

## HOBBS AND THE TWO FACES OF ETHICS

Reading Hobbes in light of both the history of ethics and the conceptual apparatus developed in recent work on normativity, this book challenges received interpretations of Hobbes and his historical significance. Arash Abizadeh uncovers the fundamental distinction underwriting Hobbes's ethics: between prudential reasons of the good, articulated via natural laws prescribing the means of self-preservation, and reasons of the right or justice, comprising contractual obligations for which we are accountable to others. He shows how Hobbes's distinction marks a watershed in the transition from the ancient Greek to the modern conception of ethics, and demonstrates the relevance of Hobbes's thought to current debates about normativity, reasons, and responsibility. His book will interest Hobbes scholars, historians of ethics, moral philosophers, and political theorists.

ARASH ABIZADEH is Associate Professor at the Department of Political Science and Associate Member of the Department of Philosophy at McGill University in Montreal. He has published extensively on Hobbes in journals including the *Journal of the History of Philosophy*, *The Historical Journal*, *Philosophers' Imprint*, and *Modern Intellectual History*.

Cambridge University Press  
978-1-108-41729-7 — Hobbes and the Two Faces of Ethics  
Arash Abizadeh  
Frontmatter  
[More Information](#)

---

# HOBBS AND THE TWO FACES OF ETHICS

ARASH ABIZADEH  
*McGill University, Montreal*



**CAMBRIDGE**  
UNIVERSITY PRESS

Cambridge University Press  
978-1-108-41729-7 — Hobbes and the Two Faces of Ethics  
Arash Abizadeh  
Frontmatter  
[More Information](#)

CAMBRIDGE  
UNIVERSITY PRESS

University Printing House, Cambridge CB2 8BS, United Kingdom  
One Liberty Plaza, 20th Floor, New York, NY 10006, USA  
477 Williamstown Road, Port Melbourne, VIC 3207, Australia  
314–321, 3rd Floor, Plot 3, Splendor Forum, Jasola District Centre, New Delhi – 110025, India  
79 Anson Road, #06–04/06, Singapore 079906

Cambridge University Press is part of the University of Cambridge.  
It furthers the University's mission by disseminating knowledge in the pursuit of  
education, learning, and research at the highest international levels of excellence.

[www.cambridge.org](http://www.cambridge.org)  
Information on this title: [www.cambridge.org/9781108417297](http://www.cambridge.org/9781108417297)  
DOI: 10.1017/9781108277310

© Arash Abizadeh 2018

This publication is in copyright. Subject to statutory exception  
and to the provisions of relevant collective licensing agreements,  
no reproduction of any part may take place without the written  
permission of Cambridge University Press.

First published 2018

Printed and bound in Great Britain by Clays Ltd, Elcograf S.p.A.

*A catalogue record for this publication is available from the British Library.*

ISBN 978-1-108-41729-7 Hardback

Cambridge University Press has no responsibility for the persistence or accuracy of  
URLs for external or third-party internet websites referred to in this publication  
and does not guarantee that any content on such websites is, or will remain,  
accurate or appropriate.

## *Contents*

<i>Preface</i>	<i>page</i> vii
<i>List of Abbreviations</i>	ix
Introduction	I
Methodological Preliminaries	II
On Normativity and ‘Reason’	13
The Overarching Argument	17
PART I THE METAETHICS OF REASONS	25
1 Naturalism	27
1.1 An Error Theory	29
1.2 Descriptivist Reductionism	39
1.3 Reasoning-Based Descriptivist Reductionism	47
1.4 Noncognitivist Prescriptivism	52
1.5 A Hybrid Theory: Reasoning-Based and Prescriptivist	59
2 Mind, Action, and Reasoning	62
2.1 Practical Deliberation Is Partly Cognitive	65
2.2 Is Hobbesian Reasoning Passive?	72
2.3 Linguistic Reasoning is Reflectively Reason-Responsive	78
2.4 The Failure of the Hybrid Reading	90
PART II REASONS OF THE GOOD	95
3 Subjectivism, Instrumentalism, and Prudentialism about Reasons	97
3.1 Conative Subjectivism about Reasons? The Problem of Instrumental Transmission	99
3.2 Instrumentalism about Reasons? The Problem of Time	105
3.3 Prudentialism about Reasons	109

vi	<i>Contents</i>	
	3.4 Cognitive Subjectivism about Reasons? Epistemically Relativized Objective Reasons	119
	3.5 Suicide, Laws of Nature, and a Life Worth Living: Self-Preservation Is Not Survival	131
4	A Theory of the Good: Felicity by Anticipatory Pleasure	139
	4.1 Four Distinct Questions about Goodness and 'Good'	141
	4.2 The Meaning of 'Good': The Customary versus Reforming Sense	143
	4.3 What Makes a Life Good: Anticipatory Pleasure	155
	4.4 Two Complications for the Meaning of 'Good': Prescriptively Subversive Circumstances	164
	4.5 Prescriptively Self-Fulfilling Circumstances	172
	PART III REASONS OF THE RIGHT	181
5	Accountability and Obligations	183
	5.1 Three Types of Responsibility and Blame: Non-Normative, Critical, and Reactive	184
	5.2 Directed Obligations	191
	5.3 The Interest and the Will Theories of Direction	195
	5.4 Owing an Obligation versus Being Held Accountable	199
	5.5 Legal Accountability and Punishment	209
	5.6 No Accountability for Intentions	212
6	The Laws of Nature, Morality, and Justice	217
	6.1 The Meaning of 'Moral'	219
	6.2 Reasons of the Right Cannot Be Derived from Reasons of the Good	223
	6.3 The Relation between Natural Law and Obligation	228
	6.4 The Relation between Natural Law and Civil Law	235
	6.5 Two Puzzles about Natural Right and Natural Law	242
7	Rational Agency and Personhood	245
	7.1 Entities, Voluntary Agents, and Rational Agents	247
	7.2 Persons: Representor or Represented?	249
	7.3 Natural Persons Are Authors	252
	7.4 Artificial Persons: True and By Fiction	255
	7.5 Accountability Is Interpersonal: No Accountability to Oneself	258
	Conclusion: Naturalism and Normativity	263
	<i>Works Cited</i>	277
	<i>Index</i>	286

## *Preface*

I didn't set out to write this book, or any other book on Hobbes. I thought I was writing a book on Rousseau. I had introduced Rousseau's account of language with a couple of paragraphs on Hobbes. But they were never quite right, so they kept expanding until too bloated to stay in a book on Rousseau. Having extracted the offending paragraphs – they were to compose a stand-alone article – yet still unsatisfied, I decided to teach a seminar on Hobbes and Descartes to figure it out. That was 2006. The seminar inspired two more articles on Hobbes, and by 2007, while on sabbatical, I discovered a book on Hobbes was being written. By 2008, it had been drafted. But I was still unsatisfied, so it kept expanding until there were too many words to stay together. I split the book, in 2011, into two. The first had two chapters needing revisions. The first chapter had two problems; I resolved to write one article on each problem, after which I'd revise the chapter with solution in hand. So near the end of 2013, I set out to write the first of two articles, about the first of two problems with the first of two chapters, in the first of two draft manuscripts on Hobbes. This book is that article.

This book is my first, so I begin with thanks to my teachers: Richard Noble, who inspired my love for this stuff; Jerry Cohen, who taught me how to make an argument; David Miller, who suggested I find inspiration in what I disagree with; Seyla Benhabib, who urged me to link past to present; Bonnie Honig, who prompted me to peek past authorial intentions; Pratap Mehta, who dazzled me with graceful erudition; and Richard Tuck, who engaged me like a colleague from the start and, of course, taught me Hobbes.

This monograph benefitted tremendously from two manuscript workshops, at McGill in 2015 and QMUL in 2016. Many thanks to the participants, particularly those who gave formal commentaries: Signey Gutnick Allen, Adrian Blau, Terence Cuneo, Robin Douglass, Evan Fox-Decent, Kinch Hoekstra, Travis Smith, Susanne Sreedhar, Sarah Stroud,

Laurens van Apeldoorn, and especially Stephen Darwall, whose intellectual generosity, acumen, and range are an inspiration. For comments I also thank Libby Barringer, Deborah Baumgold, Jérémie Duhamel, Julia Driver, Pablo Gilabert, Ian MacMullen, Al Martinich, Christian Nadeau, Kieran Oberman, Davide Panagia, Martine Pécharman, Paul Sagar, Tim Stanton, Mónica Brito Vieira, and audiences at Berkeley, Edinburgh, Montréal, Princeton, UCLA, WUSL, and York. I must also thank Lucas Stanczyk, whose conversation incited me to write this book. Thanks above all to Johan Olsthoorn, one of Cambridge University Press's referees, whose extensive criticisms and suggestions were frankly amazing.

I drafted the bulk of this book in autumn 2014, during a half-sabbatical at the Centre de Recherche en Éthique at the Université de Montréal. I am grateful to my colleagues there for their hospitality. Thanks are also due to my McGill political theory colleagues, who have made my intellectual home so stimulating: Jacob Levy, Catherine Lu, Victor Muñoz-Fraticelli, Will Roberts, Hasana Sharp, Daniel Weinstock, and Yves Winter.

Thanks to my editor, Hilary Gaskin, for supporting this project, and SSHRC for financial support. Parts of Chapter 2 first appeared in *Journal of the History of Philosophy* 55.1 (2017): 1–34 (Copyright © 2017 The Johns Hopkins University Press). Parts of Chapter 7 first appeared in *The Historical Journal* 60.4 (2017): 915–941 (Copyright © 2017 Cambridge University Press).

Hobbes said fear and he were born twins together. Isaiah, Esmée, and Dante were born with Hobbes their companion: they have never had a father who wasn't writing a book on Hobbes. I am grateful to them for the combination of sleep deprivation, curiosity, and wonder that has indelibly marked this book. My spouse Noelle, more than anyone, is thankful it is done. I dedicate this book to her.



## Abbreviations

### Hobbes's Works

- EW *The English Works of Thomas Hobbes of Malmesbury*, ed. William Molesworth. 11 vols. London: John Bohn, 1839–1845.
- OL *Opera Philosophica Quae Latine Scripsit Omnia*, ed. William Molesworth. 5 vols. London: John Bohn, 1839–1845.
- EL *The Elements of Law*. Harley MS 4235 (British Library, London) [chapters renumbered consecutively]. [1640]
- O *Objectiones to Descartes*. [*The Philosophical Writings of Descartes*, ed. J. Cottingham, R. Stoothoff, and D. Murdoch (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984).] [1641]
- DCv *De Cive: The Latin Version*, ed. Howard Warrender (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1983). [*De Cive: The English Version*, ed. Howard Warrender (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1983).] [1642, 2nd ed. 1647]
- AW *Critique du De Mundo de Thomas White*, ed. J. Jacquot and H. W. Jones (Paris: Vrin-CNRS, 1973). [*Thomas White's De Mundo Examined*, trans. H. W. Jones (London: Bradford University Press, 1976).] [1642–1643]
- LN *Of Liberty and Necessity, in Hobbes and Bramhall on Liberty and Necessity*, ed. Vere Chappell (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999). [1645]
- MDO *A Minute or first Draught of the Optiques*. Harley MS 3360 (British Library, London). [1646]
- L and LL *Leviathan: The English and Latin Texts*, ed. Noel Malcolm (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2012). [1651, 1668]
- DC *De Corpore*, in OL 1 [EW 1]. [1655]

x

*List of Abbreviations*

- Q *The Questions Concerning Liberty, Necessity, And Chance* (London: Andrew Crook, 1656). Pages numbers after ‘/’ are to EW 5. [1656]
- DH *De Homine*, in OL 2. [*Man and Citizen (De Homine and De Cive)*, ed. Bernard Gert (Indianapolis, IN: Hackett Publishing, 1991).] [1658]
- AB *An Answer to a Book Published by Dr. Bramhall, late Bishop of Derry; called The Catching of Leviathan. Together With an Historical Narration Concerning Heresie, And the Punishment thereof* (London: For W. Crooke at the Green Dragon, 1682). Page numbers after ‘/’ are to EW 4. [1668]
- HNH *An Historical Narration Concerning Heresie, And the Punishment thereof* (London, 1680). Page numbers after ‘/’ are to EW 4. [1668]
- B *Behemoth, or, The Long Parliament*, ed. Paul Seaward (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2010). [c. 1669]
- HE *Historia Ecclesiastica*, ed. P. Springborg, P. Stablein, and P. Wilson (Paris: Honoré Champion, 2008). [c. 1671]
- D *A Dialogue Between a Philosopher and a Student, of the Common Laws of England, in Writings of Common Law and Hereditary Right*, ed. A. Cromartie and Q. Skinner (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2005). [1681]

**Other Primary Texts**

- Laws Plato. *The Laws*. [c. 348 BCE]
- Rh Aristotle. *On Rhetoric*. [c. 340–335 BCE]
- NE Aristotle. *Nicomachean Ethics*. [c. 330 BCE]
- Ex Epicurus. *Epicurus: The Extant Remains*, ed. C. Bailey. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1926. [lived 341–270 BCE]
- DRN Lucretius. *De Rerum Natura*. [c. 75–54 BCE]
- DO Cicero. *De Officiis*. [44 BCE]
- DF Cicero. *De Finibus Bonorum et Malorum*. [45 BCE]
- DI Seneca. *De Ira*. [41–52 CE]
- Lives Diogenes Laertius. *Lives of Eminent Philosophers*. [200s CE]
- ST Thomas Aquinas. *Summa Theologicae*. [c. 1265–1274]
- DLDL Francisco Suárez. *De Legibus ac Deo Legislatore*. 1612.
- JBP Hugo Grotius. *De Jure Belli ac Pacis*. 1625. 2nd ed. 1646.

*List of Abbreviations*

xi

- DTL John Bramhall. *A Defence of True Liberty from Antecedent and Extrinsic Necessity*. 1655.
- BL John Aubrey. *Brief Lives*. [Ed. A. Clark. 2 vols. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1898.] [1669–1696]
- THN David Hume. *A Treatise of Human Nature*. 1739–1740.
- SLRI John Stuart Mill. *A System of Logic Ratiocinative and Inductive*. 1843.

Cambridge University Press  
978-1-108-41729-7 — Hobbes and the Two Faces of Ethics  
Arash Abizadeh  
Frontmatter  
[More Information](#)

---