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Hobbes's Argument for the Naturalness and Necessity of Colonisation

I. The ideological aspect of Hobbes's account of colonisation

In *Leviathan*, Hobbes states that, 'LIBERTY, or FREEDOME, signifieth (properly) the absence of Opposition; (by Opposition, I mean externall Impediments of motion;) and may be applyed no lesse to Irrationall, and Inanimate creatures, than to Rationall'.¹ It has been argued that this definition of freedom is motivated by the wish to offer an account of freedom opposed to the republican freedom that consists in not being subject to the arbitrary will of another person, making it into 'a polemical intervention in the ideological conflicts of his time'.² In what follows, I show with reference to Hobbes's brief account of the phenomenon of colonisation how his definition of freedom, when viewed in conjunction with his account of the role of the passions in determining human behaviour, can be seen to perform another ideological function.³ This ideological function consists in showing how under certain condition colonisation is justified in virtue of being both natural and necessary.

¹ Thomas Hobbes, *Leviathan*, ed. Richard Tuck (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), XXI, 107. Cited by chapter number and original pagination.

² Quentin Skinner, *Hobbes and Republican Liberty* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008), xv.

³ It is therefore not my intention to question this definition of freedom directly, or to discuss Hobbes's theory of freedom more generally or particular aspects of it, such as whether the 'Liberty of Subjects' of which he speaks or his theory of obligation are compatible with this definition. I shall instead restrict myself to explaining this definition's relation to his brief account of colonisation and exploring some implications of this relation. Nevertheless, towards the end I argue that in so far as this definition of freedom is bound up with a deterministic account of human agency, it can be viewed as incompatible with some things that Hobbes himself has to say, and that in this respect an alternative conception of freedom is needed, though I shall leave open the question of the precise nature of this freedom.

Hobbes's describes the phenomenon of colonisation in the following striking passage from the second part of *Leviathan*:

The multitude of poor, and yet strong people still encreasing, they are to be transplanted into Countries not sufficiently inhabited: where nevertheless, they are not to exterminate those they find there; but constrain them to inhabit closer together, and not range a great deal of ground, to snatch what they find; but to court each little Plot with art and labour, to give them their sustenance in due season. And when all the world is overchargd with Inhabitants, then the last remedy of all is Warre; which provideth for every man, by Victory, or Death.⁴

This passage has been discussed in connection with Hobbes's views on how scarcity of resources and overpopulation may lead to a 'war of necessity'⁵ Given that overpopulation and war are clearly connected with each other in the last sentence of the passage quoted above, and that war is described as the only solution to the problem of overpopulation that arises *after* a process of colonisation has taken place, colonisation can be seen to form a link in the following chain of states of affairs or events: a scarcity of resources (or lack of opportunity) brought about by an increase in the population of the home country → colonisation → overpopulation → war. In what follows, I intend to focus on the first two links in this chain and the relation between them, so as to explain in more detail Hobbes's description of the phenomenon of colonisation. I shall

⁴ Hobbes, *Leviathan*, XXX, 181.

⁵ Cf. Delphine Thivet, 'Thomas Hobbes: a Philosopher of War or Peace?', *British Journal for the History of Philosophy* 16(4) (2008), 707ff. See also Paolo Pasqualucci, 'Hobbes and the Myth of "Final War"', *Journal of the History of Ideas* 51(4) (1990).

then go on to explore some implications of this relation with a view to addressing the question of the extent to which colonisation is thought by Hobbes to be both natural and necessary.

I shall explain the passage on colonisation quoted above by showing how the particular language Hobbes uses and the kind of necessity that colonisation exhibits for him cannot be fully understood without reference to the definition of freedom that he offers in *Leviathan*, though only once this definition is viewed in conjunction with the naturalistic assumptions underpinning both it and his brief account of the phenomenon of colonisation. These assumptions concern certain alleged facts about human psychology and motivation that imply that human behaviour is causally determined and will necessarily result in one outcome rather than another one, depending on whether certain conditions obtain and on whether or not certain external impediments exist. Hobbes's definition of freedom will, in particular, be shown to imply an essentially 'expansionary' notion of freedom which accords with the territorial expansion characteristic of the process of colonisation. The seeming necessity of colonisation suggests that Hobbes is indirectly seeking to legitimise colonisation, in the sense that by demonstrating the necessity behind it, he suggests that there can be no grounds for condemning a process of colonisation as if it were something that ought not to have taken place. Rather, the natural necessity that causally determines human actions, in the form not only of the natural desire to obtain the means of subsistence but also the desire for a higher level of material well-being, and even in the form of the passion of greed, combines with practical necessity, in the sense of having to act in a certain way in the absence of other possibilities. In this way, the process of colonisation is made to appear inevitable, and therefore as something that it is essentially pointless to say ought not to have taken place, which presupposes that there was, in fact, some kind of alternative to it.

In the case of practical necessity, Hobbes, as translator of Thucydides's *History of the Peloponnesian War*, would have encountered a justification of colonisation based on this form of necessity in the Athenian ambassadors' justification of Athenian imperialism. This justification is, as he himself translates it, as follows: 'at first we were forced to advance our dominion to what it is, out of the nature of the thing itself; as chiefly for fear, next for honour, and lastly for profit'.⁶ Growth of empire is here claimed to be in the first instance a development that is not a matter of choice. Rather, it was something forced upon the Athenians by the circumstances, in particular by their fear of the actual or potential threat posed by the power of others, making colonisation into a matter of practical necessity for them. In the case of the natural necessity associated with the passions, passions such as fear or greed, along with the desire for self-preservation and the desire for an increased level of material well-being, for Hobbes play a causal role in the explanation of human action. They do so to such an extent, moreover, that explaining a particular action consists in identifying the passion that caused it together with the factors that led someone to experience the relevant passion. The motivating passion is nevertheless only a necessary condition. Another factor that must enter into any such explanation of human action has to do with the question as to whether or not there existed any insurmountable obstacles to acting on the basis of the passion that is the proximate source of what Hobbes refers to as 'motion'. This factor would enter into an explanation of the Athenians acts of colonisation, in that we must assume that ultimately there were no obstacles preventing the Athenians from acting on the basis of the fear which allegedly motivated their imperialistic

⁶ Thomas Hobbes, 'The History of Thucydides', in *The Collected English Works of Thomas Hobbes*, ed. Sir William Molesworth (London: Routledge/Thoemmes Press, 1997), Vol. VIII, 81. For an attempt to relate Hobbes's translation to the English colonialism of his own time, see Christopher N. Warren, 'Hobbes's Thucydides and the Colonial Law of Nations', *The Seventeenth Century* 24(2) (2009).

ventures, because their naval and military power was sufficient to enable them to remove all relevant obstacles.

It may here be objected that Hobbes simply had no need to offer an implicit justification of colonisation based on the idea that it is both natural and necessary in certain circumstances. This is because he did not view colonisation as a matter of conquest but, rather, as one of settlement, on the grounds that the native peoples' way of life meant that they could be regarded as only the users of their land and not also the owners of it.⁷ Moreover, Hobbes may have regarded this land as belonging to no one in virtue of the fact that it had been left uncultivated, making it available to the first person or group of people to occupy it and gain a title to the land by means of cultivating it.⁸ The fact that the native peoples would in this way have lacked any legal or moral right to the land, the violation of which would have to be justified, does not mean, however, that Hobbes would not have wanted to justify colonisation in the face of other possible objections to it based on the idea that the native peoples had some other right to the land. His own description of the 'right of nature' as 'the Liberty each man hath, to use his own power, as he will himselfe, for the preservation of his own Nature; that is to say, of his own Life', which includes the necessary means of securing this end,⁹ suggests that, in the absence of a covenant with the colonisers by means of which this right was completely or partially renounced, the native peoples would at the very least have had a natural right to the land. Although, conversely, a natural right on the part of the colonisers to do what they judge to be necessary when it comes

⁷ Cf. Richard Tuck, *The Rights of War and Peace: Political Thought and the International Order from Grotius to Kant* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), 120ff.

⁸ Patricia Springborg, 'Hobbes, Donne and the Virginia Company: *Terra Nullius* and "The Bulimia of Dominionium"', *History of Political Thought* 36(1) (2015).

⁹ Hobbes, *Leviathan*, XIV, 64.

to securing their own lives in times of material scarcity might provide a justification of acts of colonisation,¹⁰ Hobbes will be shown to suggest that such acts may be motivated by a desire for material well-being that extends beyond the desire to secure the necessities of life, and any justification of them would therefore have to appeal to considerations that cannot be easily accommodated within the framework of the idea of a war of necessity. Showing that colonisation is both natural and necessary in the senses indicated above, by contrast, would allow Hobbes to argue that any natural right to the land on the part of the native peoples is essentially meaningless, since it could not be maintained in the face of the force of human nature coupled with sufficient coercive power. I shall argue, however, that Hobbes's own account of colonisation, once it is viewed in the light of our historical experience of colonisation and the role that he accords to the sovereign, implies the existence of an element of contingency that renders the process of colonisation less necessary in both a natural and a practical sense than he himself appears to allow.

II. The connection between the passions and Hobbes's expansionary view of freedom

Hobbes's definition of freedom as 'the absence of Opposition ... I mean externall Impediments of motion' implies that freedom consists in the absence of any external constraint which would in some way impede the movement of a body in space, which in the case of a human being might mean being bound in chains or locked in a room whose dimensions determine the extent of a person's freedom. This identification of freedom with the absence of external impediments to motion means that the term 'liberty' can be equally applied to other entities with the power to move, as Hobbes himself makes clear in the following passage:

¹⁰ Cf. Thivet, 'Thomas Hobbes: a Philosopher of War or Peace?', 708f.

For whatsoever is so tyed, or environed, as it cannot move, but within a certain space, which space is determined by the opposition of some externall body, we say it hath not Liberty to go further. And so of all living creatures, whilst they are imprisoned, or restrained, with walls, or chayns; and of the water whilst it is kept in by banks, or vessels, that otherwise would spread it selfe into a larger space, we use to say, they are not at Liberty, to move in such manner, as without those externall impediments they would.¹¹

This passage contains the following notions, all of which are central to Hobbes's inherently expansionary conception of freedom and will be shown to help explain the passage on colonisation already quoted: motion ('to go further', 'would spread it selfe'); space ('within a certain space', 'into a larger space'); and external obstacles to motion ('tyed, or environed, as it cannot move', 'determined by the opposition of some externall body', 'imprisoned, or restrained, with walls, or chayns', 'kept in by banks, or vessels', 'externall impediments'). These notions are also all present in Hobbes's favourite image for illustrating this conception of freedom: the image of water contained within certain bounds.

With regard to the compatibility of freedom and necessity, Hobbes speaks of water that 'hath not only *liberty*, but a *necessity* of descending by the Channel'.¹² In other words, water is free in so far as it pursues its own natural course, in the sense of flowing freely within the physical bounds to which it is nevertheless subject, making it equally subject to the necessity of

¹¹ Hobbes, *Leviathan*, XXI, 107.

¹² Hobbes, *Leviathan*, XXI, 108.

being constrained to flow in a particular direction. This particular image points to another notion that is central to Hobbes's conception of freedom (or its absence), namely, power, for if the water confined within the banks of a river possessed sufficient force, it could burst the banks of the river and thereby become freer than before. Thus, power and freedom turn out to be essentially connected when it comes to determining the extent to which someone or something is free, even if Hobbes treats freedom and power as logically independent of each other.¹³ This connection between freedom and power implies an inherently expansionary conception of freedom because any increase in power will be matched by an increase in freedom, provided the increase in power is sufficient to overcome more external obstacles than before. This is not to say that human beings must consciously aim to increase their power and with it the scope of their freedom; rather, they are unavoidably driven to do this by 'a perpetuall and restlesse desire of Power after power, that ceaseth onely in Death'.¹⁴ This expansionary conception of freedom will be shown to inform the references to motion and to space found in the passage on colonisation. Another factor first needs to be introduced, however, and its relation to this conception of freedom needs to be explained, if we are to understand more fully Hobbes's account of the naturalness and necessity of colonisation.

According to Hobbes, human beings are, like flowing water, free to the extent that they are free of constraints that restrict their movements. Since there is no more to freedom than the absence of external impediments to motion, he claims that, 'Every man has more or less *liberty* as he has more or less space in which to move; so that a man kept in a large jail has more *liberty*

¹³ As when he states that, 'But when the impediment of motion, is in the constitution of the thing it selfe, we use not to say, it wants the Liberty; but the Power to move; as when a stone lyeth still, or a man is fastned to his bed by sicknesse' (*Leviathan*, XXI, 107).

¹⁴ Hobbes, *Leviathan*, XI, 47.

than a man kept in a small jail’, and ‘all *slaves* and *subjects* are *free* who are not in bonds or in prison’.¹⁵ Hobbes also employs the example of someone who, like water in a channel, is free to move in one direction but not in another one in the form of a traveller who is prevented by hedges and walls from trampling on the vines and crops adjacent to the road he is walking on.¹⁶ Unlike flowing water, however, we may assume that the traveller can choose to move in one direction rather than another one within the bounds set to his movements by these hedges and walls. Human freedom is therefore a more complex phenomenon than the freedom enjoyed by inanimate objects, even if there is nothing distinctive about human freedom in so far as it is reducible to the absence of external impediments to motion.

It is the passions that explain *why* a human being acted in a certain way, for it is they that ultimately determine each and every human action. Here we have necessity in the form of the idea that each and every action is determined by an antecedent cause which itself forms part of a causal chain, so that ‘to him that could see the connexion of those causes, the *necessity* of all mens voluntary actions, would appear manifest’.¹⁷ Human beings are free, then, only in so far as they encounter no external impediments to acting on the basis of the passions driving them. Hobbes accordingly states that the human being’s liberty consists in finding ‘no stop, in doing what he has the will, desire, or inclination to doe’.¹⁸ The passions are nevertheless susceptible to the influence of deliberation, in the sense that deliberation may determine the strength of one passion relative to other ones.

¹⁵ Thomas Hobbes, *On the Citizen*, eds. Richard Tuck and Michael Silverthorne (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 111.

¹⁶ Hobbes, *On the Citizen*, 111.

¹⁷ Hobbes, *Leviathan*, XXI, 108.

¹⁸ Hobbes, *Leviathan*, XXI, 108.

One example of how Hobbes conceives of the relation between deliberation and the passions is provided by his definition of deliberation as ‘simply weighing up the advantages and disadvantages of the action we are addressing (as on a pair of scales), where the weightier consideration necessarily goes into effect by its own natural inclination’.¹⁹ This definition is presented in connection with the idea that a legislator who assigns a penalty which fails to outweigh the greed that motivates a person to commit a crime would be acting counter-purposively. The assumption here is that human beings can, on the whole, deliberate and exercise foresight on the basis of their ability to engage in the following prudential type of reasoning: ‘he that foresees what wil become of a Criminal, re-cons what he has seen follow on the like Crime before; having this order of thoughts, The Crime, the Officer, the Prison, the Judge, and the Gallowes’.²⁰ The extent of such foresight may be extremely limited, however. Indeed, at times Hobbes appears to be highly sceptical about the typical human being’s capacity to follow the chain of causes and effects far enough to determine the good and evil consequences of an action.²¹ His account of punishment as essentially directed at deterrence nevertheless relies on the idea that by and large human beings can follow the chain of causes and effects in a way favourable to the generation and maintenance of social order.

Hobbes’s account of the act of will is thus reducible to the following claim: ‘In *Deliberation*, the last Appetite, or Aversion, immediately adhaering to the action, or to the omission thereof, is that wee call the WILL; the Act, (not the faculty,) of *Willing*’.²² This claim clearly shows that, despite the role of deliberation in human agency, the passions are what

¹⁹ Hobbes, *On the Citizen*, 152.

²⁰ Hobbes, *Leviathan*, III, 10.

²¹ Cf. Hobbes, *Leviathan*, VI, 29.

²² Hobbes, *Leviathan*, VI, 28.

ultimately determine a human being's actions, for although the force of the passions may be moderated by prudential considerations, these considerations will themselves ultimately need to be explained in terms of a passion such as fear. One does something voluntarily, therefore, simply when one acts on the basis of a desire that one has, irrespective of the nature of this desire,²³ as opposed to being made to act as the result of some purely external force, such as when one is pushed by another person or a physical object in motion. The passions are, then, the ultimate sources of motion in the case of willing, with one's actions being causally determined by what turns out to be the strongest desire in a given situation.

The passions themselves fall into two main classes according to the type of 'endeavour' that characterises them, that is to say, whether the endeavour is 'toward something which causes it', in which case it 'is called APPETITE, or DESIRE', or 'fromward something', in which case 'it is generally called AVERSION'.²⁴ Fear provides an example of the second type of passion, and greed provides an example of the first type of passion on account of its appetitive and outward-directed character. Greed is more obviously related to the kind of expansionary conception of freedom that I have attributed to Hobbes, because, by its very nature, it seeks an

²³ Thus one acts voluntarily for Hobbes even when one acts from practical necessity, as when one throws goods overboard in order to prevent the boat one is on from sinking. Cf. *Leviathan*, XXI, 108. Here we must assume that a person would prefer neither to drown nor to throw his or her goods overboard. However, the desire for self-preservation proves stronger in the end and he or she acts voluntarily when he or she throws his or her goods overboard in the sense of acting on the basis of a desire that he or she has, namely, the desire to preserve his or her own life. Moreover, he or she could have acted on the basis of another desire, namely, to keep his or her goods despite the heavy costs involved in doing so. When providing this example, Hobbes fails to mention, however, that such a person could have acted on the basis of this other desire only *if* it had turned out to be the strongest one in this particular situation.

²⁴ Hobbes, *Leviathan*, VI, 23.

increase of some kind and will cause someone to increase his or her possessions if there are no external obstacles to doing so, or if the greedy person happens to be someone with sufficient power to overcome what obstacles there are. Fear, by contrast, implies an absence of freedom in Hobbes's sense of the term, because it presupposes the existence (whether real or imagined) of some kind of external impediment in the form of the physical object which causes this emotion, such as chains or prison walls, or worse still, the gallows that a person fears as a possible consequence of acting on the basis of his or her desire to accumulate more and more possessions.²⁵

As we have seen, the way in which the passions determine action is compatible with Hobbes's definition of freedom, for as long as there is nothing external that impedes an action determined by a given passion, the passion in question will, so to speak, follow its own natural course in much the same way as does freely flowing water that is nevertheless constrained by the banks of a river to flow in one direction rather than another one. This is the case unless a countervailing passion turns out to be stronger in the end, as when fear proves to be stronger than greed.²⁶ If, however, the fear of punishment does not outweigh the passion of greed, the latter

²⁵ Fear can nevertheless be understood as compatible with Hobbes's expansionary conception of freedom, for in certain cases it might determine a person to seek to remove the object of fear, so as to suffer fewer external impediments to motion, assuming that the person in question judges that he or she has the power to do this.

²⁶ Another example would be when individuals driven by greed are placed in a situation in which the material goods that would satisfy this passion, or simply the opportunity to access such goods, were not available to them. The constraint would then consist in the absence of something rather than in its presence. The constraint in question could nevertheless be viewed as an external one in the sense that it had to do with objective material conditions. As we shall see, this particular constraint on both the passion of greed and the more moderate passion to enjoy a certain standard of living plays a key role in Hobbes's account of colonisation.

will ‘necessarily’ animate a person’s actions ‘by its own natural inclination’, as Hobbes puts in his previously quoted definition of deliberation. Thus, although deliberation and the multiplicity of the passions make human behaviour into a more complex phenomenon than that of water flowing within certain bounds, Hobbes ultimately reduces it to the pursuit of what might be termed a ‘natural course’ in the absence of external impediments to motion. This course is ‘natural’ in the sense that it is determined by certain passions which are given features of human nature, though the particular objects of this passions may vary.²⁷

Hobbes’s account of how the passions determine human behaviour, when taken together with his expansionary conception of freedom, is compatible with the idea of a possible catastrophic loss of social order which results from passions such as greed being allowed to pursue their own natural course unhindered by any kind of external impediment. Moreover, Hobbes’s remarks concerning the legislator who fails to make the penalty for a crime outweigh the greed that motivates someone to commit it imply that the sovereign’s task of maintaining social order will require an attempt to suppress certain passions by ensuring that one passion (for example, fear) counteracts another passion (for example, greed). Since the passions are natural, it is assumed that attempting to extirpate them altogether would be a futile endeavour, and it is therefore only when a passion poses a serious threat to social order that it is to be constrained, or - and this is more relevant to Hobbes’s account of colonisation - a suitable outlet for it must be provided. The successful performance of the task of maintaining social order will for these very reasons require, moreover, having some knowledge of the passions common to humankind.

²⁷ Cf. Hobbes, *Leviathan*, The Introduction, 2. Although the way in which the objects of the passions may vary serves to make human behaviour to some extent malleable, this malleability would encounter fixed limits in the nature of the passions themselves.

Hobbes thinks that such knowledge can be gained by means of an act of introspection through which anyone 'shall thereby read and know, what are the thoughts, and Passions of all other men, upon the like occasions'.²⁸ This act of introspection, which aims to identify certain natural psychological facts about human beings, is therefore one in which the sovereign more than anyone else must engage, as Hobbes himself emphasises when he states that, 'He that is to govern a whole Nation, must read in himself, not this, or that particular man; but Man-kind'.²⁹ I now intend to show with reference to the passion of greed and the more moderate desire for 'commodious living' how this task of governing a nation in the light of such knowledge of the passions fits my interpretation of the passage on colonisation, which relates this passage to Hobbes's expansionary conception of freedom.

III. The threat posed to social order by the passion of greed and the desire for 'commodious living'

Greed must be one passion to which the sovereign attempts set limits in order to prevent it, like a river that has burst its banks, from having destructive effects, since Hobbes himself identifies the passion to accumulate wealth as a primary cause of social conflict. This is not to say that he regards the desire for riches as intrinsically bad. How could it be when this desire is a passion natural to humankind? Rather, it depends on whether or not the means employed by this passion

²⁸ Hobbes, *Leviathan*, The Introduction, 2.

²⁹ Hobbes, *Leviathan*, The Introduction, 2. It is easier to understand this claim if the sovereign is assumed to be a single person, whereas Hobbes himself allows that the sovereign may also be an assembly (cf. *Leviathan*, XXVI, 137). In the case of an assembly, each member would, it seems, have to perform individually this act of introspection and all its members together would then have to discuss what they had discovered by means of this act.

are likely to result in violent conflict between individuals or to undermine social order in some other way.³⁰

Hobbes states that his recognition of the fact that ‘war and every kind of calamity must necessarily follow from community in things, as men came into violent conflict over their use’ first led him to discover ‘two absolutely certain postulates of human nature’: ‘the postulate of human greed by which each man insists upon his own private use of common property; the other, the postulate of natural reason, by which man strives to avoid violent death as the supreme evil in nature’.³¹ The importance of this discovery in relation to the sovereign’s task of maintaining social order can be illustrated with reference to the fifth law of nature, that of ‘compleasance’, about which Hobbes has the following to say:

[A] man that by asperity of Nature, will strive to retain those things which to himselfe are superfluous, and to others necessary; and for the stubbornness of his Passions, cannot be corrected, is to be left, or cast out of Society, as cumbersome thereunto. For seeing every man, not onely by Right, but also by necessity of Nature, is supposed to endeavour all he can, to obtain that which is necessary for his conservation; He that shall oppose himselfe against it, for things superfluous, is guilty of the warre that thereupon is to follow; and therefore doth that, which is contrary to the fundamentall Law of Nature, which commandeth *to seek Peace*.³²

³⁰ Cf. Hobbes, *Leviathan*, VI, 26.

³¹ Hobbes, *On the Citizen*, 6.

³² Hobbes, *Leviathan*, XV, 76. A similar passage to the one quoted immediately above is found in *De Cive* in connection with the fourth precept of reason listed in this work. This is the precept that everyone should be considerate of others. The passage in question reads as follows:

The reference to the right and the necessity of obtaining the basic means of subsistence found in this passage implies that social order and peace will depend on the sovereign's ability either to restrain greed or to provide it with some outlet. We shall see that Hobbes's account of colonisation is meant to explain the second possibility. Yet it is not only the passion of greed for which an outlet must be sought in order to prevent social conflict, at least for a time. There is also a more moderate desire for material well-being.

The existence of this more moderate desire is suggested by Hobbes's claim that it is, 'The Passions that encline men to Peace, are Feare of Death; Desire of such things as are necessary to commodious living; and a Hope by their Industry to obtain them'.³³ The act of giving up the right to everything which one enjoys in the state of nature – a right which can only be enjoyed at the cost of lack of personal security - by submitting to the authority of a sovereign, is not, therefore, motivated by the desire for peace alone. Rather, there is also the desire for 'commodious living', which can be taken to mean the desire to achieve a certain level of material well-being beyond

A stone of rough and irregular shape takes more space from the others than it fills itself; it cannot be compressed or cut because it is so hard, but it prevents the structure from being fitted together, so it is thrown away as unsuitable [*incommodus*]. Just so a man who keeps more than he needs for himself and, in the hardness of his heart, takes the necessities of life from other people, and is too temperamentally stubborn to be corrected, is normally said to be *inconsiderate* of others and difficult. Now since our basic principle is that every man is not only *right*, but *naturally compelled*, to make every effort to win what he needs for his own preservation, anyone who tries to thwart him for the sake of luxuries will be to blame for the war which breaks out, because he was the only one who had no need to fight; and is therefore acting against the *fundamental law of nature* (*On the Citizen*, 48).

³³ Hobbes, *Leviathan*, XIII, 63.

that of mere subsistence. This desire, or at least the hope of achieving it, must therefore be accommodated if the threat of a return to the natural condition brought about by attempts on the part of some people to reclaim the natural right to everything is to be avoided. Although this desire could turn out to be an immoderate, in which case it would correspond to the passion of greed, it may assume less inflamed forms. In any case, the sovereign will need to ensure the prospect of its satisfaction if social order is to be effectively maintained in the long term.³⁴ Hobbes himself appears to say as much in the following passage which concerns the precise nature of the safety of the people with which the sovereign has been entrusted: ‘But by Safety here, is not meant a bare Preservation, but also all other Contentments of life, which every man by lawfull Industry, without danger, or hurt to the Common-wealth, shall acquire to himself’.³⁵

For Hobbes, colonisation provides an outlet for passions such as greed and the desire for a level of material well-being that goes beyond mere subsistence, and it does so in a way that highlights his expansionary conception of freedom, which, as we have seen, involves the idea that freedom consists in passions or desires encountering no insurmountable external impediments to the pursuit of their own natural course. The establishment of colonies would provide one way in which the potential destructive effects of a situation in which the passion of greed or even a more moderate desire for commodious living remain unsatisfied could be

³⁴ The fact that Hobbes regarded the absence of a certain level of material well-being or the hope of attaining it as a threat to social order as great as that of a passion such as greed or, as in this case, unbridled ambition, is shown by his statement that, ‘needy men, and hardy, not contented with their present condition; as also, all men that are ambitious of Military command, are enclined to continue the causes of warre; and to stirre up trouble and sedition: for there is no honour Military but by warre; nor any such hope to mend an ill game, as by causing a new shuffle’ (*Leviathan*, XI, 48).

³⁵ Hobbes, *Leviathan*, XXX, 175.

avoided, because this passion and this desire would then have a new outlet in which to pursue their own natural courses, whereas they are denied one in the home country in a situation in which there is a scarcity of resources or an absence of opportunities for productive work. The passion and desire in question may, moreover, motivate people in the short term to engage in the act of establishing colonies and to populate them. Finally, since the passions or desires that ultimately explain colonisation are regarded by Hobbes as natural ones, the process of colonisation can be thought to have a natural basis. With these points in mind, I shall now analyse the language used in the passage on colonisation quoted earlier together with the particular claims made in it

IV. Space, motion and the absence of external impediments: Reading the passage on colonisation in the light of Hobbes's expansionary view of freedom

I begin with the following claim: 'The multitude of poor, and yet strong people still encreasing, they are to be transplanted into Countries not sufficiently inhabited'.³⁶ This claim can be explained in terms of the sovereign's task of preventing a breakdown in social order not only by guaranteeing the basic means of human subsistence, but also by providing the able-bodied with some hope of enjoying a higher level of material well-being as a result of their own industry. In the face of a growing population and no corresponding increase in the amount of work available in the home country, the sovereign will, in the absence of better alternatives, need to establish colonies in which those people who cannot find employment in the home country can labour productively. Thus, the desire for 'commodious living', which may assume the form of greed or a more moderate one, is provided with a suitable outlet, while the passion of hope, which Hobbes

³⁶ Hobbes, *Leviathan*, XXX, 181.

defines as, ‘*Appetite with an opinion of attaining*’, is also accommodated.³⁷ In this way passions and desires are, so to speak, channelled outwards in accordance with Hobbes’s expansionary conception of freedom, by means of the removal of certain external impediments. Greed or the hope of enjoying a better life as a result of their own industry may also be sufficient to motivate individuals to establish colonies or to settle in ones that have already been established. Hobbes’s account of human psychology suggests, moreover, that even if people were forced to settle in the colonies, the desire for commodious living would lead them to cultivate the land and to develop the means of doing so.

With its reliance on the notions of motion, space and external impediments to motion, Hobbes’s definition of freedom is present in his brief account of colonisation in other ways. This notion of freedom as the absence of external impediments to motion is evoked by the claim that the lands which are colonised are ‘not sufficiently inhabited’, for this claim implies the existence of open space in which bodies freely move without encountering any resistance from other objects, which can here be taken to mean other human bodies in particular. Although I say ‘human’ bodies, this description perhaps needs to be qualified, given the way in which the native peoples of the colonised lands are under-characterised to the point of anonymity. We may assume, however, that they are hunter-gatherers resembling the ‘the savage people in many places of *America*’ who provide one of Hobbes’s main examples of the natural condition of humankind, and who allegedly ‘have no government at all’ and live in a ‘brutish manner’ with only familial bonds that ‘dependeth on naturall lust’ uniting them.³⁸

³⁷ Hobbes, *Leviathan*, VI, 25.

³⁸ Hobbes, *Leviathan*, XIII, 63. Hobbes provides no evidence that these people do in fact live in such a manner. One explanation for this lack of evidence is that, despite the special knowledge that Hobbes would have gained through his involvement in the Virginia Company, he had a dislike for tying his arguments to questions of empirical fact,

Hobbes's definition of freedom can also be related to the following claim concerning the treatment of the native peoples by the colonists: 'where neverthelesse, they are not to exterminate those they find there; but constrain them to inhabit closer together, and not range a great deal of ground, to snatch what they find'.³⁹ This statement shows that despite the presence of the notions of motion and space in the idea of wide expanses of land in which people can move about without encountering external impediments to motion in the form of other human beings, the space available is not so great as to make it unnecessary to constrain the movements of peoples whose traditional way of life requires moving about in search of the means of subsistence. The notion of constraining others to occupy less space than they did before implies, moreover, the notion of force and thus the existence of the power to remove external impediments to motion for one's own benefit. Indeed, colonisation implies the idea of power simply because a nation must possess the means, particularly the necessary military and technological means, to colonise other lands. It is not surprising, then, that Hobbes mentions navigation as one of the main arts that is lacking in the natural condition, but is, we must assume, possessed by civilized nations, whose sovereigns are in the position to undertake for their own and their subjects' benefit the colonisation other lands.

When it comes to the question of the precise sense in which the colonists 'constrain' the native people of the colonised lands 'to inhabit closer together', one possible answer to this

while another explanation would be that his special knowledge made him aware that some Indian tribes did, in fact, conform to his model of a commonwealth, raising problems for his subsidiary argument that all the benefits of civilisation were a direct result of the leisure provided by secure government. Cf. Noel Malcolm, 'Hobbes, Sandys, and the Virginia Company', in his *Aspects of Hobbes* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2002), 75f. For some criticisms of these explanations, see Springborg, 'Hobbes, Donne and the Virginia Company', 129ff.

³⁹ Hobbes, *Leviathan*, XXX, 181.

question is that the constraints are similar in kind to those generated by the relation of domination that arises when human beings submit themselves, through fear of death, to those who have their life and liberty in their hands. This is what Hobbes himself refers to as the ‘Dominion acquired by Conquest, or Victory in war’ that results in a relationship of mastery and servitude because ‘the Vanquished, to avoyd the present stroke of death, covenanteth either in expresse words, or by other sufficient signes of the Will, that so long as his life, and the liberty of his body is allowed him, the Victor shall have the use thereof, at his pleasure’.⁴⁰ The idea of such servitude and domination can be used to highlight an ambiguity found in the following line: ‘but to court each little Plot with art and labour, to give them their sustenance in due season’.⁴¹ The pronouns ‘them’ and ‘their’ are ambiguous, for they could refer either to the colonists or to the native peoples of the colonised lands.

In the first case, the native peoples of the colonised lands would be constrained ‘to inhabit closer together’ in such a way as to provide not only their own means of sustenance but also those of the colonists, who, we may assume, have introduced the arts of agriculture that allow each little plot of land to be more productively cultivated than would otherwise have been the case. Here we have a form of servitude that is broadly consistent with Hobbes’s account of the form of dominion that arises by means of conquest, since the natives are forced through fear of death to do things they did not have to do before, namely, to avoid land on which they had previously roamed freely and to work for the colonists as well as for themselves. This would help explain the earlier claim that the colonists are not to ‘exterminate’ the native people, who are instead made to labour for the benefit of the colonists, who can now enjoy ‘commodious

⁴⁰ Hobbes, *Leviathan*, XX, 103f.

⁴¹ Hobbes, *Leviathan*, XXX, 181.

living' in a way that allows them to work less hard themselves. The form of dominion made possible by victory in war implies that the native people would indeed be made to work for those who had conquered their lands, because the victor is said to be entitled to use at his pleasure those who submit themselves through fear of death to his command.

Although this explanation accords with the first interpretation of the referents of the pronouns 'them' and 'their', Hobbes does not, however, explicitly speak of this form of dominion in relation to the phenomenon of colonisation, and a second interpretation is therefore possible. This interpretation would be that the native people of the colonised lands are be constrained to live closer together simply in the sense that they are made to live in a more confined space, but without having to work for the colonists. There are nevertheless other grounds for preferring the first interpretation. Hobbes's distinguishes between relations of domination based on consent and the situation in which someone is merely a captive who is under no obligation at all; rather, he or she is instead entitled to break free and even kill his or her master.⁴² Since in the second case it would be prudent for the colonisers to make it impossible for someone to do either of these things, especially the latter, and given that the colonised people are nowhere said to be 'kept bound in natural bonds, as chains, and the like, or in prison',⁴³ one can assume that the colonised people have consented to the form of dominion outlined above. This would, moreover, for Hobbes help legitimise colonisation, because the colonised people would then have voluntarily renounced their right of nature. As we shall see below, however, it is not necessary to assume that they have in fact renounced this right. In either

⁴² Hobbes, *Leviathan*, XX, 104.

⁴³ Thomas Hobbes, *The Elements of Law Natural and Politic*, ed. Ferdinand Tönnies, 2nd edn (London: Frank Cass, 1969), Part 2, Ch. 3, § 3.

case, we encounter the idea that the native people will be left with some freedom of movement, even if it is much less than before.

Although Hobbes's view of freedom as the absence of external impediments to motion allows us to think of the native people as retaining some freedom of movement, despite being constrained to live closer together, one may ask whether this view of the matter is compatible with his own definition of colonies as 'numbers of men sent out from the Common-wealth, under a Conductor, or Governour, to inhabit a Forraign Country, either formerly voyd of Inhabitants, or made voyd then, by warre'.⁴⁴ Given the reading of the passage on colonisation offered so far, it cannot be that the colonised lands were completely empty of inhabitants before they were colonised, and the idea that they must be made empty by means of war, if it is taken to mean the physical annihilation of the original inhabitants of the colonised lands, is incompatible with the claim that the inhabitants are simply constrained to live closer together. Perhaps, then, Hobbes means that the lands that the colonists occupy are emptied of all their original inhabitants only in the sense that the latter are forced to occupy adjacent lands upon which some of them may have already settled. If this is so, Hobbes suggests that the community of colonists and the native communities will be able to live peaceably side by side. This interpretation also allows the possibility, however, that the native people never consented to such an arrangement but only accept it as a matter of necessity, in which case they would retain the right of nature, and with it the right to resist the colonisers if they should believe themselves powerful enough to do so. Countering such an idea, which opens the way for regarding colonisation as in some sense unjust, could have motivated Hobbes to seek to offer an independent justification of colonisation, however indirectly. Yet, even if a situation in which the two communities lived in relative

⁴⁴ Hobbes, *Leviathan*, XXIV, 131.

independence would reduce the chances of conflict arising between them, the complete absence of conflict is a far from obvious outcome of the process of colonisation described by Hobbes.

For a start, the situation in question presupposes a degree of self-limitation on the part of the settlers which must itself be considered implausible.⁴⁵ Hobbes's views on the passions and his expansionary conception of freedom suggest as much, and I shall return shortly to the problem as to how to explain the possibility of self-limitation or self-restraint on the basis of such views. Secondly, in the final sentence of the passage on colonisation, Hobbes himself implies that the pressures of overpopulation mean that peaceful coexistence will, at best, be a temporary phenomenon: 'And when all the World is overchargd with Inhabitants, then the last remedy of all is Warre; which provideth for every man, by Victory, or Death'.⁴⁶ This claim implies that colonisation also can only ever represent a temporary solution to the problems posed by a potential breakdown in social order in the home country that is to be explained in terms of the lack of any suitable outlet for a passion such as greed or a more moderate desire for a higher level of material well-being than that of mere subsistence. For the assumption appears to be that population growth in the colonised lands themselves would cause conflict in relation to available resources and thereby return people to a condition very much like the natural one in which each person has the right to do what he or she judges to be necessary to secure his or her own life. This shows the extent to which competition in relation to material goods represents a key source of conflict for Hobbes. Given that the desire for a better life and the material conditions of such a life is rooted in human nature, and that the desire for 'commodious living' may assume the form of greed in some people, social conflict can in the end only be avoided when people are not

⁴⁵ Cf. Pasqualucci, 'Hobbes and the Myth of "Final War"', 653.

⁴⁶ Hobbes, *Leviathan*, XXX, 181.

forced to live together in conditions of scarcity, but this is a possibility that population growth will eventually rule out.

So far I have concentrated on analysing and explaining Hobbes's brief account of the phenomenon of colonisation on the basis of his definition of freedom and his account of the role of the passions in explaining human behaviour. I have suggested that Hobbes may have been seeking to offer a justification of colonisation, by showing that it is something natural and necessary under certain conditions. One way of undermining such a justification of colonisation would therefore be to deny its alleged naturalness and necessity. I shall now argue that certain features of the historical phenomenon of colonisation when viewed in conjunction with certain features of Hobbes's account of the role of the sovereign with respect to process of colonising other lands implies that colonisation is not as natural and necessary as Hobbes makes it appear.

The 'naturalness' and 'necessity' of colonisation

Even if Hobbes's experience and knowledge of colonisation was different from that of later ages familiar with nineteenth-century European imperialism and its consequences, it is nevertheless valid to ask what his account of colonisation can tell us about the phenomenon colonisation more generally. This is because Hobbes saw himself as providing an account of human nature as such, and thus of the basic laws or principles governing all human action, not only human action at a particular historical stage. Hobbes's account of colonisation is, in fact, prescient in a number of ways. For a start, it offers a basic explanation of the logic behind some modern examples of colonisation, such as Portugal's tenacious attempts in the twentieth century to hold on to its colonies in southern Africa. Here we have what was at the time a poor European country using its colonies as a means of preventing social unrest at home by providing some of its citizens with

the hope of a better life in face of lack of opportunities in the home country. I intend to focus, however, on another way in which Hobbes's account of colonialism, as I have interpreted it, is instructive, by identifying some problems with the idea that colonisation is, under certain circumstances, something both natural and necessity and in this sense justified. Although Hobbes's expansionary conception of freedom, when viewed in conjunction with his accounts of the role of the passions in determining human behaviour and the sovereign's task of preventing a breakdown in social order, represents an attempt to explain the phenomenon of colonisation, it arguably fails to explain a central feature of modern colonialism, namely, the national liberation struggles to which Western European colonialism eventually gave rise, especially in the twentieth century. I shall argue that this feature of modern colonialism points to a particular problem with the view of freedom which, as I have shown, informs the passage on colonisation in *Leviathan*. It does so, moreover, in such a way as to undermine the idea that colonisation is both natural, in the sense that it can be explained in terms of certain given basic features of human nature, and necessary in a causal and a practical sense.

As we have seen, Hobbes suggests that the colonists and the colonised people can peaceably coexist in the same land. He recognises, however, that such peaceful coexistence will be threatened by population growth. Moreover, given his view of freedom as the absence of external impediments to motion, any major increase in the size of the population will necessarily result in a decrease in the amount of freedom available to the existing inhabitants, because the additional bodies of other human beings and objects such as the buildings in which they live will amount to an increase in external impediments to motion. At the same time, the inherently expansionary nature of Hobbes's conception of freedom suggests that people would strive to remove these external impediments if they judged themselves to have the power to do so. On the

basis of this expansionary conception of freedom, struggles for national independence could, perhaps, be explained in terms of the existence of external impediments to motion taken in a literal sense and the desire to remove them, as well as by such passions as anger and resentment, as in the case of the imposition of pass laws on black people in apartheid South Africa. Yet in addition to the artificial nature of this type of explanation in relation to this particular object, there is the problem that it sits rather uncomfortably with Hobbes's account of human action. If the costs of seeking to remove these external impediments to motion were likely to include one's own death, Hobbes's account of the passions, especially the fear of death, suggests that the colonised peoples would necessarily prefer to suffer domination and might even consent to it. Yet it is precisely their own lives which individuals engaged in national liberation struggles are willing to risk in the name of freedom. This raises the question as to the precise nature of the freedom which motivates people engaged in national liberation movements to risk their own lives, and, in particular, whether Hobbes's notion of freedom as the absence of external impediments, when taken in conjunction with his account of the role of the passions in explaining human behaviour, provides a plausible explanation of this phenomenon of being willing to risk one's own life for the sake of freedom, which by its very nature one cannot be explained in terms of the passion that Hobbes otherwise regards as being stronger than any other passion, namely, the fear of death.

One way in which Hobbes might be thought to explain this phenomenon is by means of idea of the existence and motivating force of 'transcendent interests'. These interests are transcendent in the sense that they transcend the desire for self-preservation and any prudential considerations concerning how it can be secured. At the same time, these interests threaten social order because even the threat of the loss of one's life cannot prevent people from acting on the

basis of them.⁴⁷ Although religious interests represent the main type of transcendent interest that Hobbes himself had in mind, freedom can be viewed as another one. Thus, agents are motivated by a passion, the desire for freedom, in such a way as to overcome the fear of death. This line of argument would, however, simply reintroduce the question as to whether the notion of freedom as the absence of external impediments to motion, when taken in conjunction with the role of the passions in explaining human behaviour, can genuinely make intelligible the phenomenon of national liberation movements. An equally good, if not better, candidate would be freedom understood on the basis of the desire not to be subject to the arbitrary will of another, which in this particular case would be the arbitrary will of a colonial power. Here the republican freedom which is said to consist in absence of domination conceived in terms of being free of possible as well as actual forms of interference by others is arguably a in a better position to explain the struggles waged by national liberation movements. Yet this republican freedom has been presented as an alternative to a liberal conception of freedom as nothing more than the absence of actual interference that can be traced back to Hobbes's account of freedom.⁴⁸ If the phenomenon of colonialism can be explained in terms of an alternative conception of freedom,

⁴⁷ S. A. Lloyd, *Ideals as Interests in Hobbes's Leviathan: The Power of Mind over Matter* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992), 42 and 51f.

⁴⁸ Cf. Skinner, *Hobbes and Republican Liberty* and Quentin Skinner, *Liberty before Liberalism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998). In her discussion of liberty as a transcendent interest, S. A. Lloyd points out that for Hobbes republican liberty itself poses a threat to social stability (cf. *Ideals as Interests in Hobbes's Leviathan*, 281ff.). Yet it is not self-evident that social stability provides a sufficient reason for colonised peoples to renounce a conception of freedom similar to the republican one and thereby accept the relations of domination to which they are subject. Given the way in which something like republican freedom represents an attractive and intelligible conception of freedom for colonised peoples, I see no reason not to consider it a form of freedom which represents a justified transcendent interest, at least for certain people in certain circumstances.

whatever its precise nature, colonisation already begins to look less natural and less necessary than Hobbes implies it is. Hobbes's account of the sovereign's role in the process of colonisation also makes the naturalness and necessity of colonisation appear far from self-evident.

As we have seen, the passions are for Hobbes the ultimate causes of human actions, with the strongest passion combined with other factors determining how a human being acts in a given situation. One passion can be held in check by a countervailing passion as a result of a process of deliberation, as when greed is held in check by fear once someone considers the possible consequences of an action. When an object of fear is believed to be remote, however, fear will tend to be a passion that lacks sufficient force to counteract a potentially destructive passion such as greed. In the absence of any countervailing passion, the only way to avoid unleashing the destructive tendencies of such a passion will be to channel it in an appropriate way. This view of the matter accords with the sovereign's task of channelling not only greed but also a more moderate desire for a higher level of material well-being than that of mere subsistence by instigating and overseeing a process of colonisation that is dictated by certain conditions obtaining in the home country. An element of contingency here enters the picture, however, because the sovereign is to judge whether or not a process of colonisation should in fact be initiated. The sovereign may, for example, judge that there are other means of preventing social disorder by providing greed and the desire for a higher level of material well-being with an appropriate outlet, such as foreign trade, which Hobbes himself regards as being under the sovereign's supervision.⁴⁹ There may nevertheless be situations in which state-sponsored colonisation is the only real option, making it into a matter of practical necessity. Yet even here an element of contingency enters the picture, for the sovereign may simply make the wrong call

⁴⁹ Cf. Hobbes, *Leviathan*, XXIV, 129.

because of poor judgement. Thus, even if colonisation becomes a matter of practical necessity, as Hobbes clearly thinks it can do in certain circumstances, the effective prevention of social disorder additionally requires the sovereign's possession of the right set of beliefs which itself presupposes the possession of such personal qualities as the ability to deliberate properly, or, at the very least, a willingness to follow the advice of others who are recognized to possess these qualities together with the relevant knowledge. The practical necessity of colonisation does not, therefore, entail its necessity in a causal sense.

On the one hand, Hobbes could acknowledge this element of contingency connected with the possibility of something that is practically necessary in the circumstances not in fact taking place, because for him the occurrence of any event or the existence of any state of affairs depends on the coming together of various causal factors. Thus, if just one of the factors associated with his account of colonisation were absent, such as good judgement on the part of the sovereign, the process of colonisation may well not take place even in a situation in which one would have expected it to do so because it was practically necessary. This situation is consistent with Hobbes's claim that, '*That which I say necessitateth and determinateth every action ... is the sum of all things, which now being existent, conduce and concur to the production of that action hereafter, whereof if any one thing now were wanting, the effect could not be produced*'.⁵⁰ On the other hand, Hobbes, who is writing as someone for whom colonisation is a historical reality, seeks to provide a causal account of why the kind of state-sponsored colonisation described in *Leviathan* has occurred and necessarily had to occur given the coming together of all the factors that constitute the type of causal nexus which necessarily produces events of the relevant type. The point I now wish to make, however, is that the

⁵⁰ Thomas Hobbes, 'Of Liberty and Necessity', in *The Collected English Works of Thomas Hobbes*, Vol. IV, 246.

explanatory value of at least two of these factors, namely, Hobbes's account of the role of the passions in causally determining human action and his expansionary conception of freedom, can be challenged, making colonisation appear neither as natural nor as necessary as Hobbes implies it is. To illustrate this point I shall return to the role of the sovereign in the process of colonisation.

Hobbes concedes, in effect, that there can be exceptional individuals capable of deliberating in such a way as not to allow the passions to determine their final judgements and thereby any actions that proceed from them. He claims, for example, that the act of discovering the unwritten law of nature 'be easy to such, as without partiality, and passion, make use of their naturall reason', and the fact that he regards such people as very exceptional indeed is shown by how he immediately qualifies this statement in the following way: 'yet considering there be very few, perhaps none, that in some cases are not blinded by self love, or some other passion, it is now become of all Laws the most obscure'.⁵¹ If the process of colonisation is a necessary one in the sense that it will necessarily take place whenever *all* the relevant conditions were in place, for it to take place in each and every case when it is practically necessary for it to do so, Hobbes's sovereign would have to be one of these exceptional individuals who, instructed by the principles set out in *Leviathan*, and by engaging in the act of introspection counselled at the beginning of this work, had gained knowledge of the passions that determine human behaviour. For only in virtue of such knowledge, together with the good judgement that depends on being impartial and not at the mercy of whatever happens to be the strongest passion at any given time, would the sovereign be likely to make the right call each time, as needs to happen if one essential causal factor that explains the necessity of colonisation is to be in place. This implies, however,

⁵¹ Hobbes, *Leviathan*, XXVI, 143.

that the sovereign has the capacity to act as a detached observer of the passions that determine his actions as well as those of others. The sovereign is therefore not necessarily determined by the passions, whether immediately so or as a result of a process of deliberation, but is instead able to adopt a reflective attitude in relation to them which in turn presupposes a certain level of independence of them. Yet Hobbes's views on human psychology and motivation make it difficult to see how the sovereign's behaviour would not simply be determined by the same passions that determine the behaviour of other human beings. Indeed, on the basis of what Hobbes himself has to say one can think of another story one might tell in relation to the sovereign's decision to initiate a process of colonisation, one that points to the following causal chain: passion → colonisation → war.

Hobbes provides a possible explanation of what would motivate the sovereign to initiate and manage the process of colonization in the form of the desire for glory when he states that 'no King can be rich, nor glorious, nor secure; whose Subjects are either poore, or contemptible, or too weak through want, or dissension, to maintain a war against their enemies'.⁵² This desire can be viewed, however, as a poor candidate for that which lies behind a successful process of colonisation, since it is included by Hobbes himself among the destructive passions that generate social conflict and disorder.⁵³ Moreover, like the passion of greed, it does not fit well the idea that the sovereign must exhibit sufficient foresight and plan properly, rather than being driven to act recklessly, if the project of establishing colonies is to succeed. Hobbes draws a distinction between a sentiment of glory based only on flattery or one's own imaginings, which he terms 'Vaine-Glory', and the sentiment of it that stems from a well-grounded confidence based on

⁵² Hobbes, *Leviathan*, XIX, 96

⁵³ Cf. Hobbes, *Leviathan*, VIII, 35f. and XIII, 61

previous experience, which can be taken to mean past successful actions that allow a just estimation of one's powers relative to those of others.⁵⁴ Glory can nevertheless be viewed as an inherently unstable passion, for even glory based on a justified estimation of one's own powers can in time produce overconfidence and thereby lead this type of glory to degenerate into glory in the first sense, that is, vainglory, from which poor judgement and recklessness are likely to result, leading eventually to civil war or war with other states. Although this example may appear to justify the claim that Hobbes views colonies as the 'fruit' of the insatiable appetite for enlarging dominion of which he himself speaks, and that such colonies are burdens that are less dangerous to lose than to keep, it does not follow that this view of colonies provides evidence of Hobbes's clear distaste for empire.⁵⁵ For the fact that troublesome colonies are the result of passions such as vainglory or greed, does not entail that all colonies are so. Rather, as we have seen, Hobbes thinks that in certain circumstances good judgement would itself result in the attempt to establish colonies, even if, given the very nature of things, the act of establishing colonies with the aim of preventing social disorder at home cannot prevent the eventual emergence of war.

If successful acts of colonisation require impartiality and good judgement on the part of the sovereign, an alternative conception of freedom to Hobbes's one of the absence of external impediments to motion that is causally determined by certain passions appears possible. This alternative conception of freedom is one that recognises the human capacity to exercise self-restraint in the face of desires that would otherwise causally determine one's actions according to the degree of power they happen to possess relative to other desires. The capacity to exercise the

⁵⁴ Hobbes, *Leviathan*, VI, 26f.

⁵⁵ Cf. Springborg, 'Hobbes, Donne and the Virginia Company', 156f.

self-restraint implies that the destructive potential of a passion such as greed may be avoided in others ways than by channelling it in a direction in which there are fewer external impediments to motion. One way of dealing with it would be to suppress this passion in accordance with a higher-order desire, such as that of ensuring the existence of social order and one of its main preconditions, namely, the welfare of others. People must, then, be assumed to possess the capacity to restrain their desire for material goods, and colonisation could therefore once again be viewed as something that is neither natural nor necessary. Rather, social order might be maintained by human beings lowering their expectations concerning what counts as material well-being, or by changing their beliefs concerning the extent to which they have a right to it.⁵⁶ This notion of self-restraint is difficult, however, to reconcile with Hobbes's account of the causal role of the passions in explanation of human behaviour and his inherently expansionary conception of freedom.

⁵⁶ The notion that moderation is morally required can be detected in Hobbes's discussion of the fifth law of nature, that of mutual accommodation or 'compleasance', which I have already mentioned. Cf. Rosamond Rhodes, 'Hobbes's Fifth Law of Nature and its Implications', *Hobbes Studies* 22 (2009). As we have seen, however, Hobbes thinks that obedience to this moral requirement is likely to be weak in the case of people subject to the passion of greed, and this is in turn liable to influence the behaviour of others, since preserving themselves in the face of the destructive tendencies of this passion may well trump obedience to the moral requirement in question.