas. For one thing, Reynolds was a close contemporary, who went up to Oxford only seven years after Hobbes left. For another, Reynolds’s arguments have claims to orthodoxy, both because the treatise is based on his studies in the ‘Schools of Learning’, and because it remained an undergraduate text at Oxford until the end of the century.\textsuperscript{23} It is also significant that when the first thirteen chapters of The Elements were published as Human Nature in 1650 – probably without Hobbes’s knowledge and certainly without his direct involvement – the subtitle declared the book to be a Discoverie of the Faculties, Acts, and Passions of The Soul of Man.\textsuperscript{24} This title, so close to that of Reynolds’s book, suggests that Hobbes was thought to be engaging in a similar endeavour. What this endeavour might be I shall consider further in the next section.

Before moving on, however, it is worth considering whether a discussion of Hobbes’s language of mind and soul in the mid-seventeenth century might more fruitfully consider the influence of Descartes, whose innovativeness in this area is well known. As Marleen Rozemond puts it, Descartes

\textsuperscript{17} Aquinas, Summa Theologiae [ST], translated by the Fathers of the English Dominican Province, accessed online: http://dhspriory.org/thomas/summa, Ia, Q. 75, A. 5; A. 1.
\textsuperscript{18} ST Ia, Q. 75, A. 2.
\textsuperscript{19} ST Ia, Q. 93, A. 2.
\textsuperscript{24} The full title is Human Nature: or, The fundamental Elements of Policie. Being a Discoverie of the Faculties, Acts, and Passions of The Soul of Man, from their original causes; According to such Philosophical Principles as are not commonly known or asserted. A preface by ‘FB’ (the first edition was printed for Francis Bowman of Oxford) states that the book was published not by the author but ‘by a friend, with leave from him’. Further evidence of Hobbes’s lack of involvement in the publication is cited by Tönnies in his edition of The Elements.
3. The faculties of the soul in Wright, Burton, and Reynolds

I now turn to establish some positions of agreement about the soul and its faculties in our three authors – Wright, Burton, and Reynolds – and the terminology in which they are expressed. I shall then highlight three ways in which knowledge of the soul’s faculties was understood to serve a moral purpose. In this manner we can identify a narrative about man’s powers into which Hobbes was intervening with The Elements. The claims made by the three authors are not, for the most part, unusual, but by examining how they articulated those claims, we can establish the particular form they took in English in the first half of the seventeenth century, allowing us more clearly to identify what is striking about Hobbes’s own presentation of man’s faculties, and to better appreciate its implications.

While the philosophical influences on the three texts were eclectic, and their theological allegiances varied, a similar three-part division of the faculties of the soul is present in each. Burton begins his account ‘Of the Soule and her Faculties’ by briefly acknowledging differences of opinion among philosophers concerning the number of souls men possess, mentioning amongst others the views of Zabarella and Campanella. He nevertheless affirms that ‘The common division of the Soule, is into three principall faculties; Vegetall, Sensitive, and Rationall’. This ‘common’ division of the faculties follows closely that which Katharine Park identifies as the Aristotelian model widely accepted up to 1600. Burton’s division of the soul is presented in Figure 1. He explains that

2. See Serjeantson, The Soul, 131. The qualification ‘human’ or ‘rational’ soul becomes superfluous for Descartes, since he restricts souls to human beings. On Descartes’s use of the language of mind and soul, see Fowler, Descartes on the Human Soul, Chapter 5.
3. See Serjeantson, The Soul, 131. The qualification ‘human’ or ‘rational’ soul becomes superfluous for Descartes, since he restricts souls to human beings. On Descartes’s use of the language of mind and soul, see Fowler, Descartes on the Human Soul, Chapter 5.
6. We do not have Hobbes’s first letter to Descartes; Descartes’ reply is dated [11/] 21 January 1641. The six letters that remain are printed as Letters 29, 30, 32, 33, 34 and 36 in Hobbes, Correspondence.
7. Using ‘faculty’ and ‘power’ interchangeably was common practice (in Latin facultas and vis or potentia).
8. Robert Burton, Anatomy, 1.148. References are given to the volume and page number of the Kiessling, Faulkner and Blair edition.
9. Park, ’The Organic Soul’, 464–7; compare Figure 1 with the diagram of the soul’s faculties in Park, ’The Organic Soul’, 466.
man’s ‘Rationall Soule’ includes the powers, & performs the dueties of the [vegetall and sensitive souls], which are contained in it, and all three Faculties make one Soule’.  

This model also underlies Wright’s and Reynolds’s work; although they do not present it in the same systematic fashion, it is expressed in similar language. Reynolds, for example, discusses the ‘Faculty of Understanding’ at length. He acknowledges the ‘Operations of the vegetative soule … common to Beasts, Men, and Plants’, and ‘the sensitive Appetite … common to Men and Beasts’. Wright’s work is focused more exclusively on the passions – defined as ‘actes of the sensitive power, or facultie of our soule’ – and contains less on the understanding, but throughout the text he shows himself to be broadly in conformity with the tripartite ‘common division of the soul’. How these faculties relate to each other and to the soul is left unexplained, however. Though all agree that the human soul must be a ‘spirituall substance’, ‘immateriall’ and ‘incorporeall’, addressing the metaphysical problems concerning the soul and its faculties is not a concern for any of the three authors. According to Wright, questions of this kind which perplexed the schoolmen are unanswered, and perhaps unanswerable. Burton similarly claims that ‘How [the] three principall faculties are distin-
guished and connected … is beyond humane capacitie’. Reynolds merely touches on the manner in which the ‘reasonable soul’ is independent from the body.

All three authors accept the view that in his rational faculties, man displays the image of God. Wright claims, for example, that man ‘beareth in the face of his soule [God’s] perfit portrait and image in a farre higher degree [than other creatures]. Reynolds, who provides the fullest account, devotes the last quarter of his book to the ‘Dignities of the Soule of Man’, including a chapter on ‘the Image of God in the Reasonable Soule’. By virtue of the Understanding, Reynolds writes, ‘the Soule

---

35This is the subject of Chapter XXXVII of his treatise.
36Reynolds, Treatise, 62.
37For example, Wright, Passions, 53, 67, 301. In his definition of ‘passions’ (ibid., 8) Wright cites John of Damascus, thereby following Aquinas: Aquinas, ST IaIIae, Q. 22, A. 3.
38Wright, Passions, 301, 309; Reynolds, Treatise, 403; Burton, Anatomy, I.157.
39Wright, Passions, 300–8. After listing 120 ‘Problemes concerning the substance of our Soules’, he declares ‘GOD knows, who was, is, or ever shall bee able to answere them exactly’.
40Burton, Anatomy, I.148.
41Reynolds, Treatise, 403–6.
42Wright, Passions, 218; see also 221.
43Reynolds, Treatise, 324; 400.
of Man is made most Beloved of God, and his minde, which is Allied unto God, is it selfe Divine, and, of all other parts of Man, most Divine'. He also makes the link with the divine explicit in his account of conscience, describing it as a ‘higher and diviner Act of the Practicall Understanding’.

Burton, on the other hand, at first suggests that fallen man no longer displays the image of God, beginning the First Partition of his book by relating the ‘miserable and accursed’ condition of man to the ‘privation or destruction of Gods image’. Nevertheless, he later refers to the ‘decayed Image of God, which is yet remaining in us’, and to the ‘relics’ of that image. Although this connection between God and man is not referred to explicitly in his explanation of the rational faculties, he repeats, via Melanchthon (to whom his account of the faculties is indebted), an account of ‘synteresis’ and ‘conscience’ as ‘Species of the Understanding’ and ‘durable lights and notions’, concepts which have a long history of being understood as remnants of the divine image.

While the status of the divine image was disputed in early modern thought, with many authors by that time adopting a more Augustinian position concerning the extent to which it had been damaged, all three authors remain optimistic about human abilities. Reynolds acknowledges that the Fall of man ‘blinded his understanding’, and ‘enthralled’ his will – described as ‘that Supræme and Architectonicall Power in Mans little World’ – to ‘sensuell desires’. But although the image has been in this way ‘defaced’ by ‘hereditary pollution’ it is in part recoverable, if man ‘repaireth the ruins’. Similarly, Wright explains that although the rational faculties are often enslaved to ‘sensual’ appetites, it is possible for these appetites to ‘be well directed and made profitable’, and Burton writes that if we ‘correct our inordinate appetite, and conforme our selves to Gods word, [we] are as so many living Saints’.

Emphasising this aspect of restoration or repair, Sorana Corneanu has included Wright, Reynolds and Burton, in what she terms an early modern medicina-cultura animi tradition. The unifying aim of that tradition, according to Corneanu, is to diagnose the weaknesses of the human soul, and to use this self-knowledge to ‘cure’ them. In the next section, I suggest that the first thirteen chapters of The Elements have in common with these texts the aim to improve man’s condition by better acquainting him with his nature. However, as we shall see, Hobbes’s goal is not to show his readers how to restore a lost nature in which they are more like God, but rather to bring them to accept that they are not like Him.

To establish this requires considering in more detail the relationship between Wright, Burton, and Reynold’s model of the soul and morality. We can usefully distinguish three aspects of this relationship: their model of the soul identifies a source of moral knowledge, it explains failure to act on such knowledge, and it encourages men to try to act virtuously. The first – the association between moral knowledge and the remnants of the divine image – has already been touched upon. In Reynolds’s words, the ‘remainder of the Image [of God] in Man’ ensures that ‘there still remains a Pilot, or Light of Nature; many Principles of Practicall prudence, whereby … the course of our Actions may be directed with success and issue unto Civill and Honest ends’. It is worth

---

44 Reynolds, Treatise, 439; 531.
45 Burton, Anatomy, I.122.
46 Burton, Anatomy, III.355 and III.333.
48 Reynolds, Treatise, 439–43.
49 Wright, Passions, 15–16; Burton, Passions, I.128.
51 See also Rolf Soellner, Shakespeare’s Patterns of Self-knowledge (Ohio: Ohio State University Press, 1972), which discusses Burton and Wright as part of a tradition of texts following the injunction nosce teipsum.
52 There is a fourth: it presents human actions as ‘free’, and hence subject to praise or blame (see e.g. Reynolds, 540–8). However, since the intricacies of the debates about liberty and necessity require considerable unpacking, yet are not necessary for the argument presented here, I pass over this aspect.
53 Reynolds, Treatise, 438.
emphasising that even such a hard-line Augustinian as Calvin, who claims that ‘the heavenly image was obliterated’ by Adam’s disobedience (language which Burton’s position recalls), draws on its survival to account for moral knowledge: in relation to earthly matters, we can find some ‘sparks’ of the light of reason and hence ‘some remaining traces of the image of God’.54

Concerning the failure to act in accordance with this Light of Nature, all three authors attribute this to the overthrowing of the original hierarchy between higher and lower faculties. Wright tells us how the ‘reasonable soule … like an Empresse was to governe the body, direct the senses, guide the passions as subjectes and vassalles … [and] the inferior partes were bound to yeeld homage and obey’. But now men are ruled not by reason, but by an ‘inordinate inclination of the soul’: in other words, by the ‘unbrideled appetite of their sensual passions’.55 Reynolds agrees that the passions were created under the control of ‘Reason’ – a term which, he clarifies, comprises both ‘the Understanding and Will’. In man’s corrupt state, however, there is ‘fighting betweene his parts’. The ‘remainders’ of the ‘Light of our Reason’, are ‘so adverse to our unruly Appetite, as that it laboureth against us … to deprive us of those Reliques of Sight, which we yet retaine’.56 Burton similarly describes how the ‘Sensitive and Moving Appetite’ once obeyed the will, but the ‘harmony betwixt them … is now dissolved’ and ‘Reason is over borne by Passion’.57 Following the divine rather than the corrupt in one’s nature entails restoring harmony between the rational and sensitive faculties, as Burton describes in his example of Agamemnon: when he ‘could moderate his passion’ he was ‘like Jupiter’, but ‘when he became angry … there appeared no signe or likenesse of Jupiter in him’.58

While the broad strokes of this picture of a conflict between reason and passion are familiar and have a long history, two features of this particular formulation require emphasis. First, the troublesome ‘passion’ in question is a corrupt ‘sensitive appetite’. In addition to that appetite, the human soul possesses a ‘rational’ or ‘reasonable’ appetite. Wright, for example, draws on ‘that perturbe distinction of a triple appetite; naturall, sensitive, and reasonable: the first we finde in elements and plants, the second in beasts and men; the third in men and angelles’.59 Burton relays a similar threefold distinction of appetite, corresponding to the three kinds of faculties of the soul. The will, he notes (citing Aristotle), can be called ‘rationall Appetite, as in the Sensitive we are … ruled and directed by Sense; so in this we are carried by Reason’.60 Thus, the two appetites are distinguished by their objects: while the sensitive appetite was designed to lead men and beasts towards which is good for their bodily survival, the object of the will is that which is ‘Honest’.61 This brings us to the second point to note: appetitive powers do not themselves judge their objects as good or bad. This judgment is made by the respective ‘apprehensive’ power. Reynolds expresses this clearly: ‘all appetite (being a blind Power) is dependent upon the direction of some Knowledge’. What he calls ‘Sensitive Passions’, for example, ‘are grounded on the Fancie, Memorie, and … the common sense’.62 The will receives its direction from ‘Acts in the Understanding’, since it ‘hath not Judgment to discover an End’.63 The significance of these two points for comparison with Hobbes will become apparent in the next section.

55 Wright, Passions, 13–15.
56 Reynolds, Treatise, 61–3.
57 Burton, Anatomy, I.161.
58 Burton, Anatomy, I.128.
59 Wright, Passions, 12.
60 Burton, Anatomy, I.153; I.159.
61 Burton, Anatomy, I.160; Wright, Passions, 12.
62 Reynolds, Treatise 32: 37–9. For Reynolds, in humans these passions can be called ‘Rationall’, but he is careful to qualify that these are not ‘Acts of Reason’, but so called because the sensitive appetite owes ‘obedience to the Dictates of the Understanding’.
63 Reynolds, Treatise, 518. For the same point in Burton see I.153 and I.159.
Finally, the third way in which this model of the soul has moral implications concerns its role in inspiring human beings to live up to their divine potential. Wright, for example, invites his reader to imagine

a Kings sonne of most beautifull countenance and divine aspect resembling his father as much as a sonne could doe: who would not judge this Prince both inhumane and mad, if he would cut, mangle, and disgrace his owne face with grieslie woundes, and ugly forms?

Yet so acts the sinner. Hence knowledge of the connection between man’s soul and God was intended not only to show us what virtuous action involves, but also to encourage us to pursue it. Hobbes, however, as we shall see, rejects any benefit in associating man’s faculties with the divine, and instead grounds his political philosophy on a new model of the mind.

4. Hobbes’s model of man’s ‘natural faculties’

From the preceding discussion of three popular books from the first forty years of the seventeenth century, we can justifiably state that a broadly scholastic-Aristotelian faculty psychology was prominent in England when Hobbes wrote *The Elements*, and continued to provide the narrative through which men were to think about the soul. Man was presented as the possessor of three kinds of faculties, of which the reasonable powers of understanding and will were the highest. These powers not only raised human beings above beasts, but granted something of the divine to man. Doctrinal differences notwithstanding, the possibility of a virtuous life and civil order rested on the capacities bestowed on man through the remnants of the divine image in his soul. I now seek to highlight the terms in which Hobbes presents his own account of man’s faculties, showing the innovative ways in which he uses – and avoids – the vocabulary employed by Wright, Burton and Reynolds to present a new view of human nature: one in which the ‘Divine’ abilities conveyed by man’s soul have been removed.

It is in the first chapter of *The Elements* that Hobbes divides man’s ‘natural faculties’ into ‘powers of the body’ and ‘powers of the mind’. The former, he writes, are not ‘necessary to the present purpose’, which is to talk about ethics and politics, so he simply divides them into ‘nutritive’, ‘motive’, and ‘generative’ and discusses them no further. The powers of the mind, however, are the subject of the first thirteen chapters of the book. He subdivides these into two: the cognitive power and the motive power (see Figure 2). It is clear that Hobbes’s distinction between body and mind does not map on to the tripartite model of the soul. It is also apparent that his account amounts to a reformulation, rather than rejection, of a faculty model of human nature.

Hobbes’s ‘body’ is far narrower than the vegetative and sensitive powers shared with beasts, since it has lost nearly all of the latter; although ‘body’ retains a ‘motive power’, this is concerned with moving ‘other bodies’, whereas the appetitive and progressive faculties of the sensitive soul moved the body itself. Correspondingly, his ‘mind’ is far broader than the rational powers. We can see this by looking at the ‘acts’ attributed to the cognitive and motive powers: these are listed in *The Elements* Chapter 6, and presented in tabular form in the ‘The Order’. We should not make too much of the distinction between faculties and acts in Hobbes’s psychology: it holds in the main text of *The Elements*, whereas elsewhere the acts are referred to as faculties. Nevertheless, the acts attributed to the two powers reveal the extent of Hobbes’s deviation from Wright, Burton and Reynolds.

\[64\] Wright, *Passions*, 323. For another example, see Reynolds, *Treatise*, 443.

\[65\] EL I.1.4-8.

\[66\] EL I.6-9.

\[67\] EL I.6.9. ‘The Order’ (BL Harl. 4235, f. 3r) provides a scheme of *The Elements* in the form of a branching diagram. In some modern editions chapter titles are taken from the final level of the chart. However, the previous branches of the diagram, which group chapters together thematically, tend to be overlooked. Tönnies reproduced ‘The Order’ in his edition of *The Elements*.

\[68\] The acts are grouped together as the ‘facultys discrctive’ and the ‘facultys motive’ in ‘The Order’ (my italics). The first six chapters are bracketed under the former and the next three under the latter. In *Leviathan*, Hobbes describes the acts as ‘facultys’, for example at 44–7.
First, the omissions are striking: the rational faculties of ‘Understanding’ and ‘Will’ are absent. Consider the former first, the faculty which for Reynolds was ‘it selfe Divine, and, of all other parts of Man, most Divine’. Hobbes defines ‘understanding’ in Chapter 5, but his definition makes clear that he is using the term in a very different way: understanding is ‘a great ability in a man, out of the words, contexture, and other circumstances of language, to deliver himself from equivocation, and to find out the true meaning of what is said’. To understand is to have the same ‘conception’, or image, in our minds when we hear or see a word as was in the mind of the speaker or writer. The contrast with Wright, Burton and Reynolds’s idea of the Understanding brings into focus what Hobbes is doing with this definition: understanding now refers to men’s ability to understand one another, rather than to attain a God-like grasp of things; it refers to a relationship between human minds, rather than between the mind of a man and the mind of God.

In accordance with this removal of the Understanding, ‘conscience’ – Reynolds’s ‘higher and diviner Act of the Practicall Understanding’ – is not listed as an ‘act’ of the cognitive power. Hobbes does not refer to synderesis, nor to any ‘sparks’, and neither is there any mention of a ‘Light of Nature’ in The Elements. Later, in Leviathan, Hobbes writes that ‘The Light of humane minds is Perspicuous Words’, and much has been written about the role of language in ‘transforming’ Hobbes’s mind from animal to human. What should be equally emphasised, however, is that by describing those mental operations that are unique to human beings as resulting from language, rather than the faculty of Understanding, Hobbes demotes those operations from ‘Divine’ to merely human.

---

69EL I.5.8. See also L 62, ‘Understanding being nothing else, but conception caused by Speech’.
70Mark Hanin, ‘Thomas Hobbes’s Theory of Conscience’, History of Political Thought 33 (2012): 55–85 discusses Hobbes’s use of conscience in ‘scholastic’ context, but Hanin presents Hobbes as closer to a scholastic position than he is. For example, he claims Hobbes takes a side in a controversy concerning whether conscience is a separate faculty or an act, reading him as agreeing with William Ames that conscience is ‘an act of practicall judgment’ (2012, 58). Ames’s definition continues ‘proceeding from the Understanding by the power or means of a habit’ (William Ames, Conscience, with the Power and Cases thereof, London, 1639, 3). However, conscience is neither faculty nor act of Understanding in Hobbes’s psychology.
This is further demonstrated in his definitions of the cognitive acts of ‘knowledge’ and ‘ratiocination’: Hobbes makes a distinction between animal and human faculties, while avoiding associations with the divine. By listing the acts of the ‘cognitive power’ as ‘sense, imagination, discursion, ratiocination and knowledge’, he groups together operations which had been attributed to the sensitive and rational powers of the soul into one ‘cognitive’ power, overthrowing the hierarchy of the higher and lower faculties. Nevertheless, there are two types of knowledge, one of which is shared with beasts, and the other unique to man. The first, ‘knowledge original’, Hobbes defines as ‘nothing else but sense’. The second type is ‘knowledge of the truth of propositions, and how things are called’. Yet both sorts, in Hobbes’s deflationary definition, ‘are but experience; the former being the experience of the effects of things that work upon us from without; and the latter the experience men have of the proper use of names in language’.73

The uniquely human kind of knowledge is ‘derived from understanding’, but given how that latter term has been defined, this merely means that such knowledge relies on applying the same words to the same conceptions.74 Consistency between words and conceptions allows us to know ‘how things are called’ and hence ‘the truth of propositions’ – a true proposition being, for Hobbes, one in which ‘the latter appellation … comprehendeth the former’.75 ‘RATIOCINATION or reasoning’ is then defined as ‘the making of syllogisms’.76 In other words, after naming our conceptions, ratiocination is the process by which we ‘[join] those names in such manner, as to make true propositions’ and then ‘[join] those propositions in such manner as they be concluding’.77

Hence it appears that Hobbes does not intend the acts of ‘knowledge’ and ‘ratiocination’ to reassign the operations of the Understanding to language, but rather to remove that faculty by limiting knowledge to human experience.78 The ability to use language to name, communicate, and develop our conceptions is undoubtedly a ‘great ability’. But there is no suggestion that human cognition accesses divine knowledge. The terminology which recalled divine connections is absent. Certainly, Hobbes’s concept of ‘reason’ is a much-disputed topic within Hobbes scholarship which cannot be fully addressed here. Meticulous work has been done on his use of ‘right reason’ in particular, revealing ‘fluctuations’ in his use of the term.79 Yet what I wish to stress is that in his presentation of the faculties of the mind Hobbes carefully avoids referring to ‘cognitive’ abilities in a way that recalls the faculty of Understanding. His choice of words strongly suggests an intention to remove the divine from man’s nature.

This being so, it will come as no surprise that there is no reference to the ‘image of God’ in The Elements. The phrase does, however, appear in Part 4 of Leviathan, and it is worth considering what Hobbes says here to show that it does not alter the picture presented so far. Hobbes considers two senses of the ‘image of God’. The first refers to an image produced by sense, which is deemed an impossibility given that God is not a sensible body. The second takes ‘image’ in ‘a larger use’ meaning ‘any Representation of one thing by another’. In this second sense, Hobbes writes, ‘an earthly Soveraign may be called the Image of God’ in the same way as ‘an inferiour Magistrate the Image of an earthly Soveraign’.80 Mónica Brito Vieira notes that Hobbes is claiming ‘there can be no image of [God] by likeness’, but only by representation. The purpose of presenting the sovereign as the image of God by representation, she explains, is to undermine the language ‘commonly deployed

73EL I. 6.1; see also I.5.13.
74EL I.6.1.
75EL I.5.10.
76El I.5.11. Burton identified ‘reasoning’ as one of the acts of the Understanding (Anatomy, I.158). The prominence of ‘ratiocination’ in The Elements might suggest Hobbes’s intention to distinguish his own account. The term ‘ratiocination’ does not appear in Burton’s account of the faculties, and only makes a brief appearance in Reynolds (Treatise, 457). By contrast, Hobbes refers to ‘ratiocination’ almost twice as many times as ‘reasoning’ in the first thirteen chapters.
77EL I.6.4. In this way, Hobbes writes, ‘the truth of the conclusion [is] said to be known’.
78Thus I disagree with Leijenhorst’s claim that language, for Hobbes, ‘takes over the role of the scholastic active intellect’, The Mechanisation of Aristotelianism, 94.
80L 1030-2.
by the theorists of sacral monarchy to arrogate divinity to the king himself.\textsuperscript{81} In the same way, the denial of the possibility of an image of God by likeness also undermines the arrogation of divine powers to the human mind.\textsuperscript{82}

After dealing with the ‘cognitive’ acts, Hobbes turns to the ‘motive’: ‘the power motive of the mind’, he writes, ‘is that by which the mind giveth animal motion to that body wherein it existeth; the acts hereof are our affections and passions’.\textsuperscript{83} The omission of the ‘will’ as a moving power within humans is immediately conspicuous. Passions are called ‘APPETITE’ or ‘AVERSION’, depending on whether their object ‘delighteth’ or ‘displeaseth’.\textsuperscript{84} The will, Hobbes famously explains, is simply the name we give to ‘the last appetite, as also the last fear’.\textsuperscript{85} Hobbes’s choice to call all the appetites of the human mind ‘passions’ collapses the distinction between higher and lower appetites made by Wright, Burton and Reynolds, who associated passion so strongly with corrupt sensitive appetite. Their model of an ‘unruly’ and ‘inordinate’ inclination ‘fighting’ against reason is rejected, since Hobbes’s model retains only one appetitive faculty.

The acts of the motive power depend on prior cognitive acts: passions arise from ‘conceptions’.\textsuperscript{86} Yet Hobbes significantly changes the relationship between appetite and apprehension. Recall that an appetite had been understood to require a prior judgment of good or evil made by an apprehensive power: according to Hobbes, however, a passion itself is an evaluative judgment. Specifically, a passion is a movement ‘in which consisteth pleasure or pain’, resulting from the interaction of a conception with the ‘vital motion’ of the body. Depending on whether this interaction produces pleasure or pain, we designate the conception ‘GOOD’ or ‘EVIL’.\textsuperscript{87} Passions, then, are our source of moral knowledge, since they are our way of forming judgements about good and evil. Given the previous emphasis on ‘passion’ as fighting against reason, that Hobbes designates all human judgements of good or evil as ‘passions’ suggests his intention to dispense with the idea of a corrupt inferior appetite rebelling against man’s higher powers.\textsuperscript{88}

It should now be clear that Hobbes’s reworking of the faculties rejects the relationship between the soul and morality which Wright, Burton and Reynolds endorse. First, although Hobbes draws a distinction between human and animal cognitive capacities, he removes the image of God, cutting off human cognition from the divine. Moral knowledge is not shared with God, but at best with other human beings. Second, there is no longer a battle within men’s souls between the lower and higher faculties, between passion and reason. Thus moral failure can no longer be conceptualised as the result of a corrupt sensitive appetite working against ‘those Reliques of Sight which we yet retaine’.

Hobbes makes clear that he regards his new account of the powers of the mind to be fundamental to his ethics and politics. Not only are those powers necessary ‘to the present purpose’, but he introduces his moral theory, in chapter 14 of The Elements, by stating that ‘in the precedent chapters hath been set forth the whole nature of man, consisting in the powers natural of his body and mind, and may all be comprehended in these four: strength of body, experience, reason, and passion’. The passage is repeated at the beginning of De cive (with adjustments concerning the reference to the ‘precedent chapters’). This implies that, whether or not he was successful, Hobbes at least intended his normative philosophy to draw on his faculty psychology, in which the concepts of ‘reason’ and

---

\textsuperscript{81}Mónica Brito Vieira, The Elements of Representation in Hobbes (Leiden: Brill, 2009), 32.

\textsuperscript{82}Calvin, Institutes, I.XV.2 discusses various opinions about whether ‘image’ is equivalent to ‘likeness’ in the context of the imago Dei. He finds an ‘obvious absurdity in those who indulge in philosophical speculation as to these names [i.e. image and likeness]’ and concludes that they mean the same thing.

\textsuperscript{83}EL I.6.9.

\textsuperscript{84}EL I.7.2.

\textsuperscript{85}EL I.12.2. ‘Fear’ is another term for ‘aversion’, used in relation to expected displeasure, rather than present displeasure (EL I.7.2).

\textsuperscript{86}EL I.8.1.

\textsuperscript{87}EL I.7.2-3.

\textsuperscript{88}Note that Hobbes’s model of the mind might have resources to distinguish between two different sorts of passions: those which follow from the first and second kinds of knowledge. Thus it might be that we could (though Hobbes does not) term some passions ‘sensitive’ – that is, they arise from a conception which is ‘nothing else but sense’, and some ‘rational’ – that is, they arise from a conception arrived at through ratiocination. But the important point is that these are all ‘passions’, rather than two warring appetites in man.
‘passion’ had been radically redrawn by his rejection of the divine image and of the corrupt appetite which fought against its remains. 89

In Section 6 I shall sketch why this move was necessary within Hobbes’s political philosophy, and why for him the divine image serves not as a moral inspiration, but as a dangerous delusion. But first I turn to the terminological distinction Hobbes instigates between ‘mind’ and ‘soul’, to establish that it is sufficiently rigorous and unusual to reflect his separation of human mental capacities from considerations of man’s relationship to God.

5. ‘Soul’ and ‘mind’

A brief survey of the language used by Burton, Wright, and Reynolds shows that their three-part model of the powers of the ‘soul’ existed uneasily alongside an equivocal use of ‘mind’. The English term ‘mind’ has always conveyed a variety of meanings, even if we exclude those that are metaphorical or associated with memory. 90 ‘Mind’ was often used as the English translation of the Latin mens which referred to the Understanding; it is this sense of ‘mind’ that Reynolds conveys when he refers to it as ‘allied unto God’. Yet Reynolds also uses ‘mind’ in other, very different, ways. Most notably, on one occasion he refers to ‘faculties of the Minde’ in comparison with the body, and includes ‘Inferiour’ faculties (which he has earlier attributed to the sensitive soul) within the scope of the former. 91 Burton uses the phrase ‘Body and mind’ frequently throughout his text, but he also refers to ‘body and soul’, and there is no discernible pattern as to when one is used and when the other. As for Wright, the ‘minde’ in his Passions of the Minde cannot be mens, given that Wright defines passions as acts of the sensitive faculty. At one point, he does identify passions in the ‘highest and chiefest part of the soule’ but distinguishes these from the ‘Passions of the Minde’. 92

In addition to mind as mens, then, ‘mind’ could encompass sensitive faculties, but it could also be used interchangeably with ‘soul’, in conjunction with ‘body’, and might even be used in contrast with the ‘highest’ part of the soul. Hence the use of ‘mind’ and ‘soul’ was full of equivocation. Although a mind/body distinction was often made, it is not clear how this should, or could, relate to the model of a tripartite soul. For Hobbes, however, the avoidance of equivocation is fundamental to philosophy. The imposition of names and their consistent usage is the way to ensure philosophical truth. 93 In accordance with this principle, he removes ‘soul’ from an account of the faculties, and speaks only of ‘mind’. The word ‘soul’ appears only five times in The Elements, and never in the discussion of the powers of the mind. On three of those occasions, ‘soul’ arises in the context of eternal life and salvation; another is a biblical quotation. 94 This soul, however, plays no part in the explanation of man’s faculties.

It seems that in 1640 Hobbes had not yet decided how to approach the doctrinal need for a separable soul. He writes that ‘We who are Christians acknowledge … that the soul of man is a spirit’ which is ‘immortal’, though adds that both scripture and ‘natural discourse’ support the view that such spirits are corporeal. 95 By the time he wrote Leviathan Hobbes was prepared to state that the ‘soul’ referred to in scripture is not a separable part of a human being, but a word applied to designate a body as living rather than dead: ‘The Soule in Scripture, signifieth alwaies, either the Life, or the Living Creature; and the Body and Soule jointly, [signifies] the Body alive’. 96 The eternal life referred to in scripture will be the restoration of life to a resurrected body. The soul therefore retains its role conferring eternal life on the faithful and, as a consequence of Hobbes’s way of doing this,

90MacDonald, History of the Concept of Mind, 255–62.
91Reynolds, Treatise, 281.
92Wright, Passions, 30–31.
93EL I.5.8; I.6.4. See also L 56.
94EL I.11.5 (twice); II.6.6; I.18.2. The fifth occurs in a discussion of ‘the three sorts of commonwealth’, in which Hobbes refers to a man consisting ‘of a body and soul natural’. This is in a passage of no consequence for his account of the faculties, and is merely a turn of phrase used to distinguish a ‘natural’ person from the ‘fictitious’ body politic (EL II.2.4).
95EL I.11.5.
96L 974.
A conceptual distinction between ‘mind’ and ‘soul’ retains its importance to Hobbes in his Latin works. In Chapter XXX of the Anti-White, written in the early 1640s, the word which corresponds to the use of ‘mind’ in The Elements is animus. The translation of ‘mind’ by animus continues throughout Hobbes’s writings, with very few exceptions. Leviathan is the most useful text for demonstrating this: in English it makes extensive use of both ‘mind’ (particularly in Part I, ‘Of Man’) and ‘soul’ (in the chapters on Christian doctrine), and Hobbes’s Latin translation distinguishes these terms by animus and anima. It is perhaps unsurprising that Hobbes chose animus rather than mens for his translation of ‘mind’, given the latter’s association with the Understanding. A very small number of exceptions to the use of animus can be found in those of Hobbes’s works that were written first in Latin; we do not have Hobbes’s own translations of any of these texts to see what he would have done with them in English.

Hobbes therefore has a strong claim to be the first to instigate a rigorous distinction between ‘soul’ and ‘mind’ in English, and he carries over this distinction into his Latin works. Given his view of the importance of precise terminology in reasoning, this terminological clarification can be seen as part of his project to remove the divine capabilities associated with the soul from man’s conception of his nature.

6. Hobbes’s ‘mind’ and his civil philosophy

I turn finally to sketch how this new self-conception supports Hobbes’s political project. He shares the aim of his fellow writers on the faculties to improve man’s condition by better acquainting him with his nature. For Hobbes, however, the nature presented by those authors is at odds with moral law, since it undermines two fundamental measures necessary for preserving society: subordinating one’s judgement to that of a sovereign, and acknowledging natural equality. The first is threatened by the idea that moral knowledge comes from remnants of the divine image in the Understanding, the second by the idea that failure to act on such knowledge is a sign of corruption. The former concerns an often-noted feature of Hobbes’s argument: he considers the tendency to assign the status of ‘right reason’ to one’s own judgement to be a major cause of conflict, and believing that one’s judgment is shared with God provides a powerful motivation to follow it, rather than the will of the sovereign.

[Notes]

97 Since the old associations of the soul were so deeply embedded, there are unsurprisingly a couple of regressions in Hobbes’s account. However, we can see that he was determined to remove them by comparing the English Leviathan with the Latin version of 1668. He refers at one point in the English to ‘the motion which naturally [man] should have from the power of the Soule in the Brain’. In the Latin, the last nine words are omitted (L 512–13). At another point, Hobbes refers to a ‘departed (though Immortal) Soule’, and the bracketed words are without parallel in the Latin text (L 518).

98 E.g. AW XXX.10, 352; XXX.23, 359.

99 There are, in fact, only three exceptions to this rule that I have been able to find in the Latin Leviathan, all in Chapter 13. Ingenium is used when Hobbes writes that sometimes there will be found one man ‘manifestly stronger in body, or of quicker mind’ (viribus aut ingeni praestent, L 188–9). However, the use is appropriate in the context, since ingenium can carry the meaning of ‘talent’. The two other exceptions are: ‘Nature hath made men so equall, in the faculties of body, and mind’ (Tum Corporis, tum Animae facultatibus, L 188–9), and ‘Justice, and Injustice are none of the Faculties neither of the Body, nor Mind’ (Corporis aut Animae facultates, L 196–7). However, when Hobbes mentions ‘the faculties of the mind’ again in that same chapter, he uses facultates Animi.


101 For example, DCv XV.14: Non igitur Deo tribuetur figura, omnis enim figura finita; neque dicetur consci, siue comprehendi imaginatione, vel quacunque facultate animae nostrae. In OL II, 14, we find animae facultates. We find the following use of mens in OL I, 1.1: Quam difficile sit inverterat, eloquentissimorumque scriptorum auctoritate confirmatas opinionis mentibus hominum excutere, non ignora. The same chapter also contains an exception to the anima/animus distinction: an non sunt omnibus hominibus ejusdem generis animae, eadem animae facultates? However, in Chapter XXV of that work, which deals with ‘sense and animal motion’, animus is used.

102 EL II.10.8. Letwin (‘Hobbes and Christianity’, 8–9), conceptualises this tendency specifically as a confusion of human reason with divine. On the role of Hobbes’s psychology in his argument for following the sovereign’s will in matters of religion, see Alexandra...
The implications for natural equality are less obvious. To explicate both, a contrast between Hobbes’s account of failure to follow natural law with that of Calvin is helpful, since it highlights the difference between showing the divine image to be deeply corrupted, as did the Augustinians, and removing it entirely, as did Hobbes.

As mentioned earlier, despite his bleak picture of the destruction of the divine image, Calvin allows for some ‘traces of the image of God’ in relation to earthly matters. Even so ‘dissension and conflicts’ arise in society, in which men ‘think unjust what some have sanctioned as just … and contend that what some have forbidden is praiseworthy.’ These men, according to Calvin, ‘raging with headlong lust … fight against manifest reason’. Hence such men know that they are doing wrong: ‘What they approve of in their understanding they hate on account of their lust’.103 This account makes a dangerous concession which Hobbes needs to avoid: it leaves open the possibility that a sovereign’s reason is rendered ineffectual by corrupt passion, and that it is a subject’s moral duty to follow his own inner ‘Pilot, or Light of Nature’, and disobey.

Accordingly, Hobbes’s explanation of moral disagreement is different from Calvin’s. He writes:

> Although men agree upon [the] laws of nature, and endeavour to observe the same; yet considering the passions of men, that make it difficult to understand by what actions, and circumstances of actions, those laws are broken; there must needs arise many great controversies about the interpretation thereof.104

Here it is not that all ‘approve of [the same thing] in the Understanding’, yet some are more corrupt and resist the rule of reason; rather, the problem is that they do not understand what the law requires. That is, absent any moral knowledge granted by traces of the image of God, men do not share the same conception in their minds of what does, and does not, break the laws of nature. Further, the role for ‘passions’ in this account cannot be that of fighting against the moral judgements made by reason, given that all practical evaluations made by the mind are ‘passions’ in Hobbes’s faculty psychology. Without passion there can be no moral judgment at all. Hence for Hobbes to say that passions ‘make it difficult to understand’ what breaks the law of nature is simply to say that the variety and variability of our moral judgments make it difficult to agree on the same interpretation of the law.105

According to Hobbes’s account of moral disagreement, then, just as we are wrong to associate our own judgement with God’s, we cannot regard those who disagree with us as inherently sinful slaves of a sensitive appetite that drowns out moral knowledge. Hence Hobbes’s reformulation of the faculties of the mind invites readers to look at conflicting judgements, which so often ‘beget controversy’, in a different way: one that is more consistent with the premise that men ‘ought to admit amongst themselves equality’.106 The idea that moral disagreement is the result of corrupt passion overruling reason is a way of claiming that some people are fit to rule over others, and thus providing ‘colour and pretences, whereby to disturb and hinder the peace of one another’. It can therefore only hinder the vital command ‘That every man acknowledge other for his equal’.107 For this reason, the old model of the soul, with its battle between godlike reason and sinful passion, stokes not only rebellion against rulers, but also contention between subjects, by presenting differing judgement as a sign of corruption.

We can now see that Hobbes must also reject the third way in which the soul had served a moral purpose: acknowledging the divine image in man is not a spur towards justice, but rather a threat to it. Even for Calvin, it remained an essential part of self-knowledge that man should remember the ‘original nobility’ which God bestowed upon Adam, so that it might ‘arouse in us a zeal for righteousness and goodness’.108 Hobbes cannot share this positive role for the image of God.

---

103 See Calvin, Institutes, II.III.13.
104 EL I.17.6.
105 See EL I.7.3.
106 EL II.10.8; I.14.2.
107 EL I.17.1.
108 See Calvin, Institutes, II.1.3.
To enjoy moral rectitude and political order, Hobbesian man should not strive to recreate a notional lost nature; rather, he must accept his cognitive limitations, and he must reject the idea that moral disagreement comes from an unbridled sinful appetite fighting against ‘manifest reason’. Hence Hobbes’s new concept of mind undermines the grounds for men to claim divine authority for the conclusions of their own reasoning, and to view those who disagree with them as corrupt.

For reasons of space, this is only an outline of how the faculties of the soul were incompatible with Hobbes’s practical philosophy. Nevertheless, the way in which Hobbes meticulously takes the divine associations of the ‘soul’ out of the faculties through his terminological choices, and explicitly places his own account of man’s powers at the foundation of his moral philosophy, is pertinent evidence to inform a wider consideration of the relationship between his philosophical psychology and his political thought.

7. Conclusion

By using Hobbes’s choice of language as a guide to his intentions, I have argued that he uses ‘mind’ in his account of the faculties, and excludes ‘soul’, in order to remove the ‘conceptual baggage’ of the soul from a conception of human abilities. In this way, he seeks to remove the politically dangerous implications of the scholastic anima rationalis for man’s self-image. Rather than relying on generalised references to scholastic faculty psychology, the English-language works of Wright, Burton, and Reynolds have provided us with a formulation close to Hobbes in time and place, and one which is not obscured by translation, so that we might clearly see what he carries over into his account, and what he omits.

In The Elements Hobbes does not reject faculty psychology, but rather reformulates the faculties of the soul into the faculties of the body and faculties of the mind. However, this does not suggest that he merely sought to ‘mechanise’ Aristotelian powers; instead, it suggests an intention to provide a new picture of human nature. Many recent scholars of Hobbes have argued, persuasively, that even though Hobbes presented man as an entirely corporeal creature, he did not turn human beings into beasts, or automata, because of the role he attributed to language. But focusing on the terminology he used reminds us not to take this line of thought so far that it obscures the innovativeness of his project. Hobbes wants human beings to think of themselves in a radically different way. In his faculty psychology, human mental powers are not merely weakened and divided – as in Augustinian, Calvinist accounts of the effects of the Fall – but entirely cut off from the divine.

Presenting human nature as distinguished by the divine image was understood by Hobbes’s contemporaries to serve a moral purpose, not only by showing men that they had access to moral knowledge through the Understanding, and explaining failure to act on that knowledge, but also by spurring them on to seek a greater dignity than the corruption of fallen nature. Hobbes thought quite the contrary, regarding such an exalted idea of human abilities as leading to conflict and chaos. By giving men false confidence in the veracity and importance of their opinions, it undermines obedience to the sovereign, and it stokes civil enmities by encouraging us to regard those who disagree with us as sinful and corrupt. Man’s knowledge of his faculties is therefore part of the self-knowledge of the Hobbesian citizen.

It is worth stating that my interpretation need not necessarily imply that Hobbes rejects all notions of the Fall, or even that he presents a ‘secular’ view of man. However, my reading does challenge those that attribute to Hobbesian man a medieval or reformed Christian anthropology:

---

109 Pace Leijenhorst, The Mechanisation of Aristotelianism.
such a view rests on an account of the faculties which Hobbes rejected. Further, it suggests that his position on the dangers of an exalted opinion of oneself is not a species of the Augustinian opposition to ‘pride’. Certainly, Hobbes identifies vainglory – understood as an overestimation of one’s abilities – as one of the causes of conflict among men, and vainglory is ‘commonly called Pride’. On my reading, however, Hobbesian pride is not the failure to acknowledge how far man’s nature has fallen from its creation in God’s image, but the failure to acknowledge that human nature is not God-like at all.

By moving from soul to mind, Hobbes erodes the ground upon which men can build vainglorious conceptions of their capacities which lead them to believe that their own judgements ought to overrule that of the sovereign, or that they are morally superior to fellow citizens who disagree with them. He goes beyond accounts of the fallen nature of man’s faculties by leaving no room for the dangerous notion that remnants of the divine remain in regard to earthly government and virtue. There is no image to restore, no ruin to repair. Instead of seeking direction within ourselves, we must institute and obey the reason of a sovereign, and rather than regarding disagreement as evidence of another’s corruption, we must recognise those who disagree with us as equals. Thus, like Burton, Wright and Reynolds, Hobbes saw man’s knowledge of his faculties as essential for living a good life. Unlike them, he grounded ethics and politics on an account of those faculties which asserts that we are not like God, rather than in one which strives to make us more like Him.

Acknowledgements

For comments on an earlier draft of this paper I am particularly grateful to Quentin Skinner, Richard SERJEANTSON, Adrian Blau, and Johan OLSHOORN. This version has benefitted from discussion with colleagues at the University of Groningen, especially Oberto MARRAMA.

Disclosure statement

No potential conflict of interest was reported by the author.

Bibliography

Primary manuscript sources

Harley MS 4235: The Elements of Law, Naturall and Politique (British Library).

Primary printed sources


113EL I.14.3; EL I.9.1; L 154-6; L 112.

114Correspondingly, another dimension of Hobbesian ‘humility’ – a concept emphasised by Julie E. Cooper – is developed (Julie E. Cooper, Secular Powers: Humility in Modern Political Thought. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2013). Cooper argues that Hobbes advocated humility in the sense of a ‘keen awareness of human limitation’ (Secular Powers, 5), but her focus is on Hobbesian humility as man’s recognition of his limited power in relation to other men (e.g. ibid., 52). I emphasise Hobbesian humility as the rejection of the narrative of man as the possessor of god-like powers: the possessor of a rational soul.


**Secondary sources**


Rozemond, Marleen. 'The Faces of Simplicity in Descartes’s Soul', in *Partitioning the Soul: Debates from Plato to Leibniz*, ed. Klaus Corcilus and Dominik Perler (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 2014), 219–43.


