

## Agents, Objects and their Powers in Suarez and Hobbes

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### *1. Introduction*

In the work of the Jesuit Francisco Suarez we see one of the most developed versions of late Aristotelian-scholastic action theory. This theory and the school that it represented was confronted by the radically new account of action proposed by Thomas Hobbes. The confrontation occurred at two levels. The first concerned the fundamental notion of purposiveness or goal-directedness. The second level, the main topic of this paper, had to do with the nature of the powers involved in purposive agency.

At the very beginning of the *Nicomachean Ethics*, Aristotle characterises agency as involving goal-direction.<sup>1</sup> Action is something done as a means to an end, in order to attain a goal. This seems a feature of action even when it is done for its own sake – when the goal of the action is its own performance. The goal of an action is often referred to as its object.

Now the object of an action seems to be mental, and to be an instance of a more general phenomenon, of the direction of the mind at various objects of thought. Just as there can be objects of belief or cognition, and objects of desire and emotion, so too there can be objects of action. Purposiveness looks as though it involves a further such relation of the mind to an object of thought – a goal presented by the understanding, that as something before the mind informs the action even prior to the goal's attainment, but that may never actually be attained.

Action seems then to involve a distinctive mode of intentionality, of mental direction at a content-providing mental object. Such direction involves what contemporary philosophy refers to as a psychological *attitude* - a mental occurrence understood as consisting in direction at (an attitude towards) an object. Just as belief is a cognitive attitude of direction at an object as true, and desire is an affective attitude towards an object simply as desirable or good, so, it might be thought, action is a fully practical attitude directed at an object as a goal. Action is an attitude directed at an object not just as desirable or good, but as an end to be attained through the action. We have here the idea of purposiveness as a distinctively practice- or action-constitutive mode of intentionality – a mode of intentionality that occurs in the will as a faculty for active or action-constitutive motivation, in acts of decision and intention-formation.

The Aristotelian-scholastic tradition in action theory was built on just this understanding of agency as involving a practical mode of intentionality. But this account was rejected by Hobbes. For Hobbes and his successors, action is identified not as an attitude, but as an effect of attitudes. Possession of content and direction at a mental object is now viewed as a passive phenomenon, so that motivating attitudes in particular are viewed as no more than passions, never as mental actions. Actions no longer occur as decisions to act, which are now no more

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<sup>1</sup> See *Nicomachean Ethics* at 1094a

than passive antecedents of action, but only as the actions decided upon. Hobbes reserves the term voluntariness to characterize the very nature of purposive action as he now conceived it – to be the willed effect of a passive motivation to act. The goal of an action is no longer an object involving a content belonging directly to the action, but is inherited from the contents of the action's passive efficient causes – from various desires for goals or ends, and the desire to perform the action as a means to those ends.<sup>2</sup>

This radical change in the theory of purposiveness was accompanied by equally radical change at another level, in the theory of the kinds of power involved in agency. It is this change in the theory of power that I shall discuss here.

## 2. Action, object and power

Human action involves two kinds of power that exist in tension. One is a power involved in action's purposiveness or goal-direction, a power that moves the agent to perform his action; and the other is self-determination, when the agent determines for himself what he does.

Action is explained by what motivates it. And what motivates it seems to be both its goal and something else involving that goal - a kind of force or power that gets the agent to act. The agent crosses the road in order to get to the other side. The goal of getting to the other side motivates the road crossing – and having that goal is what *moves* the agent to cross. This moving looks like a kind of push applied to the agent to get him to attain the end. So the goal-direction of action is linked to a kind of power involving the object of the action and to which the agent is subject. Perhaps the bearer of the power is the object itself.

And then there is the agent's power to determine for himself what he does – a power on the agent's part to determine or produce actions and outcomes. A very natural conception of this power is freedom, which involves the power to determine more than one action or outcome – a power which constitutes control of which action one performs.

Purposiveness is very different from self-determination. They involve very different relations. Purposiveness has to do with the action's relation to an object of thought belonging to the action itself (on the scholastic theory) or to the action's passive causes (on Hobbes's theory). Self-determination, by contrast, has to do with agent's relation to the action. Not only do purposiveness and self-determination involve different relations, they seem also to involve very different kinds of power. Motivating power is a power to which the agent is subject along with his action; whereas self-determination is a power which the agent himself exercises and to which only his action or its outcomes are subject. And the two powers may be in tension. If one is to count as determining for oneself what one does, that may rule out the action's being determined by other things. In particular, determining action for oneself might rule out certain ways of being moved into action, and in particular those that impose necessity. Motivation and self-determination may unite to produce one and the same action – but they may also oppose each other. Some forms of motivation may make self-determination impossible.

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<sup>2</sup> For more on these very different conceptions of purposiveness see Thomas Pink, 'Suarez, Hobbes and the scholastic tradition in action theory' and *Self-Determination (The Ethics of Action, vol 1)*.

We might understand power very generally as a capacity to influence or determine processes or outcomes. Motivation and self-determination clearly involve power so understood. But what forms can power take, and which of these forms do motivation and self-determination involve?

Now Thomas Hobbes was to argue that power can take only one form; this is efficient causal power as involving material objects and processes, such as the power of a brick to break a window or of heat to melt ice. And many modern philosophers within the English-language tradition would take Hobbes's view. But is this understanding of power as being only of the kind involved in material impacts and the like – *ordinary causation* as I shall call it – a good way of understanding motivation and self-determination; and if not, exactly why not? How do the powers involved in motivation and self-determination relate to, say, the power of a brick to break a window?

Take the motivating power involved in purposiveness. If the bearer of the power really is the action's object – so it really is the goal of the action that moves the agent to act in its pursuit – then if this object is operative as a kind of moving cause, it is certainly no ordinary cause. For although its operation is explanatorily and causally prior to the action, the object does not exist prior to the action as ordinary causes such as bricks and their motions do: that requires the success of the action – the goal's production or attainment through the action – which is something posterior to the action's own causation or production.

Nor is self-determination ordinary efficient causation either. This is suggested by the very idea of determining things for oneself, which ordinary causes certainly do not. When it hits the window, the brick does not determine for itself that the window breaks. The brick's causation of the window's breaking seems dictated by brick's circumstances and its own given nature. That the window breaks is necessitated by the brick's mere possession of a power to break it when hurled against it. That is why we do not think of a brick as being in control of alternative possible outcomes. It is not up to the brick whether the window breaks or not.

Suarez sees human action as produced both by motivation and self-determination, and understands these to involve forms of causation and causal power that are different both from each other and from ordinary causation.

Human action, which primarily occurs as an elicited action of the will itself, is both motivated by its goal and determined by its agent. That for Suarez makes it the product of two forms of causation operating together but which are otherwise very different. As determined by the agent it is efficiently caused by the will – but through a distinctive form of free causation of which only rational agents are capable. And as motivated the action is also caused by its object – the goal of the act of will, which however operates not as an efficient but as a final cause.

Thus they say one and the same action of the will is caused by the end and by the will itself, and in so far as it is caused by the will, the causation is efficient, in so far as by the end, the causation is final, and in respect of the former the motion is real and proper, since such an action comes from the power as from a properly physical principle, and in respect of the latter, the motion is metaphorical since it comes from an object attracting and drawing the will towards it.<sup>3</sup>

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3 Suarez, *Metaphysical Disputations*, disputation 23, section 4, §8, *Opera* vol 25, p861

So the action is involved in two forms of dependence on distinct causes – an active dependence on the will characteristic of efficient causation, and another dependence on its goal or end characteristic of final causation:

So that same action, in so far as it is from the will is an active dependence on the will, in so far as it is from the end, is a final dependence.<sup>4</sup>

Bricks and other non-rational efficient causes operate of necessity. Once the circumstances hold required for them to act, they do so. But human agents are not like this. The will with the agent in possession of it, is, by contrast to a brick, a free cause. The agent's operation as cause to determine his performance of a specific action is not necessitated by his circumstances and by his mere possession of the power to determine that action. The will is a free faculty:

Properly to resolve the difficulties that have been raised, we must first hold onto and expand that description of a free faculty in which two things are postulated. One is that it is an active faculty that of itself and by its own internal ability has the power to exercise and to suspend its action. The other is that when this faculty exercises its act, it is so disposed and proximately prepared (as I will put it) for its work that, positing everything required for acting, it is able to act and able not to act.<sup>5</sup>

These two modes of causation, by the will as free cause and by the object as final cause, are fundamental to Suarez's moral theory and, in particular, to his theory of moral law and obligation. It is very important that the powers involved in motivation and self-determination are compatible with each other – that in being moved to act by final causes we still act as free efficient causes and determine for ourselves how we act. For the very possibility of moral or natural law depends on this compatibility in their operation. Law presupposes freedom. And law and freedom in turn together presuppose also the capacity for reason – the capacity that in the practical sphere involves our being moved by final causes.<sup>6</sup>

Thomas Hobbes developed his own account of the power involved in agency as part of a very different theory of law openly opposed to Jesuit moral and legal theory. Hobbes accused Bramhall, in their famous debate on liberty, of being a mere spokesman of Suarez.<sup>7</sup> Hobbes denied that motivation involves any power that is distinct from ordinary causation operating at the level of motions in matter. An action's relation to a goal arises through ordinary efficient causation, the causation of the action by appetites or passions. The agent is moved

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<sup>4</sup> *Metaphysical Disputations*, disputation 23, section 4, §9, *Opera* vol 25, p862

<sup>5</sup> *Metaphysical Disputations*, disputation 19, sect 4, §8, *Opera* vol 25, p708

<sup>6</sup> Speaking of law strictly understood, with which we are now dealing, I further add that that it can only involve a rational created being: for law is only imposed on a free nature, and only concerns free actions ... *On Laws*, book 1, chapter 3, §2, *Opera* vol 5, p7

<sup>7</sup> Hobbes drily reported that he had found nothing in Bramhall on free will and on free will's relation to God's concurrence that could not have been read earlier in Suarez' *Opuscula*: see *The Questions Concerning Liberty, Necessity and Chance, clearly stated between Dr Bramhall Bishop of Derry, and Thomas Hobbes of Malmesbury*, p28

into action by appetites, and it is from the causal influence of appetites and the contents of those appetites that actions obtain their goals.

Besides these appetites, the agent has no distinctive determining role of his own at all. Hobbes himself resisted the very idea of self-determination. But his successors did not. The theory of purposiveness based on efficient causation by appetites was eventually used to provide a theory of self-determination too. So instead of motivation and self-determination being explained by contrasting and in some respects potentially opposing forms of power each of which is distinct from ordinary causation, motivation and self-determination were eventually to be explained by one and the same kind of power – power exercised by passive motivations as ordinary causes.

### 3. *Objects as final causes*

As we have already noted, motivation seems to involve a case of power. The agent is moved into action; he is subjected to power that gets him to act. This power is associated with the action's object; the power gets the agent to pursue that object. Perhaps the power to move the agent is exercised by the object itself. And indeed, according to Suarez, it really is the object that moves the agent to act. Suarez claims that it really is the objects or goals of our actions that move us both to intend those objects as our ends and to perform actions as means to their attainment:

Therefore that in created beings acting through intellect and will there occurs final causation, sufficient proof can be found from human actions. Experience shows us that when we act in a human way, that is freely and rationally, we intend some particular end, towards which we direct our actions and for the sake of which we choose means; therefore we are moved by an end, both to the love or intention of that end, and to choosing and executing means for the sake of that end.<sup>8</sup>

This causation by an object as final cause is a presupposition of action as it involves our capacity for reason, and so it is also a condition of freedom, which requires the capacity for reason. But this causation by the object is not efficient causation, because the causing object is not real.

However this [final cause] as such is not active; otherwise modes of causation would be confused. Besides which an end that lacked real being would be efficient.<sup>9</sup>

The causation involves an intentional object – an object of thought that may lack real being. True, it is what the reality of the final cause would involve that attracts. An action is aimed at the actual attainment of its object, not simply at the thought of that attainment.

Secondly it is certain that the will does not aim at the end so that it pursues the end in respect of a being that is merely cognized, but pursues it in respect of a being that is proper and real, which the will grasps in the end according to its condition; and in this sense it is most certain that a cognized being is not the basis of serving as an end, but only a necessary condition...For

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<sup>8</sup> *Metaphysical Disputations*, disputation 23, section 1, §8, *Opera* vol 25, p845

<sup>9</sup>

*Metaphysical Disputations*, disputation 23, section 4, §2, *Opera* vol 25, p859

someone who intends health or riches does not intend to cognize them or think about them, but to really attain them in respect of true and real existence, and so for other ends.<sup>10</sup>

But the object still attracts and moves while as yet lacking real being.

First of all, therefore, everyone agrees that an end does not need a real or attained existence (as they say) to cause finally, in which sense it is clear that the being of existence is not the basis of causing finally, nor indeed a necessary condition. I add too that neither is the true being of essence nor the possible being of existence really necessary to causing finally, for which apprehension suffices...<sup>11</sup>

Hence the motion imparted is termed metaphorical. Nevertheless, the motion is real, a truly causal operation:

We grant that causation belongs to an end in so far as it has the character of a beginning and consequently in so far as it has the character of something that moves. But its motion is termed metaphorical, not because it is not real, but because it is not by an efficient influence nor by a motion that is physical, but by a motion that is intentional and involving the soul, so that nothing prevents its causality from being true and genuine.<sup>12</sup>

Suarez insists repeatedly that final causation is true causation. The experience that reveals to us the purposiveness of our action reveals the reality and the genuinely causal because productive nature of the motion imparted to it by goals.

This motion is a genuine feature of reality; for it is not something imagined or made up by the intellect; and it is a kind of causality, since it is an origin of operations that are real; so the end is a true and real cause.<sup>13</sup>

But how can a final cause operate, if not really existent? The metaphorical motion involves attraction of us by the object. We seem to be moved towards the goal as something good. Final causation is based on the power of good to attract.

The reason is that final causation consists in a metaphorical motion of the will by which the end attracts the will to itself; but nothing attracts the will to itself except in so far as it is good. So goodness is the basis of the will's being moved, and therefore is the basis or principle of final causation.<sup>14</sup>

Suarez insists that it is goodness that gives final causes their causal force or *virtus*:

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10 *Metaphysical Disputations*, disputation 23, section 8, §8, *Opera* vol 25, p880

11 *Metaphysical Disputations*, disputation 23, section 8, §7, *Opera* vol 25, p880

12 *Metaphysical Disputations*, disputation 23, section 1, §14, *Opera* vol 25, p847

13 *Metaphysical Disputations*, disputation 23, Section 1, §8, *Opera* vol 25, p845

14 *Metaphysical Disputations*, disputation 23, section 5, §2, *Opera* vol 25, p864

So on this matter it appears to be the common agreement of all the learned that goodness is the immediate basis by which an end moves; so goodness is what constitutes a final cause, imparting (as I shall put it) force to the causation.<sup>15</sup>

There is a difficulty here though. Not only is the goal itself unreal, at least prior to its attainment through the action, but its goodness, the claimed basis of its power to cause, may only be apparent too.

But there appears a stock difficulty with this conclusion; since final causation is true and real, how can a basis that is only imagined and supposed be sufficient for this causality? For real causality can only arise from a principle that is real. But a goodness that is merely apparent is nothing real, but is rather something made up, and so cannot genuinely cause.<sup>16</sup>

How then is final causation possible? Two features underlie it.

First there is a functional relationship between intellect and will – what Suarez terms a natural sympathy or accord between them. Through this sympathy or accord the will is responsive to objects represented to it by the intellect as good – even if the objects are not (yet) real, and even if the represented goodness is only apparent.

We reply first that this final causality is real in that it is constituted in a moral and intellectual way through a natural sympathy that holds between will and intellect, and so needs nothing more by way of real being in the cause beyond that which suffices for motion between these powers through their natural accord, and so it suffices that being be represented as real in the intellect, even if it is not truly real, and so too an appearance of goodness is enough for final causation, even if it is not true.<sup>17</sup>

The natural accord of intellect and will as capacities of one and the same soul constitutes a kind of ‘proximity’ through coordination of functions that is a condition of final causation as proximity in respect of place is a condition of efficient causation:

For which reason, just as proximity of place is a condition required for an efficient cause, so in a final cause a proximity as it were in respect of soul or life is a condition required for such a mode of causation. For since the motion of this cause is metaphorical, it has to occur through a natural accord of cognitive and appetitive powers, as has often been said.<sup>18</sup>

Secondly essential to final causation is the reality of goodness itself. Even when the goodness of the object is illusory, for final causation to be possible the illusion can extend only to the object’s possession of goodness. For the attractive force that lies at the heart of final causation to be possible, the goodness itself has to be real – and real in particular as a source of moving power. The goodness must be of a kind that if it did really attach to an end, could justify and in a rational being motivate the pursuit of that end.

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15 *Metaphysical Disputations*, disputation 23, section 5, §2, *Opera* vol 25, p864

16 *Metaphysical Disputations*, disputation 23, section 5, §13, *Opera* vol 25, p867

17 *Metaphysical Disputations*, disputation 23, section 5, §14, *Opera* vol 25, p867

18 *Metaphysical Disputations*, disputation 23, section 8, §10, *Opera* vol 25, p881

Nonetheless the will can never be said to be moved other than by true goodness; for it is never moved other than by pleasure or by moral goodness, or by what is fitting by nature, which are all true forms of goodness (I pass by the appetite for goodness in general, in which there is no deception)...the basis of the motion is not goodness that is merely apparent, but a goodness that is genuine, even if it is falsely attributed to such a thing.<sup>19</sup>

So an end cannot move simply as useful or *utilis*. For the *bonum utile* involves no goodness or justification in its own right, but only as a means to a genuine good – the *bonum honestum* (rational good) or *bonum delectabile* (sensible good).<sup>20</sup>

The power involved in final causation is real. It is generally consistent with the agent's freedom – his capacity to determine for himself which action he performs. But the power is real enough still to diminish (without entirely removing) the indifference on which human freedom depends. That is how concupiscence can make it harder (though not impossible) for us to exercise freedom well. Concupiscence does this through final causation, by making an object appear more attractive, so reducing the indifference of the will.<sup>21</sup>

As for concupiscence, so for persuasion through advice or petition. These may again diminish freedom, by operating 'through the object' - by increasing the attractiveness of the object and so its power as a final cause:

We reply that concupiscence does not move through an external principle, since it moves through an object, and thus so attracts the internal principle that it moves itself more forcefully, in just the same way too as someone who moves through advice or petition is not said to move externally as by applying force, but to persuade through the medium of internal principles, that is intellect and will, so that voluntariness is not in any way diminished on this account. Although freedom can be said to be diminished, since that persuasion is not itself free, and in a way reduces indifference.<sup>22</sup>

The motivating power exercised by final causes can even impose necessity. This it would do at the beatific vision of God when his perfect goodness engages with our rationality to remove our freedom. Our rationality involves a susceptibility to the good, and so to the power of final causes - and so a peculiar susceptibility to the goodness of God himself as our ultimate end. At the beatific vision final causation will take a necessitating form.

But since the matter is theological, I respond briefly, granting that those acts do arise from final causation...But nothing prevents them from being necessary, on the contrary I said earlier that the necessity of that love arises from God as clearly seen, as the ultimate end, whose supreme goodness is so powerful in causing even in its kind as to subject the will wholly to itself. Moreover that necessity does not arise from any imperfection or irrational mode of operation, but rather from the supreme perfection both of the ultimate end itself and of the mode of applying that end to move the will through the most perfect rational or intellectual cognition,

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<sup>19</sup> *Metaphysical Disputations*, disputation 23, section 5, §15, *Opera* vol 25, p867

<sup>20</sup> See *Metaphysical Disputations*, disputation 23, section 5, §18, *Opera* vol 25, p868

<sup>21</sup> See *Treatise 2, On the voluntary*, disputation 3, section 3, §8, *Opera* vol 4, p207

<sup>22</sup> *Treatise 2, On the voluntary*, disputation 3, section 3, §14, *Opera* vol 4, p208

and so nothing prevents that motion of the will, though necessary, from being through genuine final causation.<sup>23</sup>

We have then in final causation a peculiarly normative kind of power – a power that involves sources of justification or reason, such as goodness, and that moves us through our capacity for reason.

Can an agent aim at goals as bad as well as aiming at them as good? This is a frequently raised question to which both Suarez and Hobbes will give what appears to be superficially the same answer. For both of them to aim at a goal is to aim at it as good.<sup>24</sup> But the basis of the answer is radically different in each case. For Hobbes there is no more to goodness than to be an object of desire or appetite.

But whatsoever is the object of any mans Appetite or Desire, that is it, which he for his part calleth *Good*; and the object of his Hate, and Aversion, *Evill*; and of his Contempt, *Vile* and *Inconsiderable*. For these words of Good, Evill, and Contemptible, are ever used with relation to the person that useth them: There being nothing simply and absolutely so; nor any common Rule of Good and Evill, to be taken from the nature of the objects themselves; but from the Person of the man (where there is no Commonwealth); or (in a Commonwealth), from the Person that representeth it; or from an Arbitrator or Judge, whom men disagreeing shall by consent set up, and make his sentence the Rule thereof.<sup>25</sup>

But for Suarez, goals cannot be aimed at as bad, because the function of the will is to take us to the genuinely good, and so only genuine goodness can underpin final causation and possess a genuine power to move and attract us.

The will's function is to incline us towards an object proper or appropriate to it.

The will can will nothing though an elicited appetite unless that thing be in accord with some natural inclination of the will itself, since every elicited appetite, at least when natural, arises from such an inclination, since every appetite of this kind is related to an object or part that is adequate and proportionate to the will.<sup>26</sup>

But the bad is not a proper object for the will, since the outcomes that the will serves to attain involve goodness, not badness.

[But a natural inclination to the bad as bad] would be a natural inclination that was disordered ... For the end or arrangement of the will is that by it humans should seek what is fitting to them, and avoid what is unfitting; if therefore the will received an inclination towards what was unfitting as unfitting, that would be contrary both to the will itself and to its end...<sup>27</sup>

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23 *Metaphysical Disputations*, disputation 23, section 3, §17, *Opera* vol 25, p856

24 As Hobbes puts it: '...to love a thing, and to think it good are all one' *Questions* p290

25 Hobbes *Leviathan* chapter 6, vol 2, pp80-1

26 *Metaphysical Disputations*, disputation 23, section 5, §4, *Opera* vol 25, p865

27 *Metaphysical Disputations*, disputation 23, section 5, §4, *Opera* vol 25, p865

The will is oriented towards goodness as the intellect is oriented towards truth:

And this is confirmed, for it is impossible that the intellect give assent to the false in so far as it is false; so too it is impossible that the will pursue what is bad in so far as it is bad. The consequent is obvious, for as the intellect oriented to the true, so the will is oriented to the good; for, there is as much opposition in the terms themselves between pursuit and the bad as there is between assent and the false.<sup>28</sup>

And while goodness is something that can give force to final causation, badness cannot do so because badness in itself is nothing.

Badness considered formally and in itself has nothing by which it could attract and draw the will, because badness itself is nothing...<sup>29</sup>

Since badness cannot exercise final causal power, badness cannot be formally an object of the will.

Final causation comes with action's goal-direction, and constitutes the power by which the goal moves the agent to pursue it and thereby attain the *terminus* or endpoint that would constitute a successful outcome for the action, and to which the action tends. Human action thus unites three phenomena - direction at a goal or object, explanation by final causation as providing motivating power, and possession of a *terminus* or endpoint or final stage to which a process naturally tends. But outside human action these three phenomena can fall apart.

There can be direction at a goal or object without final causation – without subjection to or production by motivating power. The proving example is God's own immanent action – action as occurring within God himself.

Whence with regard to the first we deny that the metaphorical motion of an end has the place in the divine will that it has in our own. For in our will that motion is called metaphorical as nevertheless a genuine causality which involves true dependence in an action elicited for the sake of an end on that very end. However in the divine will there is no such metaphorical motion, but there is instead a certain eminent reason for loving, which just as it exists without any distinction of acts or potentialities, so it is without any true motion even of the metaphorical kind. For which reason we should beware equivocation in the expression *metaphorical motion*, for with respect to our case, that qualifier *metaphorical* is added to distinguish that motion from the motion of an efficient cause, not to exclude from it every dimension of motion and real causality properly so termed. But when in truth God is said to be moved or attracted by his own goodness, that way of speaking is entirely metaphorical and simply to explain the reason for the divine will.<sup>30</sup>

In God himself we see a detachment between reason and subjection to any form of power. There can be reasons for God's immanent action, but God is not really responding to reason as something that moves him, subjecting him to a kind of power.

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28 *Metaphysical Disputations*, disputation 23, section 5, §5, *Opera* vol 25, p865

29 *Metaphysical Disputations*, disputation 23, section 5, §6, *Opera* vol 25, p865

30 *Metaphysical Disputations*, disputation 23, section 9, §6, *Opera* vol 25, p883

Likewise it is false that to love one thing for the sake of another is the same as to be moved by the love of one thing to love of another, if this *by* refers to genuine causality or to a real distinction between one love and another: for strictly speaking it is enough for the truth of this expression, that one thing be the reason for love of the other...thus [God] is said to love creatures for the sake of his own goodness, not because that goodness is a cause of his loving the creatures, but because it is a reason for his loving them.<sup>31</sup>

There can also be process towards a *terminus* or endpoint but without motivation by a goal. The example Suarez provides of this is natural processes that are not direct cases of human or even merely animal agency. These are still cases of teleology broadly understood – a process towards a natural *terminus* or *finis*. An orientation towards a *terminus* is a feature of natural processes generally, even at the inanimate level.

Regarding [natural causes] it is clear and certain that certain actions are not carried out contingently or by chance, but that each natural agent through a disposition of its own nature has a fixed operation and way of carrying out that operation and a fixed endpoint [*terminus*] to which it tends through its operation.<sup>32</sup>

But outside the world of human and animal agency this orientation towards a *terminus* does not in itself involve final causation.

...however, as we have often said, an end is not a cause just through its character as an endpoint [*terminus*], but only in so far as the end is also in some way a beginning [*principium*]<sup>33</sup>

Final causation is a psychological phenomenon. It only occurs when we have action motivated by an end.

As Gabriel notes in 2. dist. 1. at the beginning of q. 5, an end and a final cause are not wholly the same, for in itself an end is only the endpoint to which a process tends, or to which motions are directed; a final cause however is what moves an agent to act.<sup>34</sup>

Final causation is involved in natural processes generally only because such processes involve the *transeunt* action of God himself. These are the external action of God in the world, which as distinct from him may be subject to power, including the power provided by the objects of the divine will:

And so it is that there is no genuine final causation in these actions in so far as they are carried out by natural agents, but only a relation to a fixed endpoint; but in so far as they are done by God, so there is final causality in them as in other external and *transeunt* acts of God.<sup>35</sup>

In his debate with Bramhall, Hobbes was unqualifiedly hostile to the very idea of final

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31 *Metaphysical Disputations*, disputation 23, section 9, §7, *Opera* vol 25, p884

32 *Metaphysical Disputations*, disputation 23, section 10, §3, *Opera* vol 25, p886

33 *Metaphysical Disputations*, disputation 23, section 10, §4, *Opera* vol 25, p887

34 *Metaphysical Disputations*, disputation 23, section 9, §8, *Opera* vol 25, p884

35 *Metaphysical Disputations*, disputation 23, section 10, §6, *Opera* vol 25, p887

causation as a mode of causation of actions by their objects that was distinct from efficient causation. In line with Suarez, Bramhall had claimed that motivation involved a determination of the action through its object that was not efficient-causal but moral:

Secondly, for the manner how the understanding doth determine the will, it is not naturally but morally. The will is moved by the understanding, not as by an efficient, having a causal influence into the effect, but only by proposing and representing the object.<sup>36</sup>

Hobbes, by clear contrast, caustically rejected all such appeals to motion or determination other than by an efficient cause:

Moved not by an efficient, is nonsense.<sup>37</sup>

Since, in Hobbes's view, any determination of anything, including any action, must be by an efficient cause, final causation had to be explained, in so far as it was intelligible at all, as really nothing more than efficient causation. A final cause

in so far as it can be conceived by man, is entirely the same as an efficient cause, for from an agreeable object there arises an imagination of enjoyment, from an imagination of enjoyment arises an imagination of a way, from an imagination of a way there arises a motion towards the desired object; in which series of productions the object or end is an agent, for which reason the act of the object which is the end is an efficient cause of our motion towards the end.<sup>38</sup>

So the only genuine causes are possible efficient causes – which for Hobbes are material objects or motions involving them. An end as genuinely explanatory can only be some sensorily presented object that does exist as a feature of reality prior to the action that it explains, and that is an efficient cause of our wanting to act. But this of course is not final causation as understood by Suarez and Bramhall.

Hobbes's end is always some already existent stimulus that suggests and triggers the pursuit of a goal – like an inviting bottle that enters our visual field. But the Suarezian final cause is an action's goal that need not yet be realized – such as that the bottle is painted by us as a still life, or its contents savoured, or that it is returned to the cupboard to be saved for the Christmas party. And for Hobbes this end as the as yet unattained goal of the action, so not the sensorily presented thing that causes desire but the desired outcome, is not a cause at all. It is simply something imagined, the content of the *imaginatio fruitionis* or imagining of enjoyment, and it is the imagining alone, a psychological occurrence and so a possible efficient cause, that gives rise to action, supplying through its content the action with its goal. What is imagined - the goal and its goodness - plays no causal role. The goal itself is inert; only the imagining of it is productive, a motion in matter and an ordinary cause.

Key to final causation in the practical sphere, in Suarez's view, is that it is exercised by objects of thought as possessing, at least in appearance, some genuine form of goodness. Final causation is exercised, then, by objects as potentially justifying the pursuit of them.

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36 John Bramhall in *Questions*, pp55-56

37 Thomas Hobbes in *Questions*, p59

38 Thomas Hobbes, *Critique du De Mundo de Thomas White*, chapter 27, §2, p315

Final causation is a power that moves rational created beings as responsive to such justification – and which only moves non-rational ones in so far as they too are agents whose actions are products of motivation, responsive to the good through the sensitive appetite in a way analogous to, though more primitive than, rational beings' responsiveness to the good through the will or rational appetite.<sup>39</sup>

Suarez's theory of final causation accommodates an important feature of our ordinary conception of our rationality. I have already referred to power in normative form – power that involves justifications and that we respond to as rational beings. In our everyday thinking about rationality we do indeed seem committed to normative power – a power very different from ordinary causation, but is a genuine form of power nonetheless. Our normal conception of reason and justification centrally involves a conception of justifications as exercising a power to move us and of rationality as involving our susceptibility to such a power. We readily use a vocabulary of power and determination to pick out normativity as well as causation. We talk of being moved by the *force* of an argument. The force of an argument may even be *compelling*. And we use this vocabulary of force just because we think of good arguments as really possessing the capacity to influence or move or even to determine our assent - and to move or determine it through the justifications they present. Our capacity for reason or rationality is a capacity to be moved by argument - and by the normative force of an argument in particular. So reason or rationality involves responsiveness to a kind of power - the power of good argument and genuine justification.<sup>40</sup>

It is tempting for modern philosophers to dismiss this talk of normative power, just because the power envisaged seems so clearly not to be ordinary causation. We have here, it might be alleged, only a manner of speaking. But there is an obvious difficulty with this move. Power follows from a genuine capacity to determine or move or influence. And surely we think it true that the very quality of an argument can be what moves people to assent to it. But for that to be true the quality of an argument must actually have a capacity to move. Good arguments must have genuine force - a power that is not that of ordinary causation because located in the normativity attaching to objects of thought, but which is a genuine capacity to move nonetheless.

Practical argument is no exception. To have a capacity for practical reason is to have a capacity to entertain objects of thought – possible goals of action – and understand them as genuinely good, and so as justifying action directed at their attainment. When a rational human responds by pursuing the goal in action, it is the fact that the response really is justified – that the goals really are desirable or good - that moves them so to respond. They are moved to respond by the goodness of the object; and their rationality is their susceptibility to being so moved. Reason and justification has a power to move us – a normative power to which our rationality leaves us subject. Both Aquinas and Suarez referred to reason in the form of law possessing a *vis directiva* – a directive force that could move rational beings to comply.

It might be claimed, following in the tradition of Hobbes, that genuine power is always and only that of ordinary causation. It can only attach to possible ordinary causes, such as

<sup>39</sup> See *Metaphysical Disputations*, disputation 23, section 10, §15, *Opera* vol 25, pp889-90

<sup>40</sup> For further discussion of normative power and its implications for the free will problem, see Thomas Pink *Self-Determination (The Ethics of Action)*, vol 1).

psychological occurrences, not to mere objects of our thought as supported by justifications. So what really moves me to desire or intend an outcome is not that outcome and its goodness, but the psychological event of imagining or entertaining that outcome. To describe me as rational is just to describe me as susceptible to a particular kind of ordinary causal force - the causal force of those entertainings that present good justifications. Agents are rational if their desires are susceptible to the causal power of those entertainings with objects that are in fact good. But the objects themselves and their goodness play no explanatory role. It is the entertaining that affects us, but not the goodness of its object.

Now it might in the end prove true that ordinary causation as allowed for by Hobbes is the only real case of power in nature. But if so, that is still not what we ordinarily assume. Take the prior entertaining of a possible goal or outcome. It is certainly not this event of entertaining the goal alone that we ordinarily think of as producing desire or decision. A rational agent's decision is motivated not by the mere fact that they have entertained a given outcome, but by the goodness of the outcome entertained. Rational or reasonable agents respond to justifications not because the event of entertaining them just happens to produce that effect, but because the justifications themselves are genuine and good. The quality of these justifications, such the goodness of an outcome as a possible goal, really is what moves rational agents to respond as justified. That is rationality as ordinarily understood - not susceptibility to ordinary causation merely, but susceptibility to the force of justifying objects of thought.

But that means that we must be capable of being moved by the goodness of a goal to pursue it. The Suarezian idea of an as yet unattained mental object that moves us through its relation to goodness as a source of justification is, then, a way of modelling normative power in the practical sphere. By assuming the inertness of the unrealized objects of our appetite and action, Hobbes is putting in doubt the possibility of practical reason ever moving us.

On Suarez's theory, of course, final causation may move us to intend and pursue an end even when it is not true that pursuit of the end would be justified – in cases where an object is not in reality so good as to justify action directed at its attainment. But the point of Suarez's extension of final causation to include even these cases must be this. Even in such a case we are not motivated in a completely different way from motivation by a genuine justification. Even when we are motivated without sufficient justification, the will is moved as a faculty responsive to genuine reason – to real justifications. That is why Suarez is so very insistent that in such cases it must still be some form of true goodness or *vera bonitas* that moves us, so something capable of justifying action, even if in this case the goodness does not sufficiently justify, or does not really attach to the object at all but is merely represented as so doing. Suarez's theory of final causation is a theory of objects moving us, not through ordinary causation as contemporary philosophy now understands it, but through our responsiveness to normative power – a power of justifications to move us to respond as justified. Even when we act foolishly or against reason, human motivation is not simply a mode of subjection to ordinary causal power. It always involves our capacity for reason, and so our susceptibility to the power of reason, even if in this case that capacity is mis-exercised, and so our susceptibility takes defective form.

What of the influence of objects of thought on the intellect within theoretical reason? Suarez claims that by contrast to objects to which we respond rationally as agents, objects of cognition act as efficient causes.<sup>41</sup>

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41 See also *On the Soul*, book 3, chapter 4, §§6-14, *Opera* vol 3, pp628-30

So that action in so far as it comes from the will is an active dependence on the will, but in so far as it comes from the end, is a final dependence. For there is here a difference between an end and the object of a cognitive power. For the object of a cognitive power contributes to the power's act as an efficient cause, through the medium of some real form by which it is joined, or through its own being if it can be united to the power through that. But a good presented to the will only contributes to the act as a final cause, since it only moves the will metaphorically through attraction, as something cognitively presented even if it does not otherwise exist in reality.<sup>42</sup>

Now our ordinary understanding of how in theoretical reason we respond to objects of cognition involves just the same commitment to normative power as arose in practical reason. No more than desire or action need cognition be the simple product of ordinary causation of the kind involved in bricks breaking windows. Suppose, for example, you entertain in thought a mathematical truth. That truth might determine or strongly incline you to assent. But what about the truth moves you to assent? The everyday answer in such cases is clear: its evident nature - in other words you are moved to believe by the clear justification there is for believing the truth. Perhaps indeed you are not only led to believe the truth, but that there is justification for believing it. Either way, what leads you to form the mathematical belief, and possibly also the belief in the justification, is the truth and the justification for believing it. Now in this case what is described as moving you is not the sort of feature involved in ordinary causation. You are contemplating, not an entity like a motion in matter with a location in time and space, but an object of thought - a mathematical truth. And if the object of your thought is true, its truth is plausibly necessary, and certainly not something that functions as an ordinary cause. For ordinary motions in matter are contingent. And what moves you to believe it is the evident nature of the truth, the clear justifiability of believing it. And this is a normative property attaching to the truth - something that, no matter if it moves or even determines your assent, is again not the sort of feature involved in ordinary causation.

Suarez is happy to accommodate the normative power exercised by objects of cognition by appeal to a form of efficient causation exercised by the object or by representations of it. But action or appetite is not similarly efficiently caused by its object, the goal, not only because that object standardly has no reality prior to the action which it explains, but because the object involves, in goodness, a quite different source of justification. Crucial here is Suarez's conception of objects of cognition and appetite - of intellect and will - as involving differing forms of normativity, which he then treats as implying different kinds of causal power on the part of the object. Objects of cognition involve an efficient causal power to determine one specific outcome - a power which is exercised provided the object is sufficiently proposed or apparent to the thinker. Objects of appetite or action possess, by contrast, a final causal power that is (in general) non-necessitating, even when the object is presented clearly. All this allows for a freedom of will or appetite, but rules out a freedom specifically of the intellect. The will is a free capacity as the intellect is not.

Moreover this can be shown and proved a priori, for in respect to such objects thus presented to it the intellect does not remain suspended and undetermined because it has some internal power and control over its action. But it remains in suspense only because the object is not sufficiently presented to the intellect so that the natural force by which the intellect inclines to the truth may carry it by necessity to what is true. In this we can discern a great difference between the will

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42 *Metaphysical Disputations*, disputation 23, section 4, §9, *Opera* vol 25, p862

and the intellect, for the intellect cannot be undetermined in relation to its own act unless because the object has been imperfectly presented to it. But the will can be indifferent in relation to an object's capacity even when that object is exactly presented to it.<sup>43</sup>

Intellect and will are viewed by Suarez as both rational or reason-responsive capacities - capacities that are susceptible to the force of reason understood as a power exercised over the capacities by their objects. To explain the very different nature of this power in each case, Suarez appeals both to the 'merits of the object' - to the kind of normative support it provides - and to what these merits imply about our capacity to respond to them. These merits are very different in each case. The normativity of an object of cognition is a normativity of truth and falsehood - and this leaves no room for freedom, so that the intellect is unfree in its operation. When reason is sufficient to guide the intellect to a conclusion, it determines the intellect to one effect, assent to the specific conclusion supported. Otherwise the intellect is left in suspense. But the normativity of an object of action or appetite is a normativity of good and bad, which does not similarly determine how the agent will respond to it:

And a yet more a priori reason can be taken from the difference between the objects of the intellect and of the will. For truth is the formal object of the intellect; and in one and the same object there cannot be both truth and falsehood, since truth consists in something indivisible, as discussed above, and so both in itself and in respect of the merits of its object, the intellect is determined to one regarding the specification of its act. For which reason, if the intellect is sometimes not sufficiently determined, that is only because its object is not sufficiently presented or apparent, not in truth because of some internal power and control that the intellect itself has over its own act. But the good is the object of the will; however, one and the same object can be at once both good and bad, or fitting and unfitting, in different respects or under different aspects, and so even given a perfect presentation or cognition of the object, the appetitive power can be indifferent regarding its specification in relation to pursuit or rejection of such an object. So indifference with respect to specification is not found in itself or formally in the intellect but in the will.<sup>44</sup>

The force of practical reason not only attaches to objects - possible goals - that lack reality prior to the actions which that force explains, but is non-determining as the force of theoretical reason is not. So to model this distinctively practical force or *vis* we need a special mode of causation, final causation, whereby a non-determining normative power that can permit indifference is exercised by a mental object as in some way good. That is why though the will is a rational capacity just as the intellect is too, there can be a freedom of the will as there cannot be a freedom of the intellect. And that in turn allows for the force of reason in the practical sphere to take the form of law - a *vis directiva* that governs the exercise of freedom. Let us now turn to the theory of freedom itself.

#### 4. *Free causation*

Just as the experience of our own action establishes the reality of final causation, so too it establishes that we are free efficient causes.

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<sup>43</sup> *Metaphysical Disputations*, disputation 19, section 5, §15, *Opera* vol 25, p716

<sup>44</sup> *Metaphysical Disputations*, disputation 19, section 5, §16, *Opera* vol 25, p716

Second we can prove matters from experience. For it is evident to us from experience that it is within our power to do a given thing or to refrain from doing it; and we use reason, discourse, and deliberation in order to incline ourselves towards the one rather than the other. That is why choice is made subject to our judgment. Otherwise as Damascene correctly said above, this ability to consider and deliberate would have been given to us in vain. Pertinent too is the ordinary way of performing and guiding human actions through advice, through laws and precepts, through encouragements and rebukes, through promises of reward and threats of punishment. All this would be pointless if human beings operated by a necessity of nature and not by their own freedom.<sup>45</sup>

And experience establishes too that this free causal power is distinct from our capacity for practical reason – our capacity to be moved by final causes – and that it involves indifference. It is not simply that we are responsive to objects as potential goals – a responsiveness that comes with final causation - but that we determine for ourselves how we respond:

For our experience shows that it is not only when there is change in our cognition or apprehension of an object but also when these remain the same, that it is up to our own will whether to sit or stand, whether to enter by this way or that way, and so forth. This, then, is a sign that this diverse mode of acting consists formally and immediately not in reason's deliberation and apprehension, but rather in freedom or indifference. Furthermore our experience shows that even after we know of a threat of punishment or a promise of reward, it is within our power to be moved or not be moved by such a reason.<sup>46</sup>

Central to Suarez's account of self-determination is the idea of an efficient cause that is free or contingent in its operation. The cause determines the outcome – but as a free cause its operation is not necessitated by the nature of its power and the circumstances under which it is operative.

Hobbes denied that such a contingent power is possible, because it is unrecognizable as the kind of causal power exercised by ordinary matter in motion. As with his opposition to final causes, Hobbes's scepticism about freedom is based on a clear view of the only form that power can take in nature. The only possible form that power, the capacity to produce or determine outcomes, can take, in Hobbes's view, is as ordinary causation - the kind of power that bricks, or motions involving them, possess and exercise to break windows. We shall see that Hobbes is right on one point at least. Whether or not the power of freedom is real, our conception of it radically distinguishes freedom and its operation from ordinary causation.

It is tempting to think that Hobbes's problem with freedom arises from his determinism and is mainly with what we might call *multi-wayness*. Freedom or control of what we do involves alternatives. To have control of whether one does A is to be capable of determining either that one does A or that one refrains. And it is very natural to view this control as a single power that could under given circumstances be employed in more than one way - hence multi-wayness - to produce either the outcome that I do A or the outcome that I refrain. That is the nature of control as a power: to leave it up to me which I do, and to be employable in doing either. Hobbes's case, on this reading of him, is simply that there cannot be such a thing as a multi-way power - a power that can, under a given set of circumstances, be used in more than one way, to produce one of a variety of outcomes. What rules out such a power is simply

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45 *Metaphysical Disputations*, disputation 19, section 2, §13, *Opera* vol 25, p697

46 *Metaphysical Disputations*, disputation 19, section 2, §15, *Opera* vol 25, p697

Hobbes's determinism. In any given circumstances it must always already be predetermined by prior causes how a power will operate, to produce this given effect rather than that.

However, we should beware of this tempting assumption. Hobbes was indeed a determinist. But the issue of multi-wayness - the possibility of a causal power's operating under given circumstances in more than one way, to produce more than one possible outcome - is not what was fundamental to Hobbes's scepticism about the very reality of freedom, or indeed of self-determination in any form at all. Hobbes's scepticism has more to do with something that can be detached from multi-wayness, and that radically distinguishes freedom from ordinary causation. We may call this factor *contingency of determination*; and it has to do with how the possessor of a power, such as a cause, *determines* an outcome when it does.

In Hobbes's view, if an entity has the power to determine a specific outcome, and the conditions required for the successful exercise of the power are all met - then the power must be exercised. The determining entity's very presence, with its power, must necessitate the occurrence of the outcome it has the power then to determine. It follows on this view that an entity cannot really possess the power to determine, under one and the same set of circumstances, more than one alternative outcome. For an entity really to be capable of determining each outcome, Hobbes argues, it must simultaneously produce each outcome. Referring, abusively, to Suarez's contingent cause as an 'indetermination', Hobbes writes:

But that the indetermination can make it happen or not happen is absurd; for indetermination maketh it equally to happen or not to happen; and therefore both; which is a contradiction. Therefore indetermination doth nothing, and whatsoever causes do, is necessary.<sup>47</sup>

The contingent determination that Hobbes denied is very much part of our ordinary understanding of freedom, and distinguishes freedom from ordinary causation. In the case of freedom, the power-bearer may have the power to determine the occurrence of a particular outcome, and all the conditions required for the power's successful exercise may be met - without the power being exercised to produce that outcome. Freedom can involve the power to determine alternatives, only one of which can actually be produced, only because this is so.

Consider by contrast something which Hobbes's determinism ruled out *a priori*, but which modern theories of causation generally now allow for - multi-wayness, but at the level of ordinary causation. An ordinary cause might under given circumstances have the power then to produce a range of possible effects. The pressing of a button might have the power to produce acceleration in a particle, but at a variety of possible rates. The cause is probabilistic: any one of these possible effects - the various possible rates of acceleration - might with some probability occur, or it might not. In such a case the cause does not count as determining the effect that it produces. A probabilistic cause at most influences the occurrence of that effect, but without determining it in a way that removes all dependence of the final outcome on simple chance. Now that would not be freedom. For we think of the free agent as *determining* that he does what he does, but without the action's performance being guaranteed just by his presence as a free agent with the power then to determine it.<sup>48</sup>

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47 Hobbes in *Questions*, p184

48 For an earlier discussion of this distinction between freedom and ordinary causation, see Thomas Pink, *Free Will: A Very Short Introduction*, pp114-115.

Contingency of determination distinguishes a free agent from any ordinary cause - including a probabilistic cause. But so too does something else in our conception of freedom, a feature of it to which Hobbes was very sensitive and of which he was equally critical. This involves not the power's relation to outcomes, but the agent's or power bearer's relation to the power.

Consider again ordinary causes. Either their operation is predetermined by the very nature of the power and the circumstances of its exercise: in those circumstances their power is to determine one particular outcome, an outcome which they will then produce. Or, as in the case of probabilistic causes, how the cause will operate is undetermined, that is, dependent on mere chance. But what seems importantly to distinguish freedom, as ordinarily conceived, is that this is not so. It is neither predetermined nor merely chance and undetermined which way a free agent exercises their power. The agent determines for himself how he exercises his power. And it seems impossible to characterize this relation that the agent has to the power without using the concept of freedom. If the agent can determine for himself how the power is exercised, it must be up to the agent whether he exercises his power to produce this outcome or that. If the power of freedom is indeed multi-way, a power employable in more than one way to produce more than one outcome, then in relation to that power there is what we might term a *freedom of specification*: it is up to the bearer which outcome the power is exercised to produce.

Hobbes was very well aware of this element to our conception of freedom as a power. The idea of the agent's determining his exercise of the power is arguably central to self-determination - to the very idea of determining outcomes *for oneself*. In Hobbes's view, this idea of a determination of how the power is exercised is viciously regressive.

And if a man determine himself, the question will still remain what determined him to determine himself in that manner.<sup>49</sup>

So the very idea of self-determination, for Hobbes, is incoherent. And that is because it viciously involves the idea of an agent's power to determine, the exercise of which that same agent has first to determine.

But it is not obvious that Hobbes is right about the regress. The regress is vicious only if the way in which the exercise of the power is determined - to produce this outcome or that - involves a prior exercise of power distinct from the exercise of the power determined. But this is not obviously what we ordinarily suppose.

There is in the case of freedom a *conceptual* distinction between (a) the power's relation to outcomes - the power can operate to produce more than one outcome - and (b) the power's relation to me, namely that I determine for myself what way it operates. But we do not suppose there to be any corresponding *ontological* distinction between two distinct exercises of power - an exercise of power to produce outcomes, and then another and distinct exercise of power to determine the operation of that power to produce outcomes. Multi-wayness and determination of the mode of exercise by me are simply conceptually distinct features of a single exercise of control. In exercising control over outcomes I *ipso facto* determine for myself how the control is exercised. That is what control is - a power to produce outcomes the manner of exercise of which I determine for myself. In one and the same exercise of

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49 Hobbes in *Questions*, p26

power I produce one outcome rather than another, and I determine how the power is exercised.

This freedom of specification does not involve then any exercise of power over and above that involved in the production of the outcome. But though there need be no vicious regress, we are clearly dealing with a kind of power that is not ordinary causation. In relation to this radically different kind of power the notion of freedom not only conveys a power over alternatives in relation to outcomes, but also the agent's distinctive relation to the power as its bearer.

Modern philosophical discussion of free will centres on a debate about ordinary causation between incompatibilists and compatibilists. This is a debate about the relation of freedom and ordinary causation - and specifically about the implications of causal determinism for the freedom to do otherwise. Is freedom as a power to do otherwise compatible with our being causally determined to do what we actually do? Much contemporary scepticism then centres on what we might call the randomness problem. This is the worry that if incompatibilism were true - if freedom did require causal indeterminism – then freedom would be impossible. For even if indeterminism did hold, that would leave us, not with genuine freedom, but with mere chance.

...liberty, by removing necessity, removes also causes, and is the very same thing with chance.<sup>50</sup>

To the extent that incompatibilism looks plausible, freedom, which then requires an absence of necessity, threatens to become indistinguishable from chance.

But now we see that there is another scepticism about freedom, and one that also involves causation and the freedom to do otherwise, though in a different way. This form of scepticism objects to the very idea of freedom as a power over alternatives, on the grounds that ordinary causation such as we find involved in bricks hitting windows is the only possible form of power - and that such a power over alternatives would be too radically unlike ordinary causation.

Indeed, it seems that it is this second scepticism, about the very possibility of a kind of power distinct from that of ordinary causation, that is the serious scepticism about freedom. For if it cannot be answered, then freedom as ordinarily understood must be unreal. If it can never be up to us which outcomes we determine – if the exercise of any power we might possess to determine a particular outcome is necessitated by its very possession – then we cannot possess genuine control of what we do. We cannot determine for ourselves which actions we perform.

But, on the other hand, if this second scepticism can be answered, then the randomness problem does not really arise. The randomness problem is the supposed threat that if incompatibilism is true, the operation of freedom is indistinguishable from chance. To remove prior necessity is just to leave the final outcome to a degree random or dependent on mere chance. And certainly with ordinary causes, if it is not determined in advance what effect a given cause will produce, the outcome must indeed depend, to a degree, on simple chance. If ordinary causation is the only power in play, take away prior necessity and you certainly are left with mere chance - chance and nothing else. So to the extent that a cause is

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50 David Hume, *A Treatise of Human Nature*, p407

merely probabilistic, what effect it will produce depends to a degree on mere chance. But to suppose that in all cases the alternative to necessity is mere chance is to assume that there can be no such power as freedom as we ordinarily understand it - a power involving contingency of determination. For even if the outcome is not already causally predetermined - so that it is initially chancy how the agent will act - freedom, as ordinarily understood, may prevent the final outcome from depending on simple chance. Freedom allows the outcome still to be determined - by the agent.

### 5. *Freedom and reason*

Our natural conception of the mind is committed to two kinds of power that differ from ordinary causal power. One is normative power. Objects of our thought can come with justification or normative support, such as evidence or goodness. And when they do, that they are so supported can move us to respond in the way supported, by believing that they are true or by pursuing them as goals. This capacity of objects of thought to move us with the force of reason is an essential feature of our rationality. Then there is freedom, a power to determine for ourselves what we do that is distinctive both in relation to outcomes – it can determine these contingently – and in relation to us as its possessors; we determine whether or how the power is exercised.

Suarez's theory of final causation is an attempt to model normative power for the practical sphere; and his theory of free efficient causation is an attempt to model freedom. Hobbes dismissed each of these two forms of causation. This dismissal was enormously influential, and was linked to a narrowing of philosophical conceptions of power itself. Increasingly the English-language tradition moved to a conception of power that to the extent that any form of power was admitted at all – the Humean tradition has of course tended to reject power in any form - left this restricted to ordinary causal power of the kind involved in material impacts and the like.

Hobbes was hostile to the very idea of self-determination. But he was not as overtly hostile to talk of reason and our capacity for reason. In particular Hobbes continued to postulate standards of reason within the practical sphere – these are the laws of nature. But he no longer provided any theory of how reason might involve a power to move us to respond. He allowed that we had appetites directed at objects as good. But talk of goodness was expressive of nothing more than those appetites themselves. Goodness was certainly not the source of a power capable of giving rise to those very appetites – a power exercised by or through mental objects as unattained goals of action.

And this is a problem for any non-sceptical account of reason and the normativity it involves. Reason, as we ordinarily understand it, is indeed (to use Suarez's vivid description) a *vis directiva*. It directs us towards certain attitudes and actions, and away from others; and as a normative *vis* reason can move us to respond to that direction through our very rationality. The source of this direction does indeed seem to lie in justifications attaching to objects of our thought that are not plausible ordinary causes – objects such as outcomes that, though as yet unrealized, as genuinely good may through the force of reason still move us to desire and aim at them as our goals. But if beyond ordinary causation, reason itself has no power actually to move us, then these objects and their justifications are indeed inert. They no longer play any role in explaining what humans think and do. In which case why postulate either the objects or the justifications?

So it was not surprising that after Hobbes dismissed final causation as a motivating power distinct from ordinary causation, Hume would eventually remove from our appetites or passions what Hobbes had merely left inert - the as yet unrealised mental objects and the standards of reason supposedly linked to them. Hume's motivating passions have ordinary causes and effects that allow us to speak of them as if they had objects. And in contemporary English-language philosophy of mind, functionalism about the mental makes room for content understood in just such causal terms. But objects of motivation as conduits of a force of justification or reason are simply denied by Hume, and so too is practical reason itself.<sup>51</sup>

Hume's radicalism in drawing the clear implication of Hobbes's dismissal of final causation has not proved so popular, however, as that dismissal. Few modern philosophers believe in final causation as Suarez did. But they still describe motivation and action as governed by standards of reason to which we are supposed somehow to be responsive. It is not clear why, in all consistency, they should do so.<sup>52</sup>

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51 When I am angry, I am actually possest with the passion, and in that emotion have no more a reference to any other object, than when I am thirsty, or sick, or more than five foot high. 'Tis impossible, therefore, that this passion can be oppos'd by, or contradictory to truth and reason.... Hume, *A Treatise of Human Nature*, p415

52 Material from this paper also appears in Thomas Pink, 'Normativity and power: Suarez and Hobbes on final and free causation' in eds H. Braun and Erik de Born, *A Companion to Late Scholasticism*, Leiden: Brill (forthcoming)