

Speech, Power, and Political [Con]Science: *Leviathan's* Liberal Miseducation in Speech

John Antonio Pascarella

JPascar@clmson.edu

Today's universities are at the center of a political debate about speech and education framed as a choice between protecting individuals and groups from "hate speech" or promoting "free speech." This debate has a longer history than many realize, for the relationship between speech and university education forms a vital part of Thomas Hobbes's Leviathan. Rather than approaching this relationship as a political question, this article proposes seeing this relationship in light of what constitutes a liberal education. By carefully reading Leviathan from this perspective, one finds how Hobbes assaults the possibility of philosophy with a political science that subjects intellectual, moral, and religious life to the need for peace through the willfully reductive language of "power." Read in this way, one can see Hobbes's legacy in contemporary efforts to combat "hate speech." One also finds, however, hints of the Greek philosophy Hobbes evades by declaring it insignificant for his political science. In tracing Hobbes's attempts to displace philosophic speech with politics, readers see universities' vital need for a liberal education that understands speech's natural purpose is to search for the truth.

Universities today are focal points of a broader debate about political speech and education. On one side are those like psychologist Lisa Feldman Barrett who argue speech "can be a form of violence."¹ Such an argument complements contemporary concerns with curtailing "hate speech," which targets groups or individuals based on race, gender, or religion and "may threaten social peace."² For those drawn to these arguments, universities must regulate speech to create a safe learning environment. On the other side are those like social psychologist Jonathan Haidt, who contends the "speech is violence" argument threatens universities immersed in a "conflict between truth and social justice" as the authoritative end

John Antonio Pascarella is a Lyceum Visiting Scholar at the Clemson Institute for the Study of Capitalism, 285 Chandler L. Burns Hall, Clemson University, Clemson, SC 29634.

¹ Lisa Feldman Barrett, "When is Speech Violence?", *The New York Times*, July 14, 2017.

² "Understanding Hate Speech," United Nations, accessed February 12, 2024.

PIETAS

for education and academic scholarship.³ Haidt frames this conflict as one between the philosophies of John Stuart Mill and Karl Marx. Where Mill’s “free speech” philosophy preserves “political diversity,” Marx’s philosophy concerns “overthrowing power structures and privilege.”⁴ Citing Mill, Haidt argues “viewpoint diversity” is necessary to search for the truth, and universities—which belong to a “productive network of knowledge-producing institutions”—should defend “free speech” to ensure science and society remain liberal.⁵ The common ground shared by Feldman Barrett and Haidt is their positions on speech in universities serve a political vision that originates with a philosopher neither scholar acknowledges: Thomas Hobbes.

Questions within liberalism about speech and university education have a longer history than present debates indicate, and they form a vital part of Hobbes’s *Leviathan*. Because universities originated in Medieval Europe, they combined the study of philosophy and religion. At the time of *Leviathan*’s writing, Scholasticism coupled Greek philosophy with Christianity, two things which Hobbes finds are impractical, sources of intellectual and moral error, and causes of war. To free society from the errors of Scholastic university education, Hobbes introduces a teaching on science to produce peace and prosperity. As psychologists and scholars, Feldman Barrett and Haidt hold an unspoken agreement with Hobbes that science and university education must benefit political society. What neither Feldman Barrett nor Haidt realize is how their positions on speech and university education reflect Hobbes’s assault on the possibility of a philosophy liberated from politics.

Hobbes’s concern with speech and universities emerges in the conclusion to *Leviathan*’s first chapter, and it introduces a philosophic problem that allows him to grant government a narrow but substantial power as the text unfolds. Intending to address universities’ role in commonwealths, Hobbes notes the influence of Aristotle’s texts in these institutions and proposes “the frequency of insignificant speech” within them needs to be “amended.”⁶ The disapproval of “insignificant speech” in universities implies Hobbes must define “significant

³ Jonathan Haidt and Greg Lukianoff, “Why It’s a Bad Idea to Tell Students Words Are Violence,” *The Atlantic*, July 18, 2017; Haidt, “2017 End of Year Letter,” *Heterodox Academy*, December 18, 2017; Haidt, “The Two Fiduciary Duties of Professors,” *Heterodox Academy*, September 20, 2022.

⁴ Haidt, “Why Universities Must Choose One Telos: Truth or Social Justice,” October 21, 2016.

⁵ Haidt, “Why the Past 10 Years of American Life Have Been Uniquely Stupid,” *The Atlantic*, April 11, 2022.

⁶ Thomas Hobbes, *Leviathan*, ed. Edwin Curley (Indianapolis, IN: Hackett, 1994): I.5. All citations from this edition use Curley’s paragraph numbering. Unless otherwise noted, italicization follows this text.

THE LIBERAL MISEDUCATION IN SPEECH IN HOBBS'S *LEVIATHAN'S*

speech” later within *Leviathan* to clarify his teaching, yet this phrase never appears in the text.⁷ Hobbes’s insistence throughout *Leviathan* on the importance of clear definitions suggests his omission of “significant speech” is deliberate and embodies a definitive characteristic of his political philosophy. Hobbes’s initial use of “insignificant speech” provides readers their first demonstration of a rhetorical tactic he deploys throughout *Leviathan*: the power to declare speech “insignificant” is greater and more possible to realize in politics than declaring what speech is “significant.”

Hobbes’s political grounds for dismissing certain philosophies from universities as “insignificant speech” are evident in *Leviathan’s* penultimate paragraph. Since Hobbes declares his works do not disturb “public tranquility,” they are fit for education in the universities, “the fountains of civil and moral doctrine” from which preachers and gentry (i.e., elites) draw teachings they share with the people through sermons and conversation.⁸ The trickle-down effect of university education is another area where Feldman Barrett and Haidt agree with Hobbes about speech’s institutional significance. But approaching speech with its institutional and political significance in mind overlooks the philosophical groundwork Hobbes lays to arrive at his conclusion. Only by examining Hobbes’s teaching on speech does it become apparent that the “hate speech” versus “free speech” debate in universities emanates from a deeper philosophical problem concerning the relationship between speech and politics.

Approaching *Leviathan* with questions about what constitutes a liberal education provides readers an opportunity to see Hobbes’s substantial influence in contemporary debates about speech, university education, and politics. Situating university education in the contest between “hate speech” and “free speech” confines education’s horizons to liberal politics. If one pulls back from liberalism and wonders more generally about speech and education, it becomes possible to consider how politics affects them. Ancient Greek philosophy is well-suited for this task, yet it is one of the philosophies Hobbes wants removed from university education. Hobbes’s statement that Aristotle’s “insignificant speech” is among what needs to be “amended” is the first step in a longer argument that seeks to render

⁷ Whereas “insignificant speech” appears in I.5, VIII.27, and XII.19, the closest Hobbes comes to “significant speech” is “significant and proper language” (XXV.12), “significant terms” (XXX.22), “significant names” (XXXVIII.12), and an allusion to “significant” words (XLIV.21).

⁸ Hobbes, *Leviathan*, “A Review and Conclusion”.16.

PIETAS

Greek philosophy useless to modern politics. Because of his disdain for Scholasticism, Hobbes's attack on Greek philosophy advances his amending of Christianity and its moral teachings to serve his political science. In this respect, readers must view Hobbes's teaching on speech as the foundation for subjecting moral, intellectual, and religious life to his scientific vision of politics. While universities are the instruments for realizing this vision, a careful look at the terms of Hobbes's philosophy reveals how his teachings pose an ongoing threat to liberal education.

This article argues for the need to understand that current debates about speech and university education in liberal democracies are evidence of a philosophic problem at the heart of Hobbes's *Leviathan*. Though Hobbes speaks in the names of "reason" and "science," his teachings on speech and power contribute to a political science based on persistent fears of war that renders insignificant any education in philosophy or religion that does not produce civil peace. The first section of this article compares recent scholarship on Hobbes, "hate speech," and conscience to older scholarship on speech and universities to recover a sense of his philosophy's revolutionary character. This comparison outlines how Hobbes's philosophy of power permeates science, morality, and religion through speech. This article's second section sketches how Hobbes redefines "philosophy" to displace it with politics, while the next three sections show his assaults on the possibility of a moral philosophy bound to a philosophy or religion outside of his own political science. The common thread running through these sections is attention to the ways Hobbes's accounts of speech, reason, and science serve political governance through the passion of fear by merging moral, intellectual, and religious matters together with the seemingly neutral language of "power." The article's final section returns to universities' reformation in the image of Hobbes's politicized philosophy. Read in this way, one discovers *Leviathan's* greatest legacy may be Hobbes's aggressive marginalization of any speech and education that finds freedom in the pursuit of truth.

SPEECH AND POWER: HOBBS'S PERSISTENT CHALLENGE TO LIBERAL EDUCATION

There are two reasons why returning to Hobbes's *Leviathan* is helpful for grasping the challenge "hate speech" poses to liberal education in universities. First, the "state of nature" narrative is unknowingly present in Feldman Barrett's "speech is violence" argument. She

THE LIBERAL MISEDUCATION IN SPEECH IN HOBBS'S *LEVIATHAN'S*

contends exposure to “hateful words” in a “culture of constant, casual brutality is toxic to the body,” causing “physical harm” through “prolonged stress” from living with constant worries about one’s own safety.⁹ Second, Hobbes’s quiet but formative presence in the philosophy driving today’s concerns with “hate speech” runs deeper than recent scholarship demonstrates. In Teresa Bejan’s exploration of how Hobbes’s teaching on “contumely” prefigures feminist and critical race theory’s work on “hate speech” and social hierarchies, she omits considering the ways his language of “power” contributes to revising what constitutes philosophy and university education.¹⁰ Despite working in different fields, both scholars share the same limitation: they do not see outside the constraints of Hobbes’s philosophy. In considering Hobbes’s relevance for reflecting on speech and university education, there is more to learn from older lines of scholarship that recognize his philosophy’s revolutionary character.

Within liberalism, the attempt to promote “free speech” while protecting individuals from “hate speech” might seem best understood through the lens of religious toleration. Bejan’s interest in Hobbes’s teaching on “hate speech” begins from Jeremy Waldron’s surprise in connecting early modern philosophical accounts of religious toleration to “hate speech.” Though Waldron dismisses Hobbes because he fails to assure individuals of their societal dignity, Bejan reveals dignity is central to his teaching.¹¹ Where Bejan’s interpretation stumbles is its failure to consider why Hobbes’s teaching on dignity begins in a chapter on power (“Of Power, Worth, Dignity, Honor, and Worthiness”).¹² Bejan’s omission is curious given her nod to Critical Race Theory, which holds liberalism embodies “racialized power” and therefore cannot provide a solution to racial problems within current social structures.¹³ Critical Race Theory builds on Critical Theory, a school of thought concerned with how social sciences model themselves on natural sciences to serve “power structures.”¹⁴ Critical

⁹ Feldman Barrett, “When is Speech Violence?”

¹⁰ Teresa M. Bejan, “Hobbes Against Hate Speech,” *British Journal for the History of Philosophy* 32, no. 2 (2022): 247–64.

¹¹ Bejan, “Hobbes Against Hate Speech,” 1–2; Jeremy Waldron, *The Harm in Hate Speech* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2012), 204, 231.

¹² Hobbes, *Leviathan*, X.

¹³ Linda Alcoff, “Critical Philosophy of Race,” *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (Fall 2023 Edition), eds. Edward N. Zalta and Uri Nodelman.

¹⁴ Robin Celikates and Jeffrey Flynn, “Critical Theory (Frankfurt School),” *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (Winter 2023 Edition), eds. Zalta and Nodelman.

PIETAS

Theory's foundational questions flow from the political and scientific world that Hobbes's *Leviathan* aims to create, and his philosophy—which Waldron does not view as “liberal”—shaped liberalism. To see Hobbes's philosophy and its consequences outside the confines of liberalism, readers must concentrate on *Leviathan's* textual teaching.

Relying on toleration to navigate disputes about speech within liberalism becomes more of a dead-end upon realizing its compatibility with Hobbes's teaching on sovereign power. Against scholars denying Hobbes a place within liberalism by calling him “absolutist” or “authoritarian,” J. Judd Owen argues they ignore two paradoxes in Hobbes's political philosophy: first, the common “arbitrariness” in sovereign power and consent; second, toleration's “secondary or contingent value” in relation to liberalism's “absolutism” regarding “peace, safety, life” as the “fundamental principle” that trumps liberty. The sovereign's right to censor religious speech is consistent with an “Enlightenment liberalism” derived from “Hobbes's vision of a truly rational politics.”¹⁵ The advancement of reason and science within liberalism is subordinate to the sovereign power's need to produce peace. But if the sovereign power's establishment is “arbitrary,” what keeps reason, science, and education from becoming arbitrary? And is only religious speech subject to arbitrary censorship, or all speech?

Hobbes's treatment of “conscience” seems to confine censorship of university speech to religious matters while preserving individual liberty. Responding to disparate interpretations of Hobbesian education as “unacceptably authoritarian” or “more liberal,” Bejan argues Hobbes's “civil science” uses the sovereign's “authoritative determination” of words' definitions to prevent religious “claims of conscience” from subverting laws. In her reading, university students and teachers are free to think whatever they wish, but must teach and study only sovereign-approved doctrines and definitions.¹⁶ Bejan and Owen agree that *Leviathan's* limits on speech's expression do not require “surrender[ing] our right to private judgment, what Hobbes calls ‘conscience’.”¹⁷ Contrary to these scholars, Johan Tralau proposes “conscience” lacks a “minimal” liberty for Hobbes because it is a “public” and

¹⁵ J. Judd Owen, “The Tolerant Leviathan: Hobbes and the Paradox of Liberalism,” *Polity* 37, no. 1 (January 2005): 130–48, at 131–33, 136–37, 140–44.

¹⁶ Bejan, “Teaching the *Leviathan*: Thomas Hobbes on Education,” *Oxford Review of Education* 36 no. 5 (October 2010): 607–26, at 614–17.

¹⁷ Owen, “Tolerant Leviathan,” 136, 141. See Hobbes, *Leviathan*, XLVI.37.

THE LIBERAL MISEDUCATION IN SPEECH IN HOBBS'S *LEVIATHAN'S*

“collective phenomenon.”¹⁸ What these interpretations overlook is how “conscience” first emerges in *Leviathan* after Hobbes distinguishes “science” from “opinion.”¹⁹ By name, “conscience” depends on “science” (which itself depends on speech and reason), and science stands alongside honor as matters of power. Because science informs conscience, science exercises intellectual, moral, and religious power in *Leviathan* through speech, powers all bound to the sovereign’s political authority.

Focusing on Hobbes’s teaching on speech—an approach more common to older research—provides a clearer picture of the philosophic revolution he initiates to reform universities. Robert Kraynak uses Hobbes’s historical writings to show how he aims to end “wars among intellectuals” seeking glory and honor in an “entire civilization of academic speech” where universities encourage the “disputative politics” derived from Socratic “political science.”²⁰ Seeing that neither Greek nor Medieval philosophy produced peace and truth, Hobbes sought to undermine the dialectical method in order to search for truths about nature and politics and change philosophy, politics, and religion.²¹ Kraynak’s interpretation suggests philosophy, science, religion, and university education in Hobbes’s thought are subordinate to the political end of preventing war, and contemporaneous scholarship indicates his attention to speech supports this end.²² For Hobbes, universities institutionalize philosophic speech to serve politics. To understand how this institutionalization of philosophic speech threatens liberal education, it is necessary to trace how Hobbes renders Socrates, Plato, and Aristotle’s dialectical philosophy insignificant in his political science.

Within recent scholarship, there remains insufficient appreciation for the moral force of Hobbes’s *Leviathan* and its power to orient speech and education towards political ends while masquerading as a science. Nicholas Dungey contends Hobbes’s scientific materialism

¹⁸ Johan Tralau, “Hobbes Contra Liberty of Conscience,” *Political Theory* 39, no. 1 (February 2011): 58–84.

¹⁹ Hobbes, *Leviathan*, VII.4.

²⁰ Robert P. Kraynak, “Hobbes on Barbarism and Civilization,” *The Journal of Politics* 45, No. 1 (1983): 86–109, at 94–95, 99–103.

²¹ Laurence Berns, “Thomas Hobbes,” in *History of Political Philosophy*, eds. Leo Strauss and Joseph Cropsey (3rd ed., Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1987), 396–420; Strauss, *The Political Philosophy of Hobbes: Its Basis and Its Genesis*, Trans. Elsa M. Sinclair (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1952): 140–45, 153.

²² John W. Danford, “The Problem of Language in Hobbes’s Political Science,” *The Journal of Politics* 42, no. 1 (February 1980): 102–34; Frederick G. Whelan, “Language and Its Abuses in Hobbes’ Political Philosophy,” *The American Political Science Review* 75, no. 1 (March 1981): 59–75.

creates a linguistic problem in the state of nature that his political philosophy cannot solve.²³ Strangely, Dungey never confronts Leo Strauss's contention that the foundation for Hobbes's political philosophy is not modern natural science, but the moral teaching that fear of violent death is the foundation for reason and science to counter human vanity.²⁴ There is reason to side with Strauss in this dispute, for speech, reason, and science belong to *Leviathan's* broader "philosophy of power" that allows Hobbes to present a precise and "morally neutral" political teaching.²⁵ This presents a paradox, for power's moral neutrality allows Hobbes to inculcate a fearful moral teaching to avoid war and produce peace through politics. Seeing that current arguments against "hate speech" in universities involve safety and power, there is an apparent renaissance in Hobbes's moral philosophy.

Returning to the text of Hobbes's *Leviathan* offers a glimpse into the true philosophic—not political—predicament regarding speech facing universities committed to liberal education. Among Critical Theorists, *Leviathan* lends credence to Michel Foucault's contention that science holds an "internal regime" produced from "relations of power, not relations of meaning" in language, for power is productive, "forms knowledge, [and] produces discourse." Treating power as a form of "warlike domination," Foucault says, "Each society has its regime of truth, its 'general politics' of truth," leaving intellectuals to "battle" over truth and power.²⁶ Though Foucault disagrees with Hobbes's view of power as both natural and political, the terms of Foucault's critique of modern science and society are remarkably Hobbesian. While engaging in a more thorough examination of Critical Theory is beyond this paper's scope, Foucault's debt to Hobbes suggests a different philosophy is necessary for freeing speech and the search for truth from political power and society. Considering that Jürgen Habermas recognizes how Hobbes's political science rejects Aristotle's political philosophy,²⁷ examining *Leviathan* with an eye for where it declares Ancient Greek philosophy insignificant could prove fruitful. To grasp the persistence of

²³ Nicholas Dungey, "Thomas Hobbes's Materialism, Language, and the Possibility of Politics," *The Review of Politics* 70 no. 2 (Spring 2008): 190–220.

²⁴ Strauss, *Political Philosophy of Hobbes*, ix, 6–29.

²⁵ Strauss, *Natural Right and History* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1965): 194–96; Michael Oakeshott, "Introduction to *Leviathan*," in *Rationalism in Politics* (Indianapolis, IN: Liberty Fund, 1991): 236.

²⁶ Michel Foucault, "Truth and Power," in *Power/Knowledge: Selected Interviews and Other Writings, 1972–1977*, ed. Colin Gordon (New York: Pantheon Books, 1980): 112–15, 119, 123, 129, 133.

²⁷ Russell Keat, *The Politics of Social Theory: Habermas, Freud, and the Critique of Positivism* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1981), 13.

THE LIBERAL MISEDUCATION IN SPEECH IN HOBBS'S *LEVIATHAN'S*

Hobbes's philosophic assault on speech and education freely devoted to truth, readers should approach *Leviathan* with one question in mind: How does *Leviathan* function as a philosophical speech that turns all things into questions of political power?

DISPLACING PHILOSOPHY WITH POLITICS

Before exploring Hobbes's path to placing speech, reason, and science firmly in the language of "power" in *Leviathan's* first two parts, it is helpful to see his displacement of philosophy with politics in the book's last part. From the beginning of Chapter XLVI ("Of Darkness from Vain Philosophy and Fabulous Traditions"), Hobbes makes a two-step argument that succinctly demonstrates the power of declaring speech insignificant. First, Hobbes defines "Philosophy" as "the knowledge acquired by reasoning" to produce effects required by human life; this "reasoning" produces "general, eternal, and immutable truth," and never errs when one works with "words he understandeth." Second, Hobbes denies "Prudence," "False Doctrine," "learning taken upon the credit of Authors," and "the authority of books" belong to "Philosophy."²⁸ Hobbes's clever argument simultaneously affirms the necessity for speech in search of philosophic truth while denying certain speech a place in this conversation. The attack on the Ancient Greeks is twofold: "prudence" is essential to Plato and Aristotle's political philosophy,²⁹ and their authority in Hobbes's time resides primarily in their books. This is a defining feature of Hobbes's political science that forms its approach to education: it cannot tolerate or dialogue with any philosophy outside of itself.

Although Hobbes explicitly states speech and reason produce philosophy, he more subtly suggests politics produces reasoning. Philosophic reasoning requires the commonwealth, for "the faculty of reasoning [is] consequent to the use of speech," and there is no "method" in reasoning until the commonwealth produces leisure by freeing individuals from constant procurement of necessities and defending them from their neighbors. From this, Hobbes concludes, "Leisure is the mother of philosophy; and Commonwealth, the mother of peace and leisure."³⁰ Reorder this passage with "leisure" as its middle term and Hobbes's argument is clear: "Commonwealth" (the "Leviathan" and most authoritative

²⁸ Hobbes, *Leviathan*, XLVI.1-5.

²⁹ See Plato, *Republic*, 505b-c, 521a-b, 530c, 582a-83b, 586a-d; Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, Book VI.

³⁰ Hobbes, *Leviathan*, XLVI.6.

political body)³¹ generates philosophy. This compact statement reveals Hobbes's intention to bind philosophy to politics throughout *Leviathan*, though there is a longer road to this conclusion earlier in the text involving speech, science, and power.

Despite speech seeming to rest more on nature compared to the ties Hobbes establishes between politics and philosophy, his appeal to geometry deftly moves speech away from Greek philosophy before turning it towards politics. Geometry "is the mother of all natural science." Compared to Greek natural philosophy's "insignificant language" which "was rather a dream than a science," geometrical knowledge allows one to know the workings of nature through motion. Because Plato ("the best philosopher of the Greeks") required his students to know geometry, only this science is necessary to study nature.³² Through the power of his own speech, Hobbes declares Greek natural philosophy "insignificant." More importantly, he uses geometry to side-step direct confrontation with Platonic philosophy and direct readers towards natural philosophy's true foundation: motion, the foundation for sense in *Leviathan's* first chapter.³³

When Hobbes defines "*philosophia prima*" (first philosophy), his political purpose for using geometry to reform philosophy, science, religion, and university education becomes clear. Because "all other philosophy ought to depend" on first philosophy, Hobbes defines this (in opposition to Aristotelian metaphysics) as "right limiting" of names and definitions to eliminate equivocation and ambiguity in reasoning. Unlike universities and the church that use their first philosophy to scare people "from obeying the laws of their country with empty names," Hobbes's first philosophy is "necessary to the doctrine of government and obedience."³⁴ When "geometry" first appears in *Leviathan's* fourth chapter ("Of Speech") to teach the importance of settling definitions,³⁵ Hobbes refrains from claiming his standard for first philosophy is political obedience. As *Leviathan* ends, however, Hobbes declares his geometric and scientific first philosophy is a political tool that exercises authority over education and religion within universities and the church.

³¹ Hobbes, Introduction.1.

³² Hobbes, *Leviathan*, XLVI.11.

³³ Hobbes, *Leviathan*, I.1; See also Strauss, *Political Philosophy of Hobbes*, 139.

³⁴ Hobbes, *Leviathan*, XLVI.14, 18.

³⁵ Hobbes, *Leviathan*, IV.12.

THE LIBERAL MISEDUCATION IN SPEECH IN HOBBS'S *LEVIATHAN'S*

Like Greek natural philosophy, Hobbes dismisses Greek moral philosophy for political purposes, characterizing its authors as teaching a subversive “description of their own passions” because they falsely define “good” and “evil” according to the law of their own appetites when “the law ... is the will and appetite of the state.”³⁶ Hobbes merges moral philosophy and law to reject the Greeks; he does this with his conceptions of “will” and “appetite,” ideas bound together in *Leviathan's* sixth chapter, which explores passions (understood as motions) and speech.³⁷ Though Hobbes implies the commonwealth's laws teach true moral philosophy rather than “vain philosophy” (the result of resolving conclusions before knowing their premises), “true philosophy” holds a tenuous place in *Leviathan*, “For disobedience may lawfully be punished in them that against the laws teach even true philosophy.” To prevent rebellion or sedition, the power to “silence” teachers of “true philosophy” belongs to the civil authority's power to care for “the public quiet.”³⁸ For the purposes of thinking through speech and university education, what is most instructive here is not Hobbes's understanding of the commonwealth, but his rhetorical power to speak of “true philosophy,” seem to defend it, and yet reinforce the primacy of politics in the formation and teaching of true moral philosophy. Hobbes wishes to merge truth and politics, but politics emerges as wielding greater power.

Hobbes may present geometry as his means for drawing philosophy and university education closer to nature, but it is truly his instrument for subjecting the study of nature to his revolutionary moral philosophy. Seeing universities' education concentrated on professions in the Roman religion (relying on the authority of Aristotle's philosophy), law, and medicine, there is untapped potential for geometry, which formerly was “subservient to nothing but rigid truth.”³⁹ Geometry—discovered prior to Scholasticism, Christianity, and “vain” Greek philosophy—can spur innovation that Christian universities stifled. Unlike the Greeks' “insignificant” philosophic speech, Hobbes's “first philosophy” contains words vital to science and the commonwealth's formation (i.e., his natural and moral philosophy) in Parts I and II of *Leviathan*: “body,” “motion,” “passion,” and “power.”⁴⁰ Readers must view

³⁶ Hobbes, *Leviathan*, XLVI.11, 31-32.

³⁷ Hobbes, *Leviathan*, VI.53.

³⁸ Hobbes, *Leviathan*, XLVI.31, 42.

³⁹ Hobbes, *Leviathan*, XLVI.13.

⁴⁰ Hobbes, *Leviathan*, XLVI.14.

these terms, then, in light of their subservience to producing peace and public quiet through politics.

But what do philosophy and university education lose if they dispense with Greek philosophy? A curious accusation Hobbes levies against the universities and their “vain” moral and civil philosophy is they make “attributes of nature” from “attributes of honor.”⁴¹ Readers should wonder, however, if Hobbes also commits this Scholastic philosophical error. Although Hobbes begins *Leviathan* by defining “Nature” as “the art whereby God hath made and governs the world,” his principal concern is how human art “imitates” nature to make and govern the “Commonwealth, or State.”⁴² Hobbes’s scientific posture towards nature and politics is to study *and* govern them. To succeed, Hobbes must ensure his combined natural and moral philosophy forms university education and reaches every subject. Plato and Aristotle’s philosophy, on the other hand, seeks only to contemplate nature and resists “popularizing” philosophy through politics.⁴³ In other words, their philosophy naturally remains free from politics. This contrast suggests Hobbes’s *Leviathan* politicizes nature, philosophy, and education. In approaching Hobbes’s geometric treatment of speech in *Leviathan* Part I (“Of Man”), readers should consider his innovations in forcing nature to embody political motion. These innovations’ educational dangers become more evident in *Leviathan*’s joint treatment of honor and power.⁴⁴

SPEECH, SCIENCE, AND POLITICS

In *Leviathan*’s first five chapters, Hobbes attempts to root speech, reason, and science in his materialistic natural philosophy. These chapters are a prelude to the sixth chapter’s account of the passions, where the contours of his moral philosophy begin to emerge. Though it seems at first glance that Hobbes’s natural science can stand as an independent foundation for his political science, the appearance of passions at key stages in his accounts of speech,

⁴¹ Hobbes, *Leviathan*, XLVI.31

⁴² Hobbes, *Leviathan*, Intro.1.

⁴³ Robert Bartlett, “On the Supremacy of Contemplation in Aristotle and Plato,” in *Mastery of Nature: Promises and Prospects*, eds. Svetozar Minkov and Benhardt Trout (Philadelphia, PA: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2018): 99–101.

⁴⁴ Contrast Danford, “Language in Hobbes’s Political Science,” 106–107, 114–17, 125–28 with Dungey, “Hobbes’s Materialism, Language,” 198, 208–209, then see Whelan, “Language in Hobbes,” 60, 66–67. Where Danford shows geometry is essential and problematic for Hobbes’s political science, Dungey neglects geometry’s connection to speech and the state of nature. But neither Danford nor Dungey acknowledges—like Whelan—how honor affects speech.

THE LIBERAL MISEDUCATION IN SPEECH IN HOBBS'S *LEVIATHAN'S*

reason, and science indicate where he anticipates politics must exercise its power upon speech. According to Hobbes, human thought begins with bodily sensation of external bodies' pressure; understanding is the imagination of these sensations through speech. A "Train of Thoughts" is "inconstant" without direction from "passionate thought," but "more constant" when "regulated by some desire."⁴⁵ Speech forms understanding, and this formation requires passion and desire. If science forms understanding, its speech cannot be dispassionate.⁴⁶ The passion driving science goes unnamed in *Leviathan's* early chapters, but there are clues throughout that speech needs constant guidance from Hobbes's most authoritative political passion: fear.

Hobbes's initial account of "speech" emphasizes its political utility while hinting at the grounds for politics' influence upon scientific speech. "Speech" consists of names humans use to register their thoughts and share them in conversation, without which there is "neither commonwealth, nor society, nor contract, nor peace." Speech's first "special" use allows people to register what causes produce certain effects. Hobbes initially identifies this use of speech as "the acquiring of arts," though he later refines it to "the acquisition of science," which consists in "the right definition of names." Conversely, it is an abuse of speech when words' definitions are non-existent, inconstant, or wrong.⁴⁷ By beginning with speech producing politics, Hobbes seems deferential to the Greeks' understanding of speech. But Hobbes's insistence on constancy in speech in the arts and sciences is a significant difference, especially since he establishes this constancy requires passion and desire. As *Leviathan* progresses, he gradually inverts speech and politics' relationship. By founding commonwealths on the passion of fear and the desire for peace, Hobbes seeks for all speech (including the arts and sciences) to serve politics.

In his introduction to speech's corrective functions, Hobbes traces how political passions insinuate themselves into education and society. With geometry as his model science for the importance of names, Hobbes says those aspiring to "true knowledge" should not "trust to books" of former authors but mistrust them, examine their definitions, and either "correct

⁴⁵ Hobbes, *Leviathan*, I.1-4; II.2, 10; III.1, 3-4.

⁴⁶ Whelan, "Language in Hobbes," 61, 64, 66-70, reads Hobbes as preferring geometry because it is "dispassionate," but he neglects Hobbes's argument for passion guiding thought.

⁴⁷ Hobbes, *Leviathan*, IV.1, 3-4, 13.

them where they are negligently set down” or make definitions themselves.⁴⁸ Mistrust is the intellectual posture for scientific inquiry and the grounds not only for correcting previous works but creating new ones.⁴⁹ Complementing this scientific correction of speech is Hobbes’s teaching that while it is an abuse of speech “to grieve one another,” there is an exception when such speech turns towards “one whom we are obliged to govern; and then it is not to grieve, but to correct and amend.”⁵⁰ Bejan cites this passage as evidence of Hobbes’s teaching against “hate speech” yet omits its last clause that suggests a link between what it means to “correct” previous authors and governed subjects.⁵¹ Constancy in scientific and social speech flows from a common passion. Since both education and conversation depend on the commonwealth, correction of scientific and grievous speech must embody this passion. The need to “correct” others in science and society means that Hobbes’s treatment of “hate speech” cannot stand independently of his intended political reforms of philosophy and university education.

Hobbes’s definition of “reason” reflects his intention to bind it to politics. With “speech” bound to names, “reason” is the adding and subtracting of the “consequences of general names agreed upon for ... our thoughts.”⁵² Unresolved in this definition is the basis for agreement on names, though names’—and therefore speech’s—need for agreement creates the opening to make politics the necessary condition for reasonable speech.⁵³ This is not an accident, as Hobbes criticizes the Greeks for having “but one word, *logos*, for both *speech* and *reason*.”⁵⁴ Hobbes separates “speech” from “reason” to make both dependent on politics, something the Greek conception of *logos* does not permit. Hobbes’s definitions of “speech” and “reason” thus demonstrate how to “correct” works of former authors to create his own political science.

Immediately after defining “reason,” Hobbes introduces the potential for violent conflict, the solution for which belongs not to nature but politics. When individuals’ false reasoning produces controversy, they must “set up for right reason the reason of some arbitrator or

⁴⁸ Hobbes, *Leviathan*, IV.12-13.

⁴⁹ See Strauss, *Natural Right and History*, 171-75.

⁵⁰ Hobbes, *Leviathan*, IV.4.

⁵¹ Bejan, “Hobbes Against Hate Speech,” 7.

⁵² Hobbes, *Leviathan*, V.1-2.

⁵³ See Danford, “Language in Hobbes’s Political Science,” 112, who argues that Hobbes “never satisfactorily resolves” the problem of names’ objective meanings.

⁵⁴ Hobbes, *Leviathan*, IV.14.

THE LIBERAL MISEDUCATION IN SPEECH IN HOBBS'S *LEVIATHAN'S*

judge ... or their controversy must come to blows or be undecided, for want of a right reason constituted by nature.” Without this judge, people will have their passions “taken for right reason” in all debates.⁵⁵ Though Hobbes prefers governance by reason over passion, he first emphasizes every debate’s potential to become violent. With no natural solution to this violence, people must seek something artificial and powerful enough to oppose the passions of those engaged in anything controversial. This presents a difficulty in Hobbes’s political science that affects his teaching on speech and education: Does it produce rule by reason or passion?

In defining “science,” it looks on the surface that Hobbes’s political science produces rule by reason. But for Hobbes, “Reason is not, as sense and memory, born with us.” It is “attained by industry, first in apt imposing of names, and secondly by getting a good and orderly method in proceeding from ... names ... to syllogisms,” yielding knowledge of causes so that “when the like causes come into our power, we see how to make it produce like effects.”⁵⁶ Reason is not natural in Hobbes’s philosophy; it requires industry and method, both of which are impossible to produce without a commonwealth and passionate guidance.

The relationship that Hobbes envisions for speech, reason, and science advances his efforts to displace classical philosophy with his political science. Compared to philosophers who in their books exhibit “the privilege of absurdity” by not defining their words according to the geometrical method, Hobbes says, “The light of human minds is perspicuous words, but by exact definitions first snuffed and purged from ambiguity; *reason* is the *pace*; increase of *science*, the *way*; and the benefit of mankind, the *end*.” Alternatively, if reasoning rests upon “senseless and ambiguous words,” these produce absurdities, “and their end, contention and sedition, or contempt.”⁵⁷ It should not escape readers’ notice that Hobbes’s rejection of classical philosophy in the name of “science” openly connects absurdities to political unrest, yet refrains from tying “truth” to “the benefit of mankind.” For the sake of peace, people must fear absurdity more than they should love truth. What governs Hobbes’s defense of science and his reformation of speech and reason is fear of political upheaval.

⁵⁵ Hobbes, *Leviathan*, V.3.

⁵⁶ Hobbes, *Leviathan*, V.17.

⁵⁷ Hobbes, *Leviathan*, V.7–8, 20.

PIETAS

The moral purpose Hobbes sets for his political science appears at the very end of his chapter on speech in a passage that displays the rhetorical power of declaring certain speech insignificant. Anticipating forthcoming speeches regarding passions, Hobbes introduces the problem of “*inconstant* signification” afflicting “the names of virtues and vices.” Diversity in “constitutions of body and prejudices of opinion, gives everything a tincture of our different passions.” This means speeches about virtues and vices reflect “the nature, disposition, and interest of the speaker,” which prohibits them from being “true grounds of any ratiocination.”⁵⁸ The mistrust Hobbes encourages towards scientific speech earlier in the chapter now extends to moral speech. Hobbes is vague, however, about what makes moral speech “true.” What Hobbes promises in his own speeches about the passions is not inconstancy and diversity, but constancy and uniformity. Although he believes this secures political peace, such security comes at the expense of freedom in thought.

POLITICAL [CON]SCIENCE, POWER, AND HONOR

The problem Hobbes sees in moral speech drives *Leviathan's* account of the passions, which presents diverse bodily motions as the natural causes for moral disagreements. Through its knowledge of causes and effects, science has the power to remedy this natural moral problem. What is not readily apparent to *Leviathan's* first-time readers are the ways Hobbes's natural examination of the passions embodies a preparation for his philosophic teaching on power that allows him to argue only politics can solve a moral problem nature creates. Those concerned with speech and university education today need to learn how Hobbes constructs this argument because his science of power is instrumental for taking questions that belong to a liberal education in philosophy and transforming them into political questions. Through “science,” Hobbes attacks moral philosophy *and* the possibility of forming “conscience” with religion to form a political science that transforms intellectual, moral, and religious questions into matters of power and politics.

Before Hobbes can turn morality into questions of power, he must reduce morality to matters of motion. All voluntary bodily motion is either an “Appetite or Desire” towards something, or an “Aversion” away from something. Continual change within the body

⁵⁸ Hobbes, *Leviathan*, IV.23-24.

THE LIBERAL MISEDUCATION IN SPEECH IN HOBBS'S *LEVIATHAN'S*

produces continual change in appetites and aversions, which makes it nearly impossible that “all men consent in the desire of any one and the same object.” People thus call “good” whatever they desire and “evil” that to which they are averse; there is no “common rule of good and evil” *unless* there is a commonwealth with “the person that representeth it, or from an arbitrator or judge whom men shall by consent set up.”⁵⁹ For Hobbes’s political science to produce peace successfully, he must lead people to “consent in the desire” for a commonwealth. Questions surrounding “good” and “evil” that naturally emerge in speech and deserve philosophic inquiry become secondary to producing this singular desire for peace through politics. With *Leviathan*, Hobbes displaces the “direct political question” concerning what is good and bad (the central question of Greek political philosophy) with the “indirect question of representation” presented in terms of passions, desire, and power.⁶⁰

With Christianity, Scholasticism, and the universities in their service, Hobbes knows moral teachings appear not only in the form of philosophy, but religious conscience. Just as Hobbes’s speech within *Leviathan* displaces classical moral philosophy with “science,” it does the same with “conscience.” According to Hobbes, “opinion” consists of discourse arising either without definition, or from definitions incorrectly combined. Opposed to “opinion” is “Science,” the “conditional knowledge” of words’ consequences.⁶¹ Both “opinion” and “science” are speech; their primary distinction is that “science” holds set conditions for its definitions. In defining “conscience,” Hobbes alludes to law and politics holding the power to set the conditions for moral speech. “Conscience” forms whenever “two or more men know of one and the same fact.” Hobbes dismisses those who speak of “conscience” as “knowledge of their own secret facts and secret thoughts” as “men vehemently in love with their own new opinions ... [who are] obstinately bent to maintain them ... as if they would have it seem unlawful to change or speak against them.”⁶² If law contains moral instruction in science, it could produce the conditions for a political conscience where knowledge secures obedience to the commonwealth.

⁵⁹ Hobbes, *Leviathan*, VI.1-2, 6-7.

⁶⁰ Harvey C. Mansfield, “Hobbes and the Science of Indirect Government,” *The American Political Science Review* 65, no. 1 (March 1971): 97-110.

⁶¹ Hobbes, *Leviathan*, VII.3.

⁶² Hobbes, *Leviathan*, VII.4.

PIETAS

From the perspective of Hobbesian political science, all things reduce to the passion for power. Here readers discover *Leviathan's* rhetorical power alongside its philosophical danger. The rhetorical power Hobbes displays in his hostility towards a personal conscience emanates from a seemingly beneficent egalitarianism. While people exhibit differences in “wit” through passions proceeding from different bodily constitutions, education, and customs, “acquired wit” is attainable with the sciences, which are “acquired by method and instruction ... [through] reason ... grounded on the right use of speech.”⁶³ Education in scientific speech, then, can overcome natural differences in wit. Yet Hobbes’s explanation that all the passions responsible for producing differences in wit (i.e., desire for riches, knowledge, and honor) “may be reduced to the ... desire for power” presents a philosophical danger.⁶⁴ The political conscience formed by *Leviathan* demands seeing speech and reason as representing the desire for power, which effectively turns all educational questions into political matters.

In *Leviathan's* tenth chapter, Hobbes uses the language of “power” to elevate politics to the greatest power and thus the highest authority in human life, a feat he accomplishes not with reason but with passion and desire. Initiating this argument is the statement that human power resides in the “means to obtain some future apparent good.”⁶⁵ With the primacy of power, Hobbes quietly sidesteps Aristotle’s philosophy, which sees “the apparent good” and wonders about the existence of a good by nature.⁶⁶ By emphasizing power, Hobbes renders knowing the good irrelevant. The arts and sciences are also powers, receiving esteem through their relationship to the commonwealth, which is the greatest human power: It makes “the wills” of individuals and factions depend on its singular “will.”⁶⁷ Again, Hobbes evades Aristotle’s philosophical association of the arts and sciences with speech/reason (*logos*).⁶⁸ What Hobbes accomplishes with “the will” is more subtle, but extremely important for how he undermines speech and reason with passionate politics. Hobbes defines “the will” as “the last appetite or aversion immediately adhering to the action.”⁶⁹ The will, then, is nothing but

⁶³ Hobbes, *Leviathan*, VIII.13-14.

⁶⁴ Hobbes, *Leviathan*, VIII.15.

⁶⁵ Hobbes, *Leviathan*, X.1.

⁶⁶ Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, 1113a15-22.

⁶⁷ Hobbes, *Leviathan*, X.3, 14-15.

⁶⁸ Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, VI.3-4, 6.

⁶⁹ Hobbes, *Leviathan*, VI.53.

THE LIBERAL MISEDUCATION IN SPEECH IN HOBBS'S *LEVIATHAN'S*

passion. If the commonwealth's power resides in being the singular will that governs individuals, arts, and sciences, then it is the power of passion—not speech or reason—that dictates Hobbesian politics and the education it informs.

Hobbes's definitions of "worth," "honor," and "dignity" within his chapter on power build the inescapably political character of moral and intellectual life in *Leviathan* and offer valuable insight into the depths of the challenge that "hate speech" poses to liberal education. What determines the "Worth of a man" is what "would be given for the use of his power." People's worth is manifest in "honoring and dishonoring," and "the public worth of a man, which is the value set on him by the commonwealth, is ... Dignity."⁷⁰ Like the arts and sciences, Hobbes binds "Dignity" to the commonwealth's power. To honor within the commonwealth is to empower; to dishonor is to disempower. While Hobbes's intent is to use the morally neutral term "power" to prevent honor and dignity from causing war by bringing both under the commonwealth's authority, his text teaches readers to judge arts, sciences, honor, and dignity according to the political and social power they exercise. "Power" becomes the foundational term to unify intellectual, moral, and social life. Bejan's interpretation of Hobbes as approaching "hate speech" with concerns for dignity in mind neglects how the dependence of "dignity" on "worth" in *Leviathan's* text folds both terms into his philosophy of power.⁷¹ Within Hobbes's political science, social standing and dignity are questions of power, just as the education individuals receive in science, moral philosophy, and religion are questions of power. With *Leviathan's* help, readers can see how "hate speech" threatens freedom in politics and education: it fuses the assurance of personal dignity with the politically contentious pursuit of power.

Before Hobbes provides more moral content to his philosophy of power, he suggests how speech and science serve his power-based vision of politics. In general, "*Honorable* is whatsoever possession, action, or quality is an argument and sign of power," whereas "To be honored of few or none, *dishonorable*."⁷² Honor is implicitly democratic in character; one's power—even if subordinate to the commonwealth's greatest power—must be visible to many. Forms of honor within the commonwealth include obedience and agreement in opinion

⁷⁰ Hobbes, *Leviathan*, X.16–18.

⁷¹ Bejan, "Hobbes Against Hate Speech," 10.

⁷² Hobbes, *Leviathan*, X.37–38.

PIETAS

(which signifies approval of some “judgment and wisdom”); the corresponding forms of dishonor are disobedience and “dissent.”⁷³ There is something democratic in Hobbes’s equivocation of “opinion” with “judgment and wisdom.” A similar equivocation occurs regarding speech within commonwealths: “All actions and speeches that proceed or *seem* to proceed from much experience, science, discretion, or wit, are honorable; for all these are powers. Actions or words that proceed from error, ignorance, or folly, dishonorable.”⁷⁴ In speech—the foundation for opinions and sciences—the difference between what things truly are and how they “seem” is irrelevant when viewed in terms of “power.” If everything reduces to “power,” it does not matter if the actions, speeches, arts, and sciences the commonwealth teaches are true; what matters is passionate obedience to its will, exercised partly through honor and dishonor.

With his chapter on “power” complete, Hobbes can firmly establish morality on its political foundation and encourage his readers to abandon prior moral philosophy. The end Hobbes sets for “manners” in *Leviathan* is living in “peace and unity.” Rejecting the “greatest good ... in the books of the old moral philosophers,” Hobbes defines “felicity” as desire’s “continual progress from one object to another” in the hopes of assuring future desires. Though this definition of “felicity” is like its first appearance in Chapter VI’s account of the passions, Hobbes adds a new dimension in Chapter XI: human life is “a perpetual and restless desire of power after power.” Hobbes’s shift seems tied to Chapter X’s orientation of “power” towards “the apparent good,” for his first definition of “felicity” directly follows the argument that “good” and “evil” are merely “apparent.”⁷⁵ Prior moral philosophy’s use of “the good” is irrelevant to the language of power in Hobbes’s political science that he insists is necessary for peace. Judged unimportant for his political ends, Hobbes’s speech declares learning older moral philosophy is irrelevant for producing peace and unity.

Where prior moral philosophers’ speeches concerning the good both cause wars *and* are impotent to prevent them, Hobbes’s political science promises the power to produce peace. Opposed to the “diversity of passions” and differences in “knowledge or opinion” of causes and effects that produce “contention, enmity, and war” through competing desires for power,

⁷³ Hobbes, *Leviathan*, X.20, 30.

⁷⁴ Hobbes, *Leviathan*, X.42 [Emphasis added].

⁷⁵ Hobbes, *Leviathan*, XI.1–2; VI.57–58.

THE LIBERAL MISEDUCATION IN SPEECH IN HOBBS'S *LEVIATHAN'S*

the desire for leisure (which includes “knowledge, and arts of peace”) disposes people “to obey a common power.” To save people from those inclined to “reverence of antiquity” to compete for praise, Hobbes presents science’s “perfect understanding of words” as necessary for ensuring no one trusts the errors of others. Where “ignorance of the causes and original constitution of right, equity, law, and justice” leads to perpetual disputes in “the doctrine of right and wrong ... both by pen and the sword,” a political science can undo this ignorance by teaching the knowledge and opinions that direct the desire for power towards peace.⁷⁶ Hobbes’s arguments contain two forceful undercurrents that must rise to the surface in his teachings on speech and university education. First, he continues casting doubt on antiquity and anyone who appeals to it. Second, he remains confident that—with great political power—speech and science can produce peace.

In Hobbes’s conclusion to the passage cited above, there is a veiled suggestion that no speech—not even mathematical speech—is safe from questions of political power. Despite his assertion that geometrical doctrines about lines and figures are not subject to the same number of disputes as moral doctrines, these mathematical doctrines might be “suppressed” if they were “contrary to any man’s right of dominion, or to the interest of men that have dominion.”⁷⁷ Hobbes rests his hopes for political science not on geometry as a model of dispassionate speech and reasoning, but on *Leviathan’s* passionate attempt to teach a politics that can exert power over speech to end wars.⁷⁸ A kindred passion lives today in efforts to combat “hate speech,” but it takes reading Hobbes to learn the nature of these efforts’ threat to university education: they will not permit any speech or philosophy to stand free from power and politics.

HOBBS’S ASSAULT ON MORAL PHILOSOPHY

The two preceding sections are necessary to contextualize how Hobbes’s “state of nature” teaching and the “laws of nature” he proposes to avoid this condition form a revolutionary moral philosophy that is no longer seen for the radical teaching that it is. Feldman Barrett’s “speech is violence” argument and her appeal to find safety from a brutal culture is an

⁷⁶ Hobbes, *Leviathan*, XI.1-3, 5, 17-18, 21.

⁷⁷ Hobbes, *Leviathan*, XI.21.

⁷⁸ See Whelan, “Language in Hobbes,” 66.

PIETAS

excellent demonstration not only of the power of Hobbes's narrative, but the failure to know how much prior philosophy was subject to assault and evasion to make this narrative seem self-evident. Among the three causes of war in the state of nature is "glory," which leads humans to use violence for "a word ... a different opinion, and any other sign of undervalue."⁷⁹ What is implicit in arguments against "hate speech" but explicit in *Leviathan* is speech in service of political power and adopted by societies can produce sustainable peace. What working directly with *Leviathan* exposes is the vast extent to which Hobbes's philosophy and his contemporary successors constrain the horizons for moral, intellectual, and political life.

With speech as a natural cause of war, science and politics are the artificial powers that must work upon speech to effect peace. Opposed to the natural equality "in the faculties of body and mind" are "arts grounded upon words, and especially that skill of proceeding upon general and infallible rules called science" that is "not a native faculty." But speech, arts, and sciences are powerless unless there is a "common power" above them, for the condition without such power is "War." Only a common power guarantees "Peace"; until then, there are "no arts, no letters, no society ... and continual fear and danger of violent death."⁸⁰ Science and politics' joint purpose is prevention of war and production of peace. Hobbes's expansive sense of "war" has a twofold effect: it compels readers to fear this natural condition, and it spurs them towards creating the common power capable of saving them. This common power must free people from the natural danger of war by forming them under the "infallible rules" of a political science that uses speech to prevent glory-driven wars.

The natural condition of war produces a moral problem for which speech and reason are ineffectual. Hobbes's solution for this is political empowerment of speech and reason; the rationale and language for this solution unknowingly undergirds arguments against "hate speech." Without a common power, there is no law, and therefore no justice or injustice. Escaping this natural condition requires the work of passions and reason: in response to the passions fearing death and desiring peace, reason suggests "the Laws of Nature." Preceding formal definitions of the laws of nature is "The Right of Nature" that underscores power's primacy in Hobbes's understanding of liberty, for this right "is the liberty each man hath to

⁷⁹ Hobbes, *Leviathan*, XIII.6-7.

⁸⁰ Hobbes, *Leviathan*, XIII.1-2, 8-9.

THE LIBERAL MISEDUCATION IN SPEECH IN HOBBS'S *LEVIATHAN'S*

use his own power ... doing anything which, in his own judgment and reason” is apt for self-preservation. Here Hobbes reiterates that the “proper signification” of “Liberty” entails lack of external impediments to use one’s power according to judgment and reason.⁸¹ In Hobbes’s conception of “Right” and “Liberty,” power is fundamental; “judgment” and “reason” are secondary. Judgment and reason do not produce power in *Leviathan*; rather, power produces judgment and reason. Under this framework, the formation and regulation of speech and reason inhibits the freedom to raise philosophic questions about politics (“What is justice?”, “What are rights?”, and “What is liberty?”) while transforming them into variants of one political question: Who or what is in power?⁸²

Without some backtracking, it is not apparent how Hobbes’s definition of “liberty” entrenches a narrow sense of human freedom that evades prior philosophy *and* anticipates the power of a willful politics. In Chapter V (“Of Reason, and Science”), Hobbes counts the use of “free” (including “free subject, a free will”) to indicate anything other than “free from being hindered by opposition” as “absurd” or “insignificant” speech. “Deliberation” (which precedes the “will,” the last appetite or aversion) is “putting an end to the liberty we had of doing or omitting, according to our own appetite and aversion.”⁸³ These arguments foreshadow the commonwealth’s creation: it is the product of will (which by definition is the work of passion, not reason), and its will holds the power to act upon subjects’ judgment and reason through external means.⁸⁴ Hobbes’s attack on “free will” accomplishes two things necessary for his political science’s suppression of freedom in speech and thought. First, it dismisses the validity of Scholasticism’s teachings on “free will.” Second, it demonstrates that the willful power to designate speech “insignificant” in politics is greater than designating what speech is “significant.” “Hate speech” designations exhibit this same power, and those using them evade scrutiny about their philosophical assumptions by passionate insistence on peace and safety.

At the heart of Hobbes’s “Laws of Nature” is a paradox about reason and speech that undermines the role both could serve in liberal education. Though reason discovers the

⁸¹ Hobbes, *Leviathan*, XIII.13-14; XIV.1-2.

⁸² See Kraynak, “Hobbes on Barbarism and Civilization,” 97-98. Hobbes recommends asking “Who benefits?” to discredit seditious doctrines and opinions. This question’s basis is political power, not truth.

⁸³ Hobbes, *Leviathan*, V.5, VI.49-53.

⁸⁴ See Strauss, *Natural Right and History*, 186.

PIETAS

“Laws of Nature,” part of what drives the natural state of war is “everyone is governed by his own reason.” While the first two “laws of nature” teach people to seek peace, defend themselves, and renounce their right to all things as far as others are willing, this is only possible under a “common” and “coercive power” people fear, for “the bonds of words are too weak to bridle men’s ambition, avarice, anger, and other passions.” One cannot rely on generosity, glory, and pride in not needing to break one’s word; thus, when it comes to keeping covenants, “The passion to be reckoned upon is fear.”⁸⁵ Reason must discover the laws of nature vital for peace and preservation, yet individuals’ exercise of reason could produce war. Though reason needs speech, speech is insufficient for preventing war. Left to themselves, reason and speech have no power. But if reason and speech serve a political power that instills fear, they are effectual.⁸⁶ As a text, Hobbes’s *Leviathan* fosters this fear of living without political power, yet in doing this, it also undercuts speech and reason’s natural power to seek things outside of politics.

Three laws of nature that seem to focus solely on social relations also embody the stifflingly politicized intellectual and moral climate that Hobbes teaches is necessary for peace. “Complaisance” insists “that every man strive to accommodate himself to the rest.” Much like stones that “cannot be easily made plain” to construct an edifice must be “cast away as unprofitable and troublesome,” so “in men’s aptness to society, in a diversity of nature arising from their diversity of affections,” those human beings who “*cannot be corrected*, [are] to be left or cast out of society as cumbersome thereunto,” for in not accommodating themselves to others, they “are guilty of the war” to follow.⁸⁷ “Complaisance” in speech necessitates accommodating one’s words to society. Failure in these accommodations demands “correction”; those not amenable to correction have no place in society. In her account of the amenability of “Complaisance” to concerns with “hate speech,” Bejan ignores this law of nature’s corrective component.⁸⁸ As previously argued, the power of correction in *Leviathan* applies to grievous speech *and* the books of former authors for the sake of political obedience.⁸⁹ For Hobbes, the social necessity of “Complaisance” is inseparable from its

⁸⁵ Hobbes, *Leviathan*, XIV.3–5, 7, 18, 31.

⁸⁶ See Strauss, *Political Philosophy of Hobbes*, 149–50, who argues that Hobbes “identifies reason with fear.”

⁸⁷ Hobbes, *Leviathan*, XV.17 [Emphasis added].

⁸⁸ Bejan, “Hobbes Against Hate Speech,” 13.

⁸⁹ Hobbes, *Leviathan*, IV.4, 13; XLVI.14, 18.

THE LIBERAL MISEDUCATION IN SPEECH IN HOBBS'S *LEVIATHAN'S*

educational necessity, and those seeking safety from “hate speech” in university education demonstrate this inseparability.

Two other laws of nature work in tandem to complement “Complaisance” and ensure that the judgment and correction of all speech reflects the commonwealth’s ordering of social power. “Contumely” teaches that “no man by deed, word, countenance, or gesture, declare hatred or contempt of another”; “Against Pride” teaches “that every man acknowledge other for his equal by nature.”⁹⁰ Bejan also cites these laws of nature as essential to Hobbes’s counters to “hate speech” for the sake of preserving “equal dignity” in social hierarchies, but she fails to trace “dignity” back to honor and power in *Leviathan*.⁹¹ Together, the three preceding laws of nature set the conditions for individuals to agree with others in opinion for the sake of establishing their equal power in the commonwealth. The corrective functions of speech Hobbes encourages dictate that *any* speech hostile to individuals’ social and political power needs either amending or casting out. This is the logic of those who oppose “hate speech” in university education today, extending it to speakers on campus and books they deem unsuitable for their political vision.

To conclude his account of the “Laws of Nature,” Hobbes openly states his philosophic ambition, claiming their “science ... is the true and only moral philosophy. For moral philosophy is nothing but the science of what is good and evil in the conversation and society of mankind.” Where diverse judgments about “good” and “evil” generate “disputes, controversies, and at last war,” Hobbes argues that because everyone agrees that peace is good, “the means of peace ... the moral virtues” are good. Further, previous “writers of moral philosophy” were wrong for rooting the moral virtues “in a mediocrity of the passions” and not recognizing their goodness consists in being “the means of peaceable, sociable, and comfortable living.”⁹² According to Hobbes, moral philosophy’s sole justification is the production of peace, which is impossible without creating a commonwealth according to his political science. Readers not susceptible to the rhetorical power of Hobbes’s dismissal of previous moral philosophers may wonder why he is so sure that peace is the good for all moral philosophy and virtue when that is decidedly not the case in Aristotle’s *Nicomachean*

⁹⁰ Hobbes, *Leviathan*, XV.20–21.

⁹¹ Bejan, “Hobbes against Hate Speech,” 1–2, 10–16.

⁹² Hobbes, *Leviathan*, XV.40.

Ethics, a work where “peace” only appears once.⁹³ The truth of Hobbes’s moral philosophy is difficult to discern since he merges it with politics, something he concedes when he says the “Laws of Nature” remain “conclusions or theorems” (not “dictates of reason”) until they become “law ... the word of him that by right hath command over others.”⁹⁴ Surprisingly, the debate over “hate speech” versus “free speech” in university education is downstream from Hobbes’s political assault on moral philosophy. This debate’s interlocutors forget the very thing Hobbes’s political science wants them to forget: that the relationship between speech and education is first and foremost a philosophical question, not a political one.

HOBBS’S LIBERAL MISEDUCATION IN SPEECH

Leviathan’s movement from Part I to Part II—from “Man” to “Commonwealth”—commences with a dramatic shift in the history of political philosophy: Hobbes rejects Aristotle’s teaching that speech/reason (*logos*)—which holds a natural, moral sense of the good and the just—produces political community.⁹⁵ To complete his rejection of speech and reason as politics’ natural foundations, Hobbes teaches the foundation of politics is the “artificial” reduction of individuals’ wills “unto one will,” and this becomes the “common power” that governs them.⁹⁶ Hobbes’s political science represents the elevation of “will” and “power” over speech and reason as the authoritative forces in politics. Because “the will” is synonymous with passion and desire, Hobbes places politics on highly variable and volatile foundations. The same is true for “natural science,” for its “constant signification of words”—“the foundation of all true ratiocination”—depends on “the will of the writer.”⁹⁷ Awareness of this passionately willful and reductive political teaching is necessary for understanding Hobbes’s reformation of university education, the spirit of which persists today.

Hobbes levies two general criticisms against speech and reason being the foundations for politics. First, words have no strength against natural passions “without terror of some power to cause them to be observed.” Second, human beings can cause war by using speech and reason to: compete for honor and dignity; compare themselves with others (hence the private

⁹³ Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, 1177b4–6: “Happiness seems to be more in leisure: for we are without leisure so that we might be in leisure, and we are at war so that we might lead to peace.”

⁹⁴ Hobbes, *Leviathan*, XV.41.

⁹⁵ Aristotle, *Politics*, 1253a1–18.

⁹⁶ Hobbes, *Leviathan*, XVII.6–13.

⁹⁷ Hobbes, *Leviathan*, XXXIV.1.

THE LIBERAL MISEDUCATION IN SPEECH IN HOBBS'S *LEVIATHAN'S*

and common good part ways); find fault in governance and “strive to reform and innovate”; misrepresent good and evil; show their “wisdom, and control the actions of them that govern the commonwealth.”⁹⁸ Speech and reason are, at best, ineffectual; at worst, they cause war. With the latter criticism, readers can see the latent influence of Hobbes’s laws of nature regarding “Complaisance,” “Contumely,” and “Against Pride”: speech should promote accommodation, avoid contempt, acknowledge others as equals, and foster obedience.

Hobbes’s account of the commonwealth’s artificial institution tacitly affirms the natural grounds of personhood that his political science and the education it informs ultimately attacks. If each person’s natural use of speech and reason without a common power produces war, the subordination of speech and reason to the commonwealth’s artificial power produces peace.

The commonwealth’s institution occurs when everyone “shall authorize all the actions and judgments of that man or assembly of men, in the same manner *as if they were his own*, to the end, to live peaceably amongst themselves.” The commonwealth’s institution requires collapsing people’s natural diversity of passions, actions, and judgments into those of one “Person,” which Hobbes defines as “he whose words and actions are considered either as his own, or as representing the words or actions of another man ... *whether truly or by fiction*.” For the sovereign to become a “feigned or artificial person,” each “natural person” must give “his own” words and actions to the sovereign.⁹⁹ By artifice, subjects surrender the judgments, words, and actions that are naturally their own to the sovereign. To escape war and produce peace, speech and reason—the foundations of intellectual and moral life—must adopt this artificial, political character.¹⁰⁰

The sixth right of the sovereign contains direct statements on the commonwealth’s intellectual power to conform educational speech to politics, not the search for truth. The sovereign holds the authority “to be judge of what opinions and doctrines are averse, and what conducing to peace.... For the actions of men proceed from their opinions, and in the well-governing of opinions consisteth the well-governing of men’s actions.” With this authority, the sovereign determines “on what occasions, how far, and what men are to be

⁹⁸ Hobbes, *Leviathan*, XVII.2, 7-11.

⁹⁹ Hobbes, *Leviathan*, XVIII.1; XVI.1-2 [Emphasis added].

¹⁰⁰ See Oakeshott, “Introduction to *Leviathan*,” 246-48, 281-83.

PIETAS

trusted withal, in speaking to the multitudes of people, and who shall examine the doctrines of all books before they be published.”¹⁰¹ Any speech deemed inimical to peace—whether presented by a speaker or written in a book—is subject to political governance. As to whether Hobbes prefers peace or truth, he writes, “And though in matter of doctrine nothing ought to be regarded but the truth, yet this is not repugnant to regulating of the same by peace. For doctrine repugnant to peace can no more be true than peace and concord can be against the law of nature.”¹⁰² The most charitable reading of this passage is that Hobbes places truth and peace on equal footing. But the prior passage elevating peace as the grounds for regulating speech (combined with the later argument that disobeying the laws by teaching “true philosophy” is a punishable offense¹⁰³) suggests peace is more authoritative than truth for Hobbes. Beyond controlling the effects of intellectual diversity, the sovereign strives to remove its causes.¹⁰⁴

With the sovereign’s need to govern intellectual uniformity established, the political character of speech’s suppression in universities and its intended constraint on reason becomes clear. Hobbes rejects the notion that “private reason” counts for law, “for then there would be as much contradiction in the laws as there is in the schools.” Though the laws of nature are evident to “every one from his own reason,” their “interpretation ... in a commonwealth, dependeth not on the books of moral philosophy. The authority of writers, without the authority of the commonwealth, maketh not their opinions law, be they never so true.” The legislator’s intention is supreme, and it “is always supposed to be equity; for it were *great contumely* for a judge to think otherwise of the sovereign.”¹⁰⁵ The “contradiction” produced in the schools’ philosophic inquiry is politically intolerable. Writers of moral philosophy hold no authority and provide no proper interpretation of laws *unless* the commonwealth grants it. If moral philosophy provides any true argument against the legislator’s equity, expressing this judgment in speech would be “contumely” that dishonors

¹⁰¹ Hobbes, *Leviathan*, XVIII.9.

¹⁰² Hobbes, *Leviathan*, XVIII.9.

¹⁰³ Hobbes, *Leviathan*, XLVI.42.

¹⁰⁴ See James Madison’s “Federalist No. 10.” *The Federalist*, eds. George W. Carey and James McClellan (Indianapolis, IN: Liberty Fund, 2001), 42–45.

¹⁰⁵ Hobbes, *Leviathan*, XXVI.11, 13, 22, 26 [Emphasis added].

THE LIBERAL MISEDUCATION IN SPEECH IN HOBBS'S *LEVIATHAN'S*

and disempowers the sovereign's authority. Legal and philosophic inquiry is thus inseparable from its political consequences.¹⁰⁶

This intellectual uniformity breeds religious uniformity for political ends. Hobbes counts among "seditious doctrines ... that every private man is judge of good and evil actions." Another "false doctrine" teaches "whatsoever a man does against his conscience is sin," for in a commonwealth "the law is the public conscience"; "private consciences ... are but private opinions," producing only disobedience to the sovereign. A similar dynamic carries into religious worship: "Public is the worship that a commonwealth performeth as one person. Private is that which a private person exhibiteth." Because "the end of worship amongst men is power," and "seeing a commonwealth is but one person, it ought also to exhibit to God but one worship.... And this is public worship, the property whereof is to be uniform." God's attributes derive from "words [that] have their signification by agreement and constitution of men," and these "signs of honor" governing public worship come from the civil laws made by those holding sovereign power; any other signs of worship or honor are contumely.¹⁰⁷ The only moral and religious speech tolerated in *Leviathan* must flow from sovereign power. Where such speech would naturally be diverse, for the sake of peace it must become artificially uniform with subjects seeing themselves in the image of one person and power: the commonwealth.¹⁰⁸

Bridging the preceding chapters is an account of the sovereign's duties emphasizing the need for a politically liberal education that protects subjects from war. The sovereign power must procure the people's safety "by a general providence contained in public instruction, both of doctrine and example, and in the making and executing of good laws." Because the commonwealth requires subjects to "use and exercise" their rights, the sovereign "cannot let the people be misinformed of the grounds and reasons of those essential rights.... And the grounds of these rights have rather the need to be diligently and truly taught, because they cannot be maintained by any civil law or terror of legal punishment."¹⁰⁹ Hobbes's teaching is

¹⁰⁶ Cf. Bejan, "Difference without Disagreement: Rethinking Hobbes on Independency and Toleration," *The Review of Politics* 78, No. 1 (2016): 1-25, at 5, 12-13, 18. Bejan incorrectly limits "contumely" to religion, and neglects honor's tie to power.

¹⁰⁷ Hobbes, *Leviathan*, XXIX.6-7; XXXI.12-13, 37, 39.

¹⁰⁸ See Owen, "Tolerant Leviathan," 136, 139. My reading suggests Hobbes forms conscience according to power and politics, which undercuts the existence of some liberty of conscience in *Leviathan*.

¹⁰⁹ Hobbes, *Leviathan*, XXX.1-4.

PIETAS

liberal because it limits the scope of the sovereign's care for safety through the use and exercise of rights. It also seems that Hobbes softens his political teaching by favoring "public instruction" over "terror of legal punishment" in maintaining peace. But this education cannot proceed without speech and reason, and fear of war remains education's authoritative passion.

The sovereign's education should be democratic, reaching all aspects of life. In choosing who education should target, Hobbes describes "the common people's minds ... [as] fit to receive whatsoever by public authority shall be imprinted on them." Supposing no faults in the sovereign or its chosen administrators, fostering this education should not be difficult. As for where this education finds its home, most people will not engage in "the deep meditation which the learning of truth" in "natural justice" and "all other sciences" requires; rather, they "receive the notions of their duty chiefly from divines in the pulpit" and discourse with neighbors and acquaintances. Because "the divines ... derive their knowledge from the universities and from the schools of law, or from the books which by men eminent in those schools and universities have published," Hobbes concludes the people's instruction "dependeth wholly on the right teaching of youth in the universities."¹¹⁰ This emphasis on "the common people" adds to the liberal character of Hobbes's political science, even if its education takes advantage of their non-philosophic character. But for those who wish to study truth, justice, and the sciences, their university education must be in doctrines necessary for peace. This liberal political education must absorb religion, directing moral and intellectual life towards worship and obedience of the sovereign power.¹¹¹ Through having the power to define the names that serve as the basis for all reasoning,¹¹² the sovereign uses speech to make fear of war and pursuit of peace education's authoritative concern. This fear trickles down from those employed in secular and religious professions requiring university education to the common people through speech. In turning speech away from truth towards peace through a power-based teaching on individual and governmental rights, Hobbes provides a liberal miseducation in speech.

¹¹⁰ Hobbes, *Leviathan*, XXX.6, 14.

¹¹¹ Bejan, "Teaching *Leviathan*," provides a similar conclusion but without attention to speech.

¹¹² See Whelan, "Language in Hobbes," 61.

CONCLUSION

It is to Hobbes's credit that the predominant approaches to today's questions about speech and university education work primarily in terms of advancing some vision of liberal politics, albeit with different emphases. Those seeking protection from "hate speech" maintain Hobbes's commitment to peace and safety, while it may surprise those who promote "free speech" by finding an ally in Mill to hear Hobbesian echoes when he describes the public search for truth with the warlike image of "the rough process of a struggle between combatants fighting under hostile banners."¹¹³ Both approaches maintain Hobbes's confidence in public enlightenment and universities' role in realizing it. At the same time, advocates for "hate speech" and "free speech" alike are unaware of how many of their default assumptions about speech, universities, and politics originate in the text of Hobbes's *Leviathan*.

One wonders, however, if those contending over "hate speech" and "free speech" in universities approach speech and education with the wrong question in mind. Rather than asking what education suits liberal politics, should not those interested in speech and university education ask what makes human life free? Instead of searching for speech bound to serve the interests of the current historical, scientific, and political moment, might there be speech capable of revealing transcendent truths about human nature that do not necessarily serve the ever-changing landscapes of history, science, and politics?

The textual approach to Hobbes's *Leviathan* in this article reflects its author's intellectual formation in a liberal education that included immersive study in the histories of political thought and philosophy. With such an education, it is possible to see the philosophies that Hobbes declares insignificant for his political science and judge his work against theirs. Further, one learns the extensive legacy of Hobbes's *Leviathan*: the open antagonism towards prior authors, the attempt to model political science on a materialistic natural science, the "state of nature" narrative and, perhaps most importantly of all, shifting the language of philosophy and politics heavily towards "power." In reckoning with the terms of Hobbes's philosophy, one sees how he attempts to use university education to reform intellectual, moral, and religious life to serve political power (reforms which are among the central

¹¹³ John Stuart Mill, *On Liberty*, ed. Elizabeth Rapaport (Indianapolis, IN: Hackett, 1978), 46.

concerns of Critical Theory).¹¹⁴ One also sees new variants of the danger that Hobbes’s philosophy poses to liberal education, particularly in Critical Theory-inspired concerns over “hate speech.” If the judgment about what speech belongs in university education rests on determinations of who that speech empowers and disempowers in society and politics, how will those judgments not become combative? And if what drives these judgments is a willful and passionate desire to hold power out of fear for safety, will those judgments be anything but infinitely mutable?

An enduring challenge to liberal education that Hobbes’s philosophy embodies is the temptation to see speech’s fundamental orientation exclusively towards politics, not nature and truth. Hobbes’s assault on speech is a brutal rejection of Socrates’s “second sailing,” the turn to speeches to receive glimpses into truths about the good.¹¹⁵ An education willing to put Hobbes in dialogue with other philosophers could help recover the vital vision that speech naturally looks to more than politics. Hobbes offers an opening to judge his work by this standard when he fears *Leviathan* will be “as useless as the commonwealth of Plato.” Hobbes claims, however, that he alone among the philosophers “proved all the theorems of a moral doctrine,” and what remains is “convert[ing] the truth of speculation into the utility of practice” through “public teaching.”¹¹⁶ Like Plato, Hobbes knows the ties between speech, theory, and practice; he also seems to prefer practice informed by theoretical truth. But where Hobbes parts ways from Plato is in speech’s purpose: Hobbes forces speech and truth into the image of politics, while Plato uses speech to see politics in light of the search for truth, a more naturally grand and beautiful horizon.¹¹⁷ By constraining speech to escape war, Hobbes closes off the possibility of the naturally liberal education in speeches to which Plato points, one that sees through the limits of politics to desires, pleasures, and goods beyond political life.

¹¹⁴ Celikates and Flynn, “Critical Theory.”

¹¹⁵ Plato, *Phaedo*, 99c-100a.

¹¹⁶ Hobbes, *Leviathan*, XXXI.41.

¹¹⁷ See Plato, *Republic*, Books VI-IX; Strauss, *Political Philosophy of Hobbes*, 140-42, 151-53, 164-65; *Natural Right and History*, 199-202.