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Hobbes on the function of evaluative speech

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ABSTRACT
Hobbes's interpreters have struggled to find a plausible semantics for evaluative language in his writings. I argue that this search is misguided. Hobbes offers neither an account of the reference of evaluative terms nor a theory of the truth-conditions for evaluative statements. Rather, he sees evaluative language simply as having the non-representational function of prescribing actions and practical attitudes, its superficially representational appearance notwithstanding. I marshal the evidence for this prescriptivist reading of Hobbes on evaluative language and show how it sidesteps various textual and philosophical problems that bedevil the traditional interpretations.

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1. Introduction

What are human beings doing when they make evaluative judgments and interpret the world in value-laden terms? As Hobbes sees it, it is not that we are responding to a mind-independent system of normative standards, objective values, or natural teloi. We have no such responsiveness, and there is no such system. Rather, our evaluative interpretations of the world are some sort of systematic expression of our own appetites and aversions – of the fact that we are attracted to certain things and recoil from others. It is not that objects are intrinsically valuable, but that we value them. It is not that we are discovering or detecting value, but that we are conferring it in accordance with our own conative attitudes and impulses.

But how exactly do our evaluative judgments connect to our appetites and aversions on Hobbes's theory? There are two popular readings. According to the one, Hobbes is proposing a reductive analysis. He holds that our evaluative vocabularies can be translated without loss into psychological terms, and that an evaluative judgment is simply another way of asserting something about

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our states of desire or aversion. Call this 'the reductionist interpretation.' On the other reading, Hobbes holds that, while our evaluative judgments are actually prompted and controlled simply by our own subjective appetites and aversions, they also involve the mistaken ascription of an objective value to the things that we desire and an objective disvalue to the things to which we are averse. On this view, Hobbes sees our practice of evaluative judgment as implicated in systematic error. He holds that our evaluative judgments encode a mistaken belief in the objectivity and mind-independence of value, just as he holds that our judgments about color encode a mistaken belief in the objectivity and mind independence of color. Call this 'the error theorist interpretation.'[1]

My contention is that these traditional interpretations lay too much emphasis on the question of what we are saying when we employ evaluative vocabularies, and too little emphasis on what we are doing. They see Hobbes as offering an account of the representational or descriptive function of evaluative speech – an account of the reference of evaluative terms, or of the truth-conditions for statements employing such terms. But, in fact, we make better sense of his writings if we read him as insisting upon the exclusively *non-representational* function of this species of language. As I will argue, for Hobbes, evaluative speech serves not to describe our own appetites and aversions nor to describe an imaginary system of mind-independent objective values, but rather simply to *prescribe* actions and practical attitudes: to command, counsel, urge, or commend. I do not claim that Hobbes was as clear as one would like on the full implications of a prescriptivist treatment of evaluative language. But I do claim that this interpretation fares decisively better with the texts than either of the two traditional representationalist readings, and that in insisting upon the purely prescriptive, action-guiding function of evaluative speech, it captures the central message of Hobbes's metaphysics of value.

2. The shape of Hobbes's theory

I begin by registering three important constraints on any interpretation of Hobbes's theory. Although Hobbes sets out the same basic account of evaluative language in all the relevant works (including *Elements of Law*, *Anti-White*, *De Cive*, and *De Homine*), to help fix ideas, I frame my remarks around the following well-known passage from *Leviathan*:

> [W]hatsoever 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 Common-wealth;) or, (in a Common-wealth,) from the Person that representeth it […] (L vi.7, 80–82)[2]

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As Hobbes sees it, in our actual practice, we apply the predicate term 'good' to the objects of our appetites or desires, and 'evil' to the objects of our aversions (compare also EL vii.3; DCi xiv.17; AW xxx.24, xxxviii.5, xxxix.4). Whatever the official ideology of good and evil promulgated in the universities and pulpits, this is in fact how ordinary speakers use evaluative terms, and hence how such expressions get their meaning.[3] Moreover, since the appetites and aversions of one person differ from those of another, and since each individual's appetites and aversions change over time, 'good' and 'evil' will be applied to different objects on different occasions of use (L vi.6, 80; L xv.40, 242; see also EL vii.3; DCi iii.31; DCi xiv.17; DH xiii.8). So as we look to their actual employment, we find that 'good' and 'evil' are used in a context- and speaker-relative fashion – that 'good' is in this sense an indexical term, 'relative to person, place, and time' (DH xi.4).[4]

When Hobbes draws the corollary that nothing is 'simply and absolutely' good, he is repudiating the notion of an objective or intrinsic value independent of human appetites and aversions (L vi.7, 80–82; see also EL vii.3). Commentators have occasionally claimed to find an objective standard of value in Hobbes's works – one that regards peace, the security of the commonwealth, or individual self-preservation as an objective good, whether or not we or the sovereign happen to desire any such thing (Gert 1991, 13–16; Arp 1999, 385).[5] But, in fact, the texts that might appear to endorse an objective or non-relational standard of value can all be accounted for as instances of the most important case of indexical and relational usage, as Hobbes himself makes plain in *De Homine* (DH xi.4), and, most vividly, in *Anti-White*:

> 'Good' […] and 'evil', are applied relatively and *ad personam*. Hence, because the same things do not please or displease everyone, and because they are not the same thing to the same person on every occasion, the same things are not good or bad, beautiful or repellent, to all. People say, therefore, that such and such is good or evil for themselves, for this person or that, or for the body politic. They do so, however, *simpliciter* only if (without defining) we call 'good' that which pleases the commonality, such as obeying the laws or fighting for one's country. But this dictum is not understood *simpliciter* but as the most important particular case, insofar as the state is a compact by which the citizens may procure, as far as possible, the well-being of everyone. (AW xxx.24)

Two other points about the basic structure of Hobbes's theory will prove relevant. First, when Hobbes writes in L vi.7, 80–82 that the 'words of *Good* [and] *Evill* […] are ever used with relation to the person that useth them,' he is often interpreted as suggesting that only the *speaker's* appetites can set the relevant indexical context for the use of an evaluative term. But that would be a bizarre view. Can I not sensibly say that lemon tea would be good for my friend, but not perhaps for me? And, in fact, Hobbes recognizes that a speaker can also use evaluative terms in ways that shift the relevant indexical context to another person's appetites. As we just saw, he remarks that in ordinary English usage, '[p]eople say […] that such and such is good or evil for themselves, *for this person or that*, or for the body politic' (AW xxx.24, my emphasis). Or again: 'what is it to

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say an action is good, but to say, it is as I would wish, or *as another would have it*, or according to the will of the state, that is to say, according to law?' (OLN 14, my emphasis; compare also L xxv.3). So we can speak of something as good for someone else, perhaps placing ourselves in their shoes and imagining what would count as good from the perspective of someone with their appetites. This is a perfectly ordinary use of 'good' that Hobbes certainly allows.

Second, in L vi.7, 80–82, Hobbes states that a new 'Rule of Good and Evill' controlling the proper use of these terms takes effect in the transition from the state of nature to a commonwealth. Where there is no commonwealth, the appetites of private individuals govern the usage of evaluative expressions. '[I]n the condition of meer Nature,' as Hobbes puts it elsewhere, 'private Appetite is the measure of Good, and Evill' (L xv.40, 242). But once we are in a commonwealth, the appetites of the state (as represented by the sovereign) trump such private appetites in providing the standard for correct usage. At least on those questions of value where the sovereign has expressed an official opinion through law, the standards of private appetite are displaced by a new rule of good and evil: 'Not the Appetite of Private men, but the Law, which is the Will and Appetite of the State, is the measure' (L xlvi.32, 1090). Notice: Hobbes is not simply saying that we ought to defer to the will of the state, right or wrong, whenever there is controversy over the correct use of evaluative terms, but that the will of the state actually determines what the correct usage *is* – a point that commentators have not always appreciated, but which is corroborated by the various texts where Hobbes straightforwardly *identifies* good and evil in a commonwealth with the mandates and prohibitions of the law (L xlvi.11, 1058–1060; L xx.16, 316; L xxix.6, 502; DCi preface para. 8; DCi xxii.1; OLN 14). This is not something that he ever says of non-evaluative terms.[6] Interpretations of Hobbes on evaluative speech have often focused simply on the use indexed to private appetite, as if that were the only employment of these terms, or at any rate, the most fundamental. But any adequate interpretation must also be able to explain the bifurcated character of Hobbes's theory, and accommodate those cases where the rule of good and evil is fixed not by private appetite but by the civil law.[7]

3. The reductionist interpretation

According to the reductionist interpretation, Hobbes is claiming that evaluative judgments are equivalent to claims about human appetites or aversions, and that our evaluative interpretations of the world can be fully analyzed – reduced, reinterpreted – in these psychological terms. At first glance, values might seem difficult to fit into Hobbes's strictly materialist picture of the world, but the reductive analysis would reveal that judgments about value are simply another way of putting claims about human desires and aversions (which are themselves simply so many material motions or impulses in the human body). In the simplest sort of case, an utterance of 'X is good' might perhaps be

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translated as 'I desire X,' and 'X is evil' as 'I am averse to X.' But the reductive analysis could also be extended to accommodate cases where we shift the indexical context beyond the speaker's own appetites and aversions. Depending on the context of use, a given utterance of 'X is good' might be translated as 'You desire X,' or 'She desires X,' or 'The commonwealth as represented by the sovereign's legal enactments desires X,' and so on.

There might seem to be decisive textual evidence in favor of the reductionist reading. Consider Hobbes's blunt declaration that '*Good*, and *Evill*, are names that signifie our Appetites, and Aversions' (L xv.40, 242). If Hobbes is using 'signifie' to mean 'refer to,' then this passage and others like it (L iv.24, 62; DCi iii.31) tell us that we employ the evaluative expressions 'good' and 'evil' to refer to our appetites and aversions; and thus that when I say that 'coffee is good,' in the simplest kind of case where I am speaking from the perspective of my own appetites, I will be saying something to the effect of 'I have an appetite for coffee.' Some version of the reductionist interpretation might then seem inescapable.

But this textual argument is a paper tiger. Hobbes's relation of signification is not our semantic relation of reference, and a word might 'signify' something in his sense without thereby referring to it. In fact, Hobbes explicitly defines 'sign' and 'signify' simply in terms of a relation of reliable correlation between two kinds of phenomena, the sign and the signified, 'as clouds are a sign of rain to come, and rain of clouds past' (EL iv.9; see also AW xxx.13; DCo ii.2; L iii.8, 44). So clouds can signify rain; facial expressions and body language can signify one's passions (L vi.56, 94); customary obedience to a person can signify his or her power (L xxxi.9–10, 562); and declarations of God's greatness can signify our own pious reverence (EL xi.3; L xxxi.33, 568): all cases where Hobbes's relation of signification cannot be understood as any sort of semantic relation of reference. Humans are able to intentionally introduce 'conventional' signs, including words, that through habitual use and regular correlation come to signify our thoughts and passions (DCo ii.2; see also L iv.3, 50). But Hobbes never says or implies that we can only understand such words as *referring to* the thoughts and passions that they signify. So when Hobbes says that '*Good*, and *Evill*, are names that signifie our Appetites, and Aversions,' he is saying that we use these words in reliable correlation with our appetites and aversions, and thus that our use of these words tends to display these passions. If I speak sincerely, then an observer should be able to infer my appetites and aversions from my evaluative pronouncements. That is something that each of our rival interpretations can easily accommodate. However, there is no need to suppose that Hobbes endorses the further claim that the expressions 'good' and 'evil' *refer to* our appetites and aversions any more than we need suppose that he holds that expressions such as 'Hurrah!' and 'Get me a coffee!' refer to the appetites and aversions that they might typically 'signify' – i.e. evince or display.[8]

The problem with the reductionist interpretation is that it saddles Hobbes with an account of evaluative judgment that is both implausible in its own

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right and in conflict with his own wider systematic commitments. First, the account is unable to explain what people are disagreeing about when one asserts and another denies that something is good, at least in the case where the two speakers are using 'good' in a manner indexed to their own respective private appetites. According to the reductionist interpretation, the one speaker is simply declaring his own attraction toward that object, and the other his own indifference or aversion. Understood as reports or avowals of the speakers' respective psychological attitudes, the two evaluative judgments are not at odds with one another: there *is* no disagreement. But this is implausible, and would be a particular problem for Hobbes, given that he holds that disagreements between private judgments about good and evil are not only possible, but a major source of the 'Disputes, Controversies, and at last War' that roils the state of nature (L xv.40, 242).

Second, according to the reductionist interpretation, Hobbes holds that evaluative judgments can be fully analyzed into statements about human desires and aversions. But as with any theory that attempts to reinterpret evaluative language in non-evaluative terms, the proposed analysis would seem to leave out the all-important normative force of the original evaluative expressions altogether. The claim that an object is worthy of desire is one thing; the claim that I desire that object seems to be another. And in calling something good, I am surely making the former claim, which carries with it an impersonal commendatory force that is missing from a simple factual report of my own desires (Peters 1966, 152; Darwall 2000, 315–316; Martinich 2005, 58).

Third, the reductionist interpretation generates absurdities when we consider the bifurcated character of Hobbes's theory. Recall that Hobbes characterizes the proper use of the terms 'good' and 'evil' disjunctively. When one is in the state of nature or when one is addressing an issue on which the civil law is silent, the indexical context for the use of an evaluative term will be the appetites or aversions of some particular private individual. On the other hand, where the civil law speaks, the indexical context for the use of evaluative terms switches to the appetites of the state as encoded in the law. So if the reductionist interpretation is to be adequate to Hobbes's bifurcated theory, it seems that it must propose a similarly bifurcated reductive analysis: where the law is silent, an evaluative judgment will be equivalent to a proposition about private appetites; but once the law has spoken, an evaluative judgment will be equivalent to a proposition about the appetites of the state. In this way, evaluative expressions and judgments shed their old semantic content for new whenever the sovereign passes a relevant ruling in the civil law.[9] But this bifurcated semantics is quite incredible. It means, for instance, that seditious subjects who continue to use terms such as 'good' and 'evil' in ways that conflict with new laws are making not merely a political but a *linguistic* mistake. They are now simply misusing the relevant terms, and whenever a private individual states that a certain law mandates evil practices, their utterance will be oxymoronic, a contradiction in

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terms. The sheer implausibility of this result ought to give us pause, and it is worth noting that, while Hobbes is firm that there is something improper about subjects using evaluative terms in ways that conflict with the civil laws, he never says that such utterances involve linguistic errors or verbal contradictions, the sort of 'Absurd,' 'Insignificant,' and 'Non-sense' speech that he delights in exposing in expressions such as 'incorporeall substance' and 'free-Will' (L iv.21, 60; L v.5, 68). And, in fact, Hobbes cannot hold that a private individual's evaluative pronouncements contradicting the official views of good and evil expressed through the laws are always absurd or nonsensical, for while he is clear that all laws are *just* simply in virtue of being laws, he is equally clear that they are not thereby also all *good*; and indeed, he himself explicitly condemns certain kinds of laws as 'not good.'[10]

4. The error theorist interpretation

According to the error theorist interpretation, Hobbes holds that although our evaluative judgments are in fact simply an expression of our subjective appetites and aversions, those judgments involve the mistaken attribution of an objective value to the things that we desire and an objective disvalue to the things to which we averse. On this reading, Hobbes is claiming that our value-laden interpretations of the world are involved in systematic error, and that all of our evaluative judgments are, strictly speaking, false. The objective and impersonal value or disvalue that we ascribe to things in characterizing them as good or evil is an illusion, if perhaps a natural or even psychologically inescapable one.

The error theorist interpretation plainly avoids the first two problems facing the reductionist reading. It can explain what two people are disagreeing about when the one asserts and the other denies that something is good: the one is claiming that that thing has an intrinsic value and is objectively worthy of desire; the other is denying this. And the error theorist interpretation also avoids saddling Hobbes with the implausible view that our evaluative expressions can be translated without loss into non-evaluative terms; instead, it credits Hobbes with the view that words such as 'good' and 'evil' involve an irreducible reference to an objective value or disvalue, albeit an objective value or disvalue that does not in fact exist. The error theorist interpretation handles the third ('bifurcation') problem rather less well, however. It is difficult to believe that evaluative terms are supposed to capture an objective and appetite-independent feature of the things that we call good and evil while also believing that the meaning of these terms is systematically bifurcated, governed in one context by a 'Rule of Good and Evill' reflecting private appetite and in another by a rule reflecting the appetites of the state – and indeed to believe not merely that we ought to defer to the state's judgment regarding the proper usage of 'good' and 'evil,' but that the state's judgment actually determines what the proper usage *is*. This sort of

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systematically bifurcated '[r]ule' or 'measure' of good and evil seems to wear its subjective and appetite-relative character on its sleeve.[11]

In any case, the texts simply do not support the view that Hobbes accepted an error theory regarding our practice of evaluative judgment. First, he never says that our general practice of evaluative judgment is involved in systematic error, nor does he ever say that we take ourselves to be describing some objective feature of reality when we make evaluative judgments. Second, Hobbes seems to regard at least some of our evaluative judgments as non-erroneous – perhaps most obviously, where they align with the laws of the commonwealth. Third, Hobbes holds not only that our use of evaluative terms 'signifies' – i.e. displays – our subjective appetites and aversions, but also that if we look to our everyday use of such expressions, we find that, at least some of the time, ordinary language users understand this fact quite well. 'One must recognize,' he says, 'that *good* and *evil* are names imposed on things *to* signify desire for or aversion from the thing so named' (DCi iii.31, last emphasis mine). We can use these words precisely in order to put our appetites and aversions on display, and must therefore expect our audience to understand that these terms are being employed in a subjective and appetite-relative fashion, not as an attempt to characterize some objective and impersonal reality. Other texts confirm that we often employ these terms in a self-consciously subjective and appetite-relative way, both when we speak from the perspective of our own appetites, and when we speak on another's behalf. '[W]hat is it to say an action is good, but to say, *it is as I would wish*, or *as another would have it*, or *according to the will of the state*, that is to say, according to law?' (OLN 14, my emphases; see also AW xxx.24) 'The common name for all things that are desired, *insofar as they are desired*, is *good*' (DH xi.4, first emphasis mine). These passages are difficult to reconcile with any reading of Hobbes as holding that our practice of evaluative judgment presupposes an objective, impersonal, and appetite-independent system of value. And they seem to have been simply ignored by proponents of the error theorist reading.

What then is the positive case that advocates of the error theorist reading put for their interpretation? Tuck (1989, 52–55) suggests that there is a telling structural analogy between Hobbes's treatment of color on the one hand and his treatment of good and evil on the other. Darwall (2000, 323–328) agrees, and notes that Hobbes himself explicitly registers a parallel between his account of color experience and his account of 'the apparence, or sense of Good' (L vi.11, 82). Given that Hobbes is plainly some sort of error theorist about color, Tuck and Darwall take the analogous treatment of the two cases to intimate some sort of error theory about value as well. First, consider the case of color. As Hobbes sees it, our everyday pre-philosophical talk and thought about color systematically mistake the subjective color sensations of our own visual field for an objective and mind-independent feature of external bodies (EL ii.9–10; L i.4, 22–24). Furthermore, in his analysis of color vision, Hobbes also draws a

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distinction between the underlying material basis of our color experience – a motion produced in the optic nerve and brain as a result of pressure on the retina (EL ii.7; EL ii.8; L i.4, 22–24; DCo xxv.2) – and the color experience itself, an 'apparition' or 'phantasm' that is how this material motion manifests itself in first-person consciousness (EL ii.4; DCo xxv.2). And very shortly after the notorious paragraph on good and evil L vi.7, 80–82, Hobbes goes out of his way to register the following correspondence between his treatment of color on the one hand and his treatment of good and evil on the other:

> As, in Sense, that which is really within us, is […] onely Motion, caused by the action of externall objects, but in apparence; to the Sight, Light and Colour; to the Eare, Sound; to the Nostrill, Odour, &c: so, when the action of the same object is continued from the Eyes, Eares, and other organs to the Heart; the reall effect there is nothing but Motion, or Endeavour; which consisteth in Appetite, or Aversion, to, or from the object moving. But the apparence, or sense of that motion, is that wee either call DELIGHT, or TROUBLE OF MIND. (L vi.9, 82)

Moreover, since we apply the terms 'good' and 'evil' to the objects of our appetites and aversions, and since delight and trouble of mind – i.e. pleasure and displeasure – are how our appetites and aversions manifest themselves in first-person consciousness,[12] Hobbes can write that

> *Pleasure* […] (or *Delight*,) is the apparence, or sense of Good; and *Molestation* or *Displeasure,* the apparence, or sense, of Evill. (L vi.11, 8)

So we have the following parallel. As sensations of color are how certain material motions in the brain are experienced in first-person consciousness, sensations of pleasure and pain are how certain material motions around the heart are experienced in first-person consciousness. And as the former gives the appearance or sense as of an objective and mind-independent feature of external bodies – i.e. the color we falsely attribute to bodies in our everyday pre-philosophical judgments – the latter gives 'the apparence, or sense of Good' and 'the apparence, or sense of Evill.' For Tuck and Darwall, this structural similarity between the two cases shows that Hobbes is likely an error theorist about value as well as an error theorist about color. Hobbes holds that our natural, pre-philosophical judgments about color involve 'the *illusory* projection' of our own subjective states onto the objective world, and 'it seems reasonable to interpret [Hobbes] as saying that value is in this respect just like color' (Darwall 2000, 327–328; compare also Tuck 1989, 53, 55).

There is less to this analogy than it might appear, however. First, although Hobbes notes the parallel between color and value here at L vi.9, 82 and L vi.11, 82, he does not mention it in any other place, including the various texts before and after *Leviathan* in which he sets out the same basic account of evaluative language as a systematic expression of human appetites and aversions (EL vii.3; AW xxx.24; DCi iii.31; OLN 14; DH xi.4). It would be surprising if Hobbes saw the practice of evaluative judgment as presupposing a false belief in the objectivity of value, but neither thought fit to say this explicitly in any work nor to intimate

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it by way of an analogy in any text but *Leviathan* – and then only in a rather oblique fashion. For consider, second, that L vi.9, 82 and L vi.11, 82 do not say that color and value are alike in that our everyday thought and talk about each involve the illusory projection or presuppose the objectivity of the properties in question. All Hobbes says in L vi.9, 82 is that color and value are alike in that each involves a sensation – a visual sensation on the one hand, a sensation of pleasure or displeasure on the other – that is our first-person awareness of what is, at bottom, some sort of material motion in the body. That is the real point of the analogy in L vi.9, 82: not to suggest that value is a kind of secondary quality, but to emphasize that value, like color, is ultimately just a product of the workings of the human mind, and hence ultimately just a product of a complex system of matter in motion.[13] Third, Darwall (2000) wants us to read Hobbes as saying that pleasure and displeasure are appearances whose content is as of an objective, mind-independent feature of the world – i.e. good and evil construed in realist terms as 'categorical, subject-independent' features of the objects of our appetites and aversions (328, see also 325–326). But it is difficult to imagine that we might take our subjective sensations of pleasure and displeasure to present us with mind-independent features of external objects in the way that we might naturally take our subjective color sensations to present us with mind-independent features of external objects. In fact, Hobbes himself explicitly contrasts color, which is naturally, if mistakenly, thought to be a mind-independent feature of external objects, with pleasure and pain, which are quite obviously subjective sensations in the mind; and he even offers a physiological hypothesis to explain this contrast between our natural interpretations of the two respective kinds of sensation. Colors and other sensory phantasms involve 'a reaction and endeavor outwards in the organ of sense, caused by some endeavor inward from the object.' The result is that a sensory phantasm, 'by reason that the [bodily] endeavor is […] outwards, doth always appear as something situate without the organ' (DCo xxv.2). In contrast,

> as phantasms seem to be without, by reason of the endeavour outwards, so pleasure and pain, by reason of the endeavour of the organ inwards, seem to be within; namely, there where the first cause of the pleasure or pain is; as when the pain proceeds from a wound, we think the pain and the wound are both in the same place. (DCo xxv.12)

So Hobbes has no truck with the view that our sensations of pleasure and displeasure present us with an appearance as of something beyond our own bodily responses and feelings, or that we project our desires and aversions, or their manifestation in consciousness as pleasures and displeasures, onto the world in the same way that we naturally project our color sensations onto external objects. Of course, this is not to deny that Hobbes holds that there is a characteristic phenomenology of pleasure and displeasure that tracks with our appetites and aversions, and hence with our dispositions to declare things good or evil. But there is no textual evidence that Hobbes takes evaluative judgment to involve

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the projection of this private phenomenology onto the world, and in fact, there is clear textual evidence against it.

5. The prescriptivist interpretation

There is no need to read Hobbes as treating our practice of evaluative judgment as any sort of attempt to describe or represent either some feature of the world (such as its objective value), or some feature of our own psychology (such as our appetites and aversions). In fact, we make better sense of both the texts and the philosophy if we take his view to be that evaluative judgment has a purely non-representational function – and in particular, a purely *prescriptive* function. On this view, when we call something 'good' or 'evil,' the role of our utterance is to urge that a certain course of action be pursued or that a certain sort of practical stance be adopted. The specific illocutionary nature of the prescription will presumably vary with the indexical context of the evaluative utterance, as we shift from contexts fixed by the speaker's own appetites (giving us commands, pleas, and petitions) to contexts fixed by the appetites of another person (giving us acts of counsel and advice), or to contexts fixed by the appetites of the state (giving us commands and one or another kind of exhortation). The authority of the prescription might also vary as we shift the intended audience from intimidated subordinate to unintimidated master, or to contexts of first-person deliberation and acts of self-counsel or self-exhortation. And the urgency and insistence of the prescription might vary with the strength of the appetites or aversions that are signified by the evaluative utterance. But for all this potential species-variation in the force of our evaluative utterances, in each kind of case, our utterance is an attempt to shape practice, and its role is not to represent the way the world is, but to legislate action within it.[14] Notice: I am not claiming simply that (for Hobbes) evaluative judgments have this particular non-representational function, but also that that they have *no* representational function. Evaluative judgments are *purely* prescriptive, and the alternative hybrid view that they involve some representational component alongside a prescriptive component fails quite as badly as the purely representationalist readings both (i) to account for the passages I will be citing in favor of the prescriptivist reading and (ii) to plausibly explain the systematic bifurcation of the rule of good and evil.[15]

As we have seen, Hobbes holds that evaluative judgments 'signifie' our appetites and aversions, and that ordinary language users have an implicit understanding of this fact. On my proposed interpretation, this display of appetites and aversions is not the purpose of evaluative judgment, but simply a means or byproduct. The point can be illustrated with reference to Hobbes's exhaustive four-part taxonomy of the various 'uses of Speech' in *Leviathan*. Here, Hobbes does not explicitly mention evaluative judgment, but it would presumably fall, not in the category of speech that registers the nature and causes of phenomena, nor in the category of speech that teaches this acquired knowledge to

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others, nor in the category of wit and wordplay, but in the category of speech that serves 'to make known to others our wills, and purposes, that we may have the mutuall help of one another' (L iv.3, 50). Both the means and the ends here square nicely with the prescriptivist interpretation. Evaluative speech puts our appetites on show (as indeed would any prescriptive utterance, regardless of whether or not it invoked evaluative language). But its purpose in so doing is to guide action.

Evaluative predicates operate grammatically like descriptive predicates, and so an evaluative judgment will typically take on the grammatical appearance of a descriptive judgment, as when I say that a certain cup of coffee is dark, hot, fresh, and *good*. My proposal is that Hobbes regards this similarity as merely skin deep, and that he holds that, the surface appearance of our language notwithstanding, our actual employment of evaluative terms shows that their function is not to describe but to prescribe. But could Hobbes really have endorsed a form of expressivism about this part of our language – i.e. the view that this kind of speech serves purely to express some non-representational attitude or state of mind, in spite of its superficially representational appearance? The proposal might seem anachronistic. At least, those who have gone looking for early proponents of expressivism have generally stopped short several generations before Hobbes, either with Hume's account of causal and moral judgment, or with Berkeley's instrumentalist handling of the language of scientific theory (Blackburn 1993, 5; Flew 1974).

But the charge of anachronism is misplaced. Hobbes is quite plainly an expressivist about some areas of discourse, and takes evident pride in exposing the purely non-representational function of certain kinds of speech whose representational appearances have led other philosophers astray. The clearest example is his treatment of pious language that might seem to describe the nature of the deity. Consider this from *Anti-White*:

> In truth, while I hold that the nature of God is inconceivable, and that propositions are a kind of language by which we express our conceptions of the natures of things, I incline to the view that no proposition about the nature of God can be true save this one: God exists; and that no title correctly describes God other than the word *being* [*ens*]. Everything else, I say, pertains not to the explanation of philosophical truth, but to proclaiming the states of mind that govern our wish to praise, magnify, and honor God. Hence the expressions 'God sees, understands, wishes, acts, brings to pass' and the like, which mean nothing to us except motion, do not display the Divine Nature, but our own piety […] Therefore *they are oblations rather than propositions* […] [*T*]*he words under discussion are not the propositions of people philosophizing but the actions of those who pay homage*. (AW xxxv.16, final two emphases mine)[16]

The same expressivist treatment of pious speech about the nature of God appears in the *Elements of Law*, *De Cive*, and *Leviathan* (EL ix.3; DCi xv.14; L xxxi.28, 566; L xxxi.33 568). When we speak of God as acting in such and such a way, or as wishing for such and such a thing, or as being infinite, eternal, just,

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or holy, we are not describing anything – not the character or behavior of the deity nor the states of our own minds. Appearances to the contrary, we are not asserting propositions about the nature of God, but simply expressing (but not describing) our own awe and reverence. Hobbes sees nothing wrong with the devotional language itself, but he mocks to scorn literal-minded philosophers who are misled by the representational appearances and attempt to draw truth-evaluable propositions out of the devotee's pious words (L xlvi.23, 1084–1086; compare also L xxxi.33, 568).[17]

What is the case for thinking that Hobbes extends this sort of expressivist strategy to evaluative language, and, more specifically, that he regards evaluative language as having the particular non-representational function of prescribing actions and practical attitudes? We might begin with a distinction that Hobbes draws in *De Corpore* between two general kinds of speech:

> From the connexion or contexture of names arise divers kinds of speech, whereof some signify the desires and affections of men; such are, first, *interrogations,* which signify the desire of knowing […] Then *prayers,* which signify the desire of having something; *promises, threats, wishes, commands, complaints,* and other significations of other affections. […] In philosophy, there is but one kind of speech useful, which some call in Latin dictum, others *enuntiatum et pronunciatum*; but most men call it *proposition,* and is the speech of those that affirm or deny, and expresseth truth or falsity. (DCo iii.1)[18]

Here Hobbes draws a distinction between the kinds of speech that 'signify the desires and affections of men' and the kind of speech that asserts truth-apt propositions. The latter form of speech is descriptive or representational in character: it is used to 'affirm or deny,' and therefore 'expresseth truth or falsity.' In Hobbes's implied contrast, the former kinds of speech must then serve one or another sort of non-representational function, as is clearly the case in each of Hobbes's chosen examples: interrogations, prayers, promises, threats, and the rest. Now, presumably, Hobbes does not mean to deny that we might also on occasion use the representational, proposition-expressing form of speech in order to 'signify [i.e. display] the desires and affections of men' (as when I say, purely to report a fact, that my friend has a desire for lemon tea, or that I have a desire for coffee). His point is rather that the forms of speech that are distinguished *peculiarly* by the signification or display of our desires and affections have some different function from representation and the expression of truth-apt propositions. We also find this same basic distinction between the kinds of speech we use peculiarly to 'signifie the Appetites, Aversions, and Passions of mans mind' and the kind of speech we use to represent the world through truth-apt 'affirmations' in *Leviathan* (L iv.11, 54; L iv.23, 62). So if we recall Hobbes's repeated insistence that '*Good*, and *Evill*, are names that signifie our Appetites and Aversions' (L xv.40, 242; see also L vi.7, 80–82; DCi iii.31), we might then expect him to locate the vocabulary of good and evil within the former, non-representational species of language.

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Two passages in *Leviathan* help confirm this picture. Each appears in the main body of chapter 6 (i.e. Hobbes's official account of '*the* PASSIONS' and '*the Speeches by which they are expressed*'), just a few pages away from our familiar proof text L vi.7, 80–82. So any reading of L vi.7, 80–82 and of Hobbes on evaluative language ought to be able to accommodate these two texts. Yet, each seems to stand in the way of the traditional representationalist readings.

First then, at L vi.59, 96, Hobbes tells us that '[t]he forme of Speech whereby men signifie their opinion of the Goodnesse of anything is PRAISE,' and various other passages confirm that he equates the labeling of a thing as 'good' with the act of praising it.[19] But what is it to praise something? According to the two traditional readings of Hobbes on evaluative language, it must be to *represent* it as having some property, to *describe* it in some way – either as being desired by someone (as with the reductionist interpretation), or as having an objective value that is independent of human desires and attitudes (as with the error theorist interpretation). But Hobbes does not regard praise as a matter of description, as the passive registration of putative fact, but rather as a speech act with some sort of non-representational function. Thus, in our passage from *Anti-White* on religious language, he clearly contrasts the 'proclaiming' of the 'stat[e] of mind that govern[s] our wish to praise' with representational speech 'pertain[ing] […] to the explanation of philosophical truth' (AW xxxv.16, quoted more fully above). Or, similarly, in *Leviathan,* he writes that '[i]n orations of Prayse […] the designe is not truth, but to Honour' (L 8.6, 106). Passages such as these show Hobbes's resistance to treating praise as any matter of description or representation, and indicate that he thinks of this form of speech – and hence that he thinks of our use of the predicate 'good' – not as directed toward truth and representation (or indeed to any hybrid role partly involving representation), but rather as having some sort of exclusively non-representational function.

My proposal is that that function is to prescribe actions and practical attitudes. The closest Hobbes comes to saying this in so many words is in the following important passage:

> The formes of Speech by which the Passions are expressed, are partly the same, and partly different from those, by which we expresse our Thoughts. And first, generally all Passions may be expressed *Indicatively*; as *I love*, *I feare*, *I joy*, *I deliberate*, *I will*, *I command*: but some of them have particular expressions by themselves, which nevertheless are not affirmations, unlesse it be when they serve to make other inferences, besides that of the Passion they proceed from. […] The language of Desire, and Aversion, is *Imperative*; as *Do this*, *forbeare that*; which when the party is obliged to do, or forbeare, is *Command*; otherwise *Prayer*, or els *Counsell.* The language of Vain-Glory, of Indignation, Pity and Revengefulness, *Optative*: But of the Desire to know, there is a peculiar expression, called *Interrogative*; as, *What is it*, *when shall it*, *how is it done*, and *why so?* (L vi.55, 94)

The passage begins with Hobbes allowing that any of the passions could be expressed by speech in the indicative mood, and he clearly implies that that these indicative utterances – unlike imperatives, optatives, and interrogatives

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– would be so many 'affirmations.' So we *can* signify the passions in this truth-apt form of speech, as when we simply report facts about our own desires and affections, or, presumably, about the desires and affections of others. However, Hobbes also asserts that when our passions gain expression in their own distinctive forms of speech – their 'particular expressions by themselves' – these forms of speech 'are not affirmations.' Among these distinctive passion-expressing forms of speech is '[t]he language of Desire, and Aversion,' which is 'Imperative' in character, and comprehends the various speech acts of command, prayer, and counsel. So the language of desire and aversion has a particular non-representational function. It serves to *prescribe*, and its role is, in one way or another, to guide actions and shape practice: to mandate, urge, recommend, exhort, and the rest. But the language of desire and aversion must comprehend the vocabulary of good and evil. At least, one could resist this only if one were prepared to say that Hobbes does not intend his expression '[t]he language of Desire, and Aversion' to comprehend 'names that signifie our Appetites, and Aversions' – for on Hobbes's account, 'good' and 'evil' just are such names (L xv.40, 242; see also L vi.7, 80–82; DCi iii.31; DH xi.4; OLN 14). Unless we are willing to make this rather desperate move, it seems that we must say that, for Hobbes, the vocabulary of good and evil, like the language of desire and aversion more generally, serves a prescriptive function; and further, that when we use this distinctive form of speech, our expressions 'are not affirmations' – and so are not representational, do not convey propositions, and do not 'expresseth truth or falsity.'[20]

The prescriptivist interpretation of Hobbes on evaluative language is also attractive on systematic grounds. First, it avoids the two specific problems faced by the reductionist interpretation. It can explain what two speakers are arguing about when the one asserts and the other denies that something is good. In the standard case where the rule of good and evil is fixed by the speakers' respective private appetites, the two will be in a *practical* conflict, with the one urging one course of action or practical stance, and the other resisting this in favor of a rival practical policy. Moreover, with the prescriptivist interpretation we also avoid attributing to Hobbes the implausible view that our evaluative vocabularies can be translated without loss into the non-evaluative terminology of appetites and aversions. The core function of our evaluative vocabularies is to *prescribe*, and so any proposed reduction of evaluative judgments to *descriptive* claims about appetites and aversions will leave out the essential ingredient altogether. (In this way, the prescriptivist interpretation also explains why deliberation about good and evil is, inescapably, *practical* deliberation.)[21]

Now consider the way in which the prescriptivist interpretation meshes with what Hobbes has to say about the employment of evaluative terms under the civil laws. Recall that whenever the sovereign announces a new law, the 'Rule of Good and Evill' controlling the proper use of these terms follows accordingly, and any conflicting use of 'good' and 'evil' reflecting private appetite becomes improper. Both the reductionist and the error theorist readings of Hobbes on

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evaluative language struggle to explain this feature of his overall account – and indeed so long as evaluative language is regarded as representational in function, it seems that we will be left with an implausibly bifurcated semantics for evaluative terms, with such terms conveying one sort of semantic content when the law is silent, and an entirely different sort of semantic content once the law has spoken.

But with the prescriptivist interpretation, we avoid this Humpty Dumpty semantics and its paradoxical consequences, such as the result that subjects cannot criticize the laws without falling into verbal contradiction. Moreover, we have a natural explanation of *why* evaluative speech has its distinctive bifurcated employment while yet maintaining a unified underlying purpose. Whenever the sovereign enacts a law, it is just issuing a certain sort of command, and prescribing, in its capacity as representative for the overall body politic, that subjects behave in such and such a way. So the laws are naturally seen as the sovereign's pronouncements about what is 'good' and what 'evil,' given that the function of evaluative predicates is (on the proposed interpretation) just to prescribe this or that kind of action or behavior. Further, since all subjects have agreed to be collectively represented by the sovereign and 'to submit their Wills, every one to his Will, and their Judgements, to his Judgment' (L xvii.13, 260), the civil laws – i.e. the sovereign's official pronouncements about what is 'good' and what 'evil' – have a particular authoritative status. That is why the new rule of good and evil encoded in the civil law makes any conflicting use of these terms improper. It is not that those who defy the state and continue to use the words 'good' and 'evil' in a manner reflecting private appetite have somehow managed to misunderstand the meaning of evaluative terms. Rather, their utterances are improper simply in that they are failing to align their own speech acts of command, counsel, and deliberative self-counsel – as expressed in their declarations about what is 'good' and what 'evil' – with the prescriptions of the law. Such uses of 'good' and 'evil' can remain perfectly meaningful and in good linguistic order, even if they are out of order politically.[22]

Finally, while this sort of lawless speech act will typically be a sign of criminality or sedition, the sovereign would be wise to allow some free expression of contrarian prescriptive speech, if only within a closed circle of counselors and advisors. Such counselors may have differing judgments from the sovereign and use evaluative language to urge different courses of action, though being bound to obedience they should speak only when and where permitted, and must accept any final decision by the sovereign as speaking for all. And here we can dissolve one last paradox, or putative paradox, in Hobbes's philosophical system. There is often thought to be a kind of performative contradiction running through Hobbes's writings, as he repeatedly asserts that we should give up the right of private judgment of good and evil to the state, and yet is himself so insistent in pressing his own particular private view of how the state should be ordered – including, as we have seen, his own private judgments about what

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laws are good and what 'not good.' But this is no contradiction at all on the current interpretation. So long as the state allows the philosopher to express his advice – as, in one way or another, the Caroline Crown, the Commonwealth, and the Protectorate each allowed Hobbes to circulate or publish his political recommendations – then the philosopher may criticize the laws while also insisting that they must be obeyed.

Notes

1. For versions of the reductionist interpretation of Hobbes on the meaning of evaluative terms (also known as 'the subjectivist interpretation'), see Gauthier (1969, 7), Hampton (1986, 29), Biletzki (1997, 84–86), and Martinich (2005, 57–58; but see also 41, which hints at the error theorist interpretation).
   For versions of the error theorist interpretation (also known as 'the projectivist interpretation'), see Darwall (2000) and Tuck (1996, 181, 1989, 52–55, 1998, xxii). Compare also Mackie (1977, 43).
   Other discussions of Hobbes on the meaning of evaluative terms include Boonin-Vail (1994, 59–61), Sorell (1986, 29–30, 34), and Pettit (2008, 51–53, 85–89), each of which is framed in sufficiently neutral language to be consistent with either the reductionist or the error theorist interpretation, or indeed with my own prescriptivist reading. (But see Pettit [52] for some doubts about the textual support for the error theorist interpretation).
2. References to Hobbes's works will be abbreviated as follows. 'L' = Thomas Hobbes, *Leviathan: The English and Latin Texts*, edited by Malcolm (2012), followed by chapter and paragraph number, then page number. 'EL' = Thomas Hobbes, *Human Nature and De Corpore Politico* (i.e. the *Elements of Law*), edited by Gaskin (1994), followed by chapter and section number. 'DCi' = Thomas Hobbes, *On the Citizen* (i.e. *De Cive*), edited by Richard Tuck and Michael Silverthorne (1998), followed by chapter and section number. 'DH' = Thomas Hobbes, *De Homine* selections in Thomas Hobbes, *Man and Citizen*, edited by Bernard Gert (1972), followed by chapter and section number. 'DCo' = Thomas Hobbes, *De Corpore*, in *The English Works of Thomas Hobbes of Malmesbury*, edited by William Molesworth (1839–1845, i. 1–532), followed by chapter and section number. 'AW' = Thomas Hobbes, *Thomas White's De Mundo Examined* (i.e. *Anti-White*), translated by Harold Whitmore Jones (1976), followed by chapter and section number; where noted I have adapted Jones's translation from the original Latin text in Thomas Hobbes, *Critique du De Mundo De Thomas White*, edited by Jean Jacquot and Harold Whitmore Jones (1973). 'OLN' = Thomas Hobbes, 'Of Liberty and Necessity', in *Hobbes and Bramhall on Liberty and Necessity*, edited by Vere Chappell (1999, 15–42), followed by section number. 'B' = Thomas Hobbes, *Behemoth, or, the Long Parliament*, edited by Paul Seaward (2010), followed by page number.
3. Commentators sometimes question whether Hobbes means to endorse the usage of 'good' and 'evil' described in passages such as L vi.7, 80–82 (Martinich 2005, 62–63; Lloyd 1992, 258–260). They point out that Hobbes does not say that the object of any individual's appetite *is* good for that person, but merely that it is that 'which he for his part calleth *Good*.' The suggestion is that Hobbes might be leaving room for the view that this common usage is improper, and perhaps ought to be revised. But this is unlikely. First, Hobbes often uses expressions such as 'men calleth' and 'is called' when introducing definitions that he plainly

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means to endorse (e.g. L i.2, 22; L ii.10, 36; L vi.2, 78; L vi.45, 90; L vi.47, 90). Second, his overall argument in *Leviathan* is supposed to proceed from 'Definitions (of such words as are Essentiall to all Politicall reasoning) universally agreed on' and 'Consent (concerning the use of words)' – i.e. from the common employment of these terms in everyday language (L xxxii.1, 576). By his own lights, he is supposed to be reasoning from our shared use of words in natural language, not from his own idiosyncratic usage. Third, in other texts, Hobbes either defines or uses 'good' and 'evil' in much the same way in his own voice (EL vii.3; L xlvi.32, 1090; OLN 14; DH xi.4).

4. When presenting his theory, Hobbes focuses on the thin terms 'good' and 'evil' (or 'bonum' and 'malum'). But what he has to say is also intended to extend to the evaluative component of thick terms – 'words,' as Hobbes sees it, 'which besides the signification of what we imagine of their nature, have a signification also of the nature, disposition, and interest of the speaker; such as are the names of the Vertues and Vices; For one man calleth *Wisdome*, what another calleth *feare*; and one *cruelty*, what another *justice* […]' Such words plainly describe their object in some sort; but in addition, they also have an evaluative aspect that, for Hobbes, reflects the 'tincture of our different passions' (L iv.24, 62).
5. Passages that might seem to import an objective standard of value include DCi iii.32; L xxx.21, 540; DH xi.6; DH xiii.8; and B 166.
6. The sovereign of course has the right to command its subjects to use words in any way that it likes. But in contradistinction to his repeated insistence on the sovereign's role in determining the '[r]ule' or 'measure' of good and evil, Hobbes never says or implies that the sovereign's commands, however authoritative, fix the standards for *correct* usage of non-evaluative terms.
7. The full text of L vi.7, 80–82 also allows a third kind of case in which the rule of good and evil is taken not from an individual's private appetites, nor from the will of the state, but rather from 'an Arbitrator or Judge' set up by mutual consent to settle a dispute between disagreeing parties. Insofar as the traditional representationalist interpretations are unable to plausibly explain the bifurcation between the first two types of case (as I argue below), they will face the same problem over again in accounting for the shift to yet another rule of good and evil in this third kind of case. Still, this third kind of case is not mentioned in the corresponding passages in Hobbes's other works (AW xxx.24, xxxviii.5; OLN 14; DCi xii.1), and to keep matters simple, I ignore it here. (Everything that I say about the employment and force of evaluative terms in a commonwealth can be applied, mutatis mutandis, to the employment and force of evaluative terms under an arbitrator or judge established by mutual consent.).
8. I owe this point to Robert McIntyre, who has substantial unpublished work on the topic. See also Hacking (1975, 20) and Abizadeh (2015).
9. Note that the two kinds of semantic content will not always coincide, either in theory or in practice. Hobbes certainly has no expectation that the appetites of private individuals will always *in fact* coincide with the appetites of the state as expressed through the laws. But perhaps it will be said that, given that private individuals have an all-trumping desire for self-preservation, they *ought* to align their appetites with the appetites of the state on pain of irrationality, and so in this way, the meaning of evaluative terms once the sovereign has expressed its official appetites through law will coincide with the meaning of evaluative terms reflecting *rationally corrected* private appetite (Darwall 2000, 344–345). However, this reading is implausible. First, Hobbes never says (or implies) that the meaning of evaluative terms once the civil laws have spoken will coincide with

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the meaning of evaluative terms reflecting rationally corrected private appetite. He misses many excellent opportunities to register this alleged coincidence, and instead repeatedly chooses rather to emphasize the *divergence* between the standards of public and private appetite (see, for instance, L xlvi.11, 1058–1060; L xlvi.32, 1090). Second, Hobbes does not hold that it is always rational to desire whatever the sovereign officially desires through law: consider the case of a sovereign who orders an individual to take his or her own life (L xxi.11–14, 336–337), 'to execute any dangerous […] Office' (L xxi.15, 337), or to perform an act that brings on insufferable 'infamy and loathing' (DCi vi.13). Third, Hobbes holds that it is quite possible for a rational individual to judge that certain kinds of law are 'not good,' and indeed offers such judgments himself (L xxx.20, 540 – an interesting case that I will return to in section 5). This would be quite mystifying if rationally corrected private judgments about good and evil always coincided with the appetites of the state. Fourth, as Darwall notes, if the sovereign officially expresses a desire for *X* through law, then instrumental reasoning emphasizing the importance of obedience to the sovereign as a means to self-preservation can at best lead a private individual to the second-order desire to desire *X*, not to a first-order desire for *X* itself (345 note 49).

10. 'By a Good Law, I mean not a Just Law: for no Law can be Unjust. […] A good Law is that, which is *Needful*, for the *Good of the People*, and withall *Perspicuous*/[…] A Law may be conceived to be Good, when it is for the benefit of the Soveraign; though it be not Necessary for the People; but it is not so. […] Unnecessary Lawes are not good Lawes.' (L xxx.20–21, 540).
11. Darwall notes that there is a possible objection here to his own error theorist (or 'projectivist') interpretation, *if* the rule of good and evil reflecting private appetite and the rule of good and evil reflecting the appetites of the state could in fact come apart. He replies that since (for Hobbes) *rationally corrected* private appetite will always coincide with the appetites of the state, it follows that there is no real bifurcation in the *proper*, *rationally corrected* employment of evaluative terms. (Darwall 2000, 344–345) However, even if we were to allow this conditional claim, its antecedent is not in fact authentically Hobbesian. See note 9 above.
12. The view that appetites and aversions manifest themselves, respectively, as pleasures and pains can seem strange, and open to ready counterexample. However, the position is certainly authentically Hobbesian (EL vii.2; L vi.9–11, 82; see also the more nuanced DH xi.1). For a partial defense of the view, see Martinich (2005, 42).
13. Granted, when Hobbes writes in L vi.11 of pleasure and displeasure as the 'apparence, or sense' of good and evil, his language might seem to suggest that the experience of these sensations is as of encountering an objective, mind-independent property, as with the appearance or sense of color (Darwall 2000, 326). But, in fact, Hobbes's talk of 'apparence, or sense' need not be read this way, as we see from his willingness to write in this same run of text that 'DELIGHT, or TROUBLE OF MIND' is not only the appearance or sense of good and evil, but also 'the apparence, or sense of that motion' around the heart 'which consisteth in Appetite, or Aversion' (L vi.9, 82). Here, at least Hobbes's talk of 'apparence, or sense' points not to an experience as of an objective, mind-independent reality, but rather simply to the manifestation in consciousness of our own subjective reactions and the mechanisms of our own minds.
14. The prescriptivist theory of evaluative language is developed most fully in the works of Hare (1952, 1981, 1997). I am not aware of anywhere that Hare relates prescriptivism to Hobbes, though he does claim that various other historical

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luminaries – including Plato, Aristotle, Hume, Kant, and Mill – were prescriptivists at least 'in part' (1997, 130; see also 18, 182).

15. Of course, evaluative judgments involving *thick terms* will serve (in part) to describe or represent. But my claim is that judgments that are purely evaluative (such as those simply involving thin terms such as 'good' and 'evil') are purely non-representational in function; and also that the evaluative component of any judgment involving thick terms is purely non-representational in function. To whatever extent a judgment is evaluative, it is to that extent non-representational.
16. Slightly adapted from Jones.
17. For discussion of Hobbes's expressivist treatment of religious language, see Holden (2015, 657–660).
18. Slightly adapted from the anonymous 1656 translation of *De Corpore*, which alternates between 'which denotes' and 'which signify' for *quae significant*; I use 'signify' consistently throughout. On this issue with the 1656 translation, see also Hungerland and Vick (1981, 11). Martinich also corrects this point in his translation of *De Corpore*: see Hobbes (1981, 223).
19. '[T]he same man […] [at] one time praiseth, that is, calleth Good, what another time he dispraiseth, and calleth Evil' (L xv.40, 242; see also DCi iii.31). '[W]hat is it else to praise, but to say a thing is good?' (OLN 14).
20. In a tantalizing qualification, Hobbes allows a single exception to his claim that '[t]he language of Desire, and Aversion' does not convey 'affirmations': namely, when this form of speech 'serves[s] to make other inferences, besides that of the Passion [it] proceed[s] from' (L vi.55, 94, quoted more fully above). Is Hobbes here showing an awareness of the Frege–Geach problem, or even gesturing toward a form of quasi-realism by way of solution? That is probably too much to suggest. Still, this qualification clearly shows both (i) that Hobbes regards the language of desire and aversion as non-representational in its core or primary employment, and yet also (ii) that he sees that this form of language must be able to emulate truth-apt speech (supplying 'affirmations' that might be employed as premises in arguments) when it is embedded in inferential contexts. So he is sensitive to this explanandum (which would later be emphasized by Frege and Geach). But at the same time, he does not regard it as a reason to abandon his view that the language of desire and aversion is non-representational in its core function, and that when it serves this basic purpose, it decidedly does *not* provide us with 'affirmations.'
21. It also provides a natural explanation of what we are doing when we consider the relative importance of this or that good, or ask whether a certain good is real or merely apparent (L vi.49, 90; L vi.57, 94): we are asking about the relative force and authority of the various competing prescriptions (including self-prescriptions) that bear on the individual choosing what to do. Since the force and authority that an individual will accord to each competing prescription are ultimately a function of her appetites and aversions along with her assessment of the likely outcomes of the courses of action available to her, practical deliberation (as with the reductionist and error theorist interpretations) is ultimately an expression of just these variables.
22. Hobbes's allegorical reading of the Fall also supports this interpretation. For Hobbes, Adam and Eve's eating of the forbidden fruit stands for an attempt to 'take upon them Gods office, which is Judicature of Good and Evill,' 'the Cognisance or Judicature of *Good* and *Evill*, being forbidden by the name of the fruit of the tree of Knowledge.' When God reprimands them 'Hast thou eaten, &c' it is 'as if he should say, doest thou that owest me obedience, take upon

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thee to judge of my Commandments? *Whereby it is cleerly, (though Allegorically,) signified, that the Commands of them that have the right to command, are not by their Subjects to be censured, nor disputed.*' (L xx.17, 318–320, final emphasis mine). Here again, the question of who has the right to declare what is good and what is evil reduces not to the question of who has Humpty Dumpty's curious ability to determine the semantic content, reference, or extension of these terms, but, rather less mysteriously, to the question of who has the right to decide which prescriptions we are to follow.

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