

HOBBS AND THE WOLF MAN: Animality and Melancholy in Modern Sovereignty*

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Abstract

Homo homini lupus, man is a wolf to man, remains one of the most well-known and often quoted dictums in the tradition of political theory. Political theorists, but also political scientists across sub-fields, take this phrase by Thomas Hobbes in the Epistle Dedicatory of *De Cive* to illustrate the brutish, anarchical and violent condition of man in the natural state, prior to the establishment of a civil government. Contrary to conventional wisdom, I suggest that this brief passage does not just summarize Hobbes' position on the natural condition of man. It also directs our attention to a neglected topic in Hobbes's theory of sovereignty: the intersection between melancholy and the human-animal divide. Attending to the human-animal divide and melancholy will help us understand the lycanthropic consequences of attempting to keep animality at bay, excluded from the realm of politics.

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He [Hobbes] was sanguineo-melancholicus; which the physiologers say is the most ingenious complexion.

John Aubrey, Brief Lives

Sir, sorrow was not ordained for beasts but men, yet if men do exceed in it they become beasts.

Sancho Panza

The King would call him [Hobbes] “The Bear” “Here comes the bear to be baited!”

John Aubrey, Brief Lives

Homo homini lupus, man is a wolf to man¹ remains one of the most well-known and often quoted dictums in the tradition of political theory. Political theorists, but also political scientists across sub-fields, take this phrase by Thomas Hobbes in the Epistle Dedicatory of *De Cive* to illustrate the brutish, anarchical and violent condition of man in the natural state, prior to the establishment of a civil government. This assimilation of Hobbes’s dictum to a state of war of all against all may be well grounded, but it can also conceal the obvious. Contrary to conventional wisdom, I suggest that this brief passage directs our attention to two neglected and interrelated topics in Hobbes’s theory of sovereignty: the question of the human-animal divide and melancholy.

Our attention has to be re-directed to these notions because the reception of the political theory of Hobbes has been working along a humanist consensus. This consensus has been taking for granted the distinction between human and animal in Hobbes’s political theory and has therefore circumscribed the palette of conceptual and contextual questions available for Hobbes’s scholars. Although this paper will not hinge upon a detailed discussion of the contemporary reception of Hobbes, I will draw on a few examples of the consensus to show the ways in which they dwell on the human-animal divide without identifying its

¹ Thomas Hobbes, *On the Citizen*, edited by Richard Tuck and Michael Silverthorne (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 3. Unless indicated, I will hereafter use the version of *De Cive* edited by Bernard Gert, *Man and Citizen (De Homine and De Cive)*, (Indianapolis and Cambridge: Hackett Publishing Company, 1998) and will cite it parenthetically in text as DC. It is worth noticing that the phrase “man is a wolf to man”, which has slowly become part of the background knowledge of political theorists and political scientists across sub-fields, has not received much scholarly attention. The most helpful historical and genealogical discussion of this canonical phrase continues to be: Francois Tricaud, “‘Homo homini Deus’ ‘Homo homini Lupus’: Recherches des sources des deux formules des Hobbes” in *Hobbes-Forschungen* (Berlin: Duncker & Humblot, 1969). An interesting albeit brief discussion of the implications of this phrase for Hobbes’ political theory can also be found in: Paul J. Johnson, “Hobbes and the Wolf-Man” in *Thomas Hobbes: His View of Man*, edited by J.G. van der Bend (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 1982) 31-44. Derrida also elaborates on this dictum in his last seminar: Jacques Derrida, “La Bête et le Souverain” in *La Démocratie à venir. Autour de Jacques Derrida*, ed. Marie-Louise Mallet (Paris: Galilée, 2004) 433-476.

underlying implications. From my perspective, Hobbes is making an intricate theoretical move concerning the human-animal divide which is crucial for understanding his contribution to political theory. I suggest that Hobbes attempts to separate human politicality from animality and that this separation generates a peculiar kind of melancholy that I will call lycanthropy. To put it differently, Hobbes proposes a process of political humanization that is questioned and subverted by lycanthropic melancholy. This lycanthropic melancholy, I contend, is generated by the ambivalent position of animality regarding the realm of politicality.

As it is well known, Hobbes questions the grounds of scholastic and Christian humanism and was read by many of his contemporaries as favoring a radical animalization of the human being.² This move is important for Hobbes because by relaxing human *dignitas* and, as Bramhall puts it, comparing humans with brute beasts,³ he manages to offer a new point of departure for human politicality. Contrary to Aristotle, Hobbes argues that humans, unlike other animals, are not driven towards a political community by nature but only by artifice. According to Hobbes, human animals are a peculiar kind of animal that needs to create and shape its own political existence in order to survive. Since Hobbes situates the human animal in a natural condition that is not political, he has to carefully proceed towards extracting the human animal from this condition by means of an artifice that can enact, sustain and reproduce a certain form of politicality. Hence, human animals depend on the artifice of the commonwealth to be what they are; if they fall outside of it, they default on their humanity - not on their animality-- and go back to the brutish existence proper to that liberty that is “natural and savage” (DC: 204). Falling back into the natural condition is becoming more animal than human.

I propose to think of Hobbes’s argument in *De Cive* and *Leviathan* as comprising three overall claims: 1) animals are not political; 2) humans are animals; and 3) human animals *can be* political. 1) Animals are not political because Hobbes criticizes Aristotle and interrupts the continuity between animality and politics. Hobbes holds that ants and bees, as well as other animals, should not be termed political because “their government is only a consent, or many wills concurring in one object not (as is necessary in civil government) one will” (DC:

² See: Richard Ascraft, “Hobbes’s Natural Man: A Study in Ideological Formation” *The Journal of Politics*, Vol 33, No. 4 (Nov. 1971): 1100-1101; Samuel Mintz, *The Hunting of Leviathan: Seventeenth-Century Reactions to the Materialism and Moral Philosophy of Thomas Hobbes* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1962) especially 80-109.

³ See the objections to Hobbes’s arguments put forward by the Archbishop John Bramhall. In several passages, Bramhall accuses Hobbes of misunderstanding the status of human liberty by comparing humans with beasts. See Thomas Hobbes, *The Questions Concerning Necessity and Chance, The Works of Thomas Hobbes of Malmesbury: Vol. 5* (London: Adamant Media Corporation, 2007) 25, 40, 76 and 90.

168).⁴ Moreover, since contracts cannot be made with beasts, non-human animals are definitely shut down from Hobbes's only path towards politicality (128).⁵ 2) Humans are animals because Hobbes challenges human exceptionalism in the Christian sense by depriving human-animals from any exceptional faculty that would distinguish them from non-human animals. It is only by "Speech, and Method", namely, by the use of words and by regulating mental discourse, that human animals can distinguish themselves "from all other living Creatures" (L: 23). 3) Thus, human animals *can be* political through the use of language because, as Philip Pettit has recently argued, they use words to ratiocinate, personate and incorporate.⁶

If Hobbes's argument is faithfully represented in the three steps above it remains highly ambivalent. On the one hand, non-human animals are not political and therefore their natural gregariousness or forms of organization cannot be counted as a genuine civil government. On the other, humans are also animals and, as in the case of the "savage people in many places of America" mentioned twice in *Leviathan*, their natural gregariousness participates in the realm of non-politicality (L: 232; 459). According to Hobbes, if left to their natural condition, humans will continue to lead a brutish and savage existence, a form of life that emphasizes the animal dimension in them instead of fulfilling the possibilities latent in speech and ratiocination. It is precisely this ambivalence between the assurance of human politicality in the commonwealth and the non-political, beastly, savage and animalistic existence in the natural condition, what remains unaddressed in the humanist consensus. Contrary to other animals, human animals *can be* political if, by the use of words, contract their way into a commonwealth. However, they never cease to be animals themselves, and thereby never cease to carry the non-political *in* and *with* them.

⁴ The non politicality of bees for instance, may not have been obvious to Hobbes's contemporaries. The book *Femenine Monarchie*, by Charles Butler, had been published in 1609 and became very popular among English readers reaching three editions (1609, 1623 and 1634) during Hobbes's life. The book was written under the assumption that bees had a coherent form of political organization that resembled a monarchy under the rule of a queen bee. See: Charles Butler, *Femenine Monarchie or the History of Bees*, available at:

http://books.google.com/books?id=f5tbAAAAAAAJ&dq=%22Butler%22+%22feminine+monarchie%22&printsec=frontcover&source=bl&ots=8opENpgGVO&sig=33Y2K8_3IR9tAXJF5MbASTiX3Ns&hl=en&ei=H6A6SuSTAZLyMoyxrK8F&sa=X&oi=book_result&ct=result&resnum=1, accessed on 06/18/2009. The fact that Butler was not only a beekeeper but also a musician and a grammarian cannot but catch our attention. Butler was an acute listener of the sound produced by bees which he translated into music and thought constituted the basis of human music. He was also invested in reforming English spelling, which he found deficient. See: George Sarton, "The Femenine Monarchie of Charles Butler, 1609" *Isis*, Volume 34, No. 4 (Autumn, 1943): 469-472.

⁵ See also Thomas Hobbes, *Leviathan*, edited by Richard Tuck (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005) p. 97. Hereafter cited parenthetically in text as L. In *De Homine* Hobbes also argues that: "For though among certain animals there are seeming polities, these are not of sufficient great moment for living well; hence they merit not our consideration; and they are largely found among defenseless animals, not in need of many things; in which man is not included." Thomas Hobbes, *Man and Citizen*, op. cit., 40.

⁶ Philip Pettit, *Made with Words: Hobbes on Language, Mind, and Politics* (Princeton and Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2008).

It is precisely this non-politicality in the human animal that Hobbes attempts to confine to the natural condition, what will create tensions and inner contradictions in his political theory. The non-politicality that Hobbes ascribes to the animal dimension of the human animal will generate resistance and melancholy in the process of assuring human politicality, and will reappear in Hobbes's arguments under several forms of creaturely life that will threaten to question the Hobbesian way towards a human commonwealth. Under the notion of lycanthropy -from the Greek *lycos*, wolf-- I will attempt to grasp the resistance to this identification of animality with non-politicality, as well as to the extrication of human politicality from animality. From my perspective, lycanthropy is not only, as modern psychiatry would have it, a delusion by means of which a person believes that he or she is turning into an animal.⁷ Instead, I will suggest that lycanthropy expresses the peculiar type of melancholy generated by the attempt at excluding, and controlling, the animal dimension of the human animal with the purposes of establishing a commonwealth. Hobbes's theoretical intervention oriented to exclude and control the animality of the human animal generates a set of undecidable beings that oscillate between humanity and animality. According to my reading, these forms of creaturely life that resist the delimitation between human and animal are expressions of the lycanthropic tendencies unleashed by Hobbes's assumption of the non-politicality of animal life.

If my argument holds, the humanist consensus is repeating an effect of Hobbes's theoretical intervention instead of recovering the originality of his gesture, together with its melancholic repercussions. The complexity of Hobbes's theoretical move, exemplified by his argument on the natural condition of man and his departure from it, is oriented towards positing a new beginning out of which the politicality of human beings can be re-thought and secured. This move however, requires intervening at the very core of human "nature", working on its re-definition and often failing to do so. Drawing on the works by Walter Benjamin and Jacques Derrida, I will attempt to trace the forms of creaturely life in Hobbes's argument that indicate the ambivalence between human and animal, and between the political and the non-political. In his *Trauerspiel* book, Benjamin focus not only on the lycanthropic tendencies in the melancholic prince, who is overwhelmed by the passions and

⁷ See: T.A. Fahy, "Lycanthropy: a Review", *Journal of the Royal Society of Medicine*, Vol. 82 (January, 1989): 37-39; P. Garlipp, T. Godecke-Koch, DE Dietrich, H. Haltenhof, "Lycanthropy—psychopathological and psychodynamical aspects," *Acta Psychiatrica Scandinavica*, 109 (2004): 19-22. For a description of lycanthropy according to the standards of 17th century physiology see: Robert Burton, *The Anatomy of Melancholy*, Introduction by William H. Gass (New York: New York Review of Books, 2001) 141.

risks turning into a beast,⁸ but also singles out numerous symbols and embodiments of melancholy such as dogs, mad dogs and Saturn, among others.⁹ Thanks to Benjamin's insights on creaturely melancholy, I will trace a plurality of saturnine beings in Hobbes's political theory that enact the lycanthropic tendencies dwelling in his baroque architecture of human politicality. Derrida adds up to Benjamin's insights providing a deconstructive critique of human subjectivity that identifies and questions the frontiers between human and animal, as well as of the superiority of the former over the latter. According to Derrida, humans have been after the animal, chasing it and hunting it down, since long ago and they have justified this chase by excluding animality from the realm of logos.¹⁰ Since animals are conceived as lacking speech and reason they remain excluded from the realm of law and politics,¹¹ but they are also required and invoked by the arguments that sustain human politicality.

This paper will proceed as follows. In section one I will briefly account for what I call the humanist consensus in Hobbes's scholarship and I will suggest that relaxing this consensus will provide a different vantage point from where to interrogate Hobbes's political theory. In section two, I will proceed to trace the lycanthropic tendencies in Hobbes's argument by focusing on three main lycanthropic figures found in *De Cive* and *Leviathan*: wolfish voracity; dogs and the melancholic man. Section three concludes.

1. Questioning the Humanist Consensus

A few examples might illustrate the way in which the humanist consensus operates in the contemporary reception of Hobbes. The field of Hobbes's studies has grown exponentially in the last few decades, and several contributions have been made to the conceptual and contextual understanding of his work. The authors I briefly discuss below participate of the vibrant reception of Hobbes's political theory and all have made major contributions to the field. Nevertheless, their arguments are still framed within an ongoing accord that requires, and often invokes, the human-animal divide without exhausting its implications for Hobbes's political theory. Arguments representative of this humanist consensus can be found in Michael Oakeshott, Philip Pettit and Quentin Skinner.

⁸ Walter Benjamin, *The Origin of the German Tragic Drama* (London: Verso, 2003), 86.

⁹ Benjamin, *The Origin*, op. cit., 144, 150 and 152.

¹⁰ Jacques Derrida, *The Animal that Therefore I am*, edited by Marie-Louise Mallet, Trans. by David Willis (New York: Fordham U. Press, 2008).

¹¹ See Jacques Derrida, "Force of Law: The 'Mystical Foundation of Authority'" in *Acts of Religion*, edited and with an introduction by Gil Anidjar (New York and London: Routledge, 2002) 246-247.

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When Oakeshott discusses the limits of the Hobbesian moral space he claims that, according to Hobbes: “[t]he moral life is a life *inter homines* [...] This, no doubt, spills over into other relationships -those with animals, for example, or even with things– but the moral significance of these lies in their reflection of the disposition of men towards another men.”¹² In this familiar argument, Oakeshott does not take into account the fact that, according to Hobbes, it is precisely the “disposition of men towards another men” what calls the shared horizon of humanity into question. When Hobbes argues about this disposition in *De Cive*, he tells us that men can either be a God or a wolf to other men, indicating that the human realm is being contaminated by two different and opposed forces. The fact that, according to Hobbes, men appear to be a God or a wolf to other men, indicates the intrusion of the divine and the animal in between (*inter*) humans. Accordingly, the claim about the human exclusivity of the moral horizon, and its spillover effect over animals and things, becomes at least problematic. In order to hold, the idea of an exclusively human moral horizon requires, and depends upon, a clear delimitation of the realm of the human between the overhuman divine and the sub-human animal. However, Hobbes’s argument is never able to establish and secure such a clear-cut delimitation. Why should we then?

Pettit’s impressive book on Hobbes discusses the human-animal divide but ultimately reinstates another --highly nuanced--version of the consensus. Pettit argues that Hobbes distinguishes a natural-animal mind, passive and particularistic, from a mind that is able to ratiocinate thanks on the use of language.¹³ According to Pettit, Hobbes holds “in the most startling and original claim that he makes in the whole of his philosophy” that “language or speech is a historical invention” and that it makes possible the “active form of thinking that we human beings display.”¹⁴ Pettit suggests that Hobbes sticks to a naturalistic conception of the origin of language¹⁵ and thinks of it as an invention that lifts humans up from animality, granting them the possibility to ratiocinate and giving room to desires “of a reach and kind unknown in other species.”¹⁶

In conjunction with this argument about the origin of language, Pettit makes an original albeit problematic move. He adds an intermediate stage between the natural condition of man and the commonwealth proposed by Hobbes. Pettit argues that there are three possible modes of human existence: “the state of first nature, when humans are as

¹² Michael Oakeshott, *Hobbes and Civil Association*, Foreword by Paul Franco (Indianapolis: Liberty Fund, 2000) 75.

¹³ Pettit, *Made with Words*, op. cit., 26.

¹⁴ Idem, 25.

¹⁵ Ibidem, 26.

¹⁶ Ibid, 25 and 13.

other animals; the state of second nature, when they leave community with beasts as a result of developing language; and the civil state, in which they incorporate under a sovereign".¹⁷ But this claim raises two interrelated questions: why would the acquisition of language imply that human-animals *leave* their community with beasts? And, what would the grounds of this community be in the first place? Despite of what "community" might mean in this context, it seems that humans never cease to be animals themselves and therefore they never fully exit, or resign, their "community" with beasts.

Nevertheless, by making an analytical distinction between a worded and a non worded state of nature Pettit is trying to resolve the ambivalence in Hobbes's argument by way of a reinstatement of the human-animal divide. Pettit is therefore trying to draw a definitive delimitation between human and non-human animals based on logos, the faculty of speech or discourse, but this claim does not seem to account for the ambivalence in Hobbes's theoretical move. Contrary to Pettit, I suggest that Hobbes's argument resists this analytical distinction due to lycanthropy. What Pettit does not consider is that Hobbes's notion of the natural condition of man is itself a lycanthropic concept that oscillates ambivalently between human (worded) and animal (non worded) "nature". Pettit tries to retell the story of animal non-politicality by isolating it in the first state of nature but, according to my critical reading of Hobbes, the animal dimension of the human-animals cannot be left behind, even after the commonwealth has been formed. In other words, if a total caesura from animality cannot be deduced from the invention of language, distinguishing between two different states of nature then is only an analytical effect or enactment of a lycanthropic symptom rather than its explication.

A distinct, but ultimately coincident position is favored by Quentin Skinner's reframing of Hobbes's political philosophy within the horizon of ideas of Renaissance Humanism.¹⁸ Skinner's work has emphasized the importance of the historical context for understanding texts central to the canon of political theory and questioned the limitations of the notion of liberty put forward by liberalism.¹⁹ In this endeavor he is committed to the humanist amplitude of the rhetorical tradition of Cicero, Quintilian, and Sallust as interpreted by the neo-Roman project of the free cities, and taken up by the English republicans. Contrary to a notion of liberty understood as absence of constraints, Skinner finds in this tradition a broader, humanistic understanding of freedom in which "it is only possible to enjoy civil

¹⁷ Pettit, *Made with Words*, op. cit. 99.

¹⁸ Quentin Skinner, *Reason and Rhetoric in the Philosophy of Hobbes* (Cambridge: Cambridge U. Press, 1997).

¹⁹ Quentin Skinner, "Meaning and Understanding in the History of Ideas", *History and Theory*, Vol. 8, No. 1 (1969): 3-53 and *Liberty Before Liberalism* (Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 1998).

liberty to the full if you live as the citizen of a free state.”²⁰ This means that, according to Skinner, and contrary to liberalism up to Isaiah Berlin, the possibility to participate in a popular government is central for the experience of freedom. Conversely, the lack of popular institutions enabling such participation can only produce servile and dependent individuals which never fully realized their human potential: they never cease to be slaves.²¹

Several generations of scholars have increased their knowledge of Hobbes thanks to Skinner’s approach. However, given the contextual expertise of his work and his general preoccupation with a wider notion of liberty, it could have been expected that the salience of the reaction of Hobbes’ contemporaries against his extreme animalization of man could have entered the scope of his discussion; not only because it appears in the quarrels among philosophers and theologians of the time²² but also because this animalization might illuminate a different kind of subjection of which humanism is an *effect*, rather than a corrective. In other words, ascribing non-politicality to animals, and to the animality of the human-animal, may favor a domination of the animality of the human being of which *humanism* is a consequence, rather than an agent of emancipation.

After all, in *De Cive*, Hobbes discusses the right “we get” over “irrational creatures” in the context of a discussion of human serfdom and slavery. At the end of the chapter VIII Hobbes claims that we get a right over animals in the same way we do “over the persons of men; to wit, by force and natural strength” (DC: 209). When Hobbes examines the categories of slavery and serfdom, he conceives them as kinds of “natural government”, namely, as governments by “power and natural force” (205). Thus, human natural government over other humans is conceptually equivalent to human government over non-human animals: men can be lords of other men in the same way as they can be lords of non-human animals. It seems that Skinner’s republicanism questions the remnants of this lordship or natural government in the civil government, under regimes which lack institutions enabling popular participation, but does not extend his questioning to the government of non-human animals. In this context, *humanism* means the theoretical framework that circumscribes the political among humans remaining inattentive to the politicality of forms of lordship across species. In other words, neither a Hobbesian artificial commonwealth nor a Skinnerian republican government questions the natural government over animals.

²⁰ Skinner, *Liberty Before Liberalism*, op. cit. 68.

²¹ Idem, pp. 37, 66 and 91.

²² See: Ashcraft, “Hobbes Natural Man” op. cit.; Samuel Mintz, *The Hunting of Leviathan: Seventeenth-Century Reactions to the Materialism and Moral Philosophy of Thomas Hobbes* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1962) especially 80-109.

In contrast to Skinner's commitment to humanism, Erica Fudge has been studying the instability of the human-animal divide in the culture of Hobbes's formative years, the Elizabethan and Jacobean England.²³ According to Fudge, the notion of the human was secured by forms of inner government over the passions which reasserted the domination of reason over the body, as well as human domination over non-human animals and nature.²⁴ Fudge draws on Robert Burton's analysis of melancholy, among other authors contemporary to Hobbes, to show how a failure in controlling passions such as joy, melancholy or fear, or bodily reactions such as laughter, was thought capable of unsettling the realm of the human altogether.²⁵ In this context, Fudge helps us see that in late Renaissance and Early Modern England, notions such as "dog laughter"²⁶, "melancholia canina"²⁷ or "insania lupina"²⁸ described the unchecked irruption of the animal in the self, producing a grey area of undecidability between humanity and animality²⁹ that challenged the stability of human's position at the summit of the great chain of being.³⁰ It is unfortunate that the unstable nature of human nature unveiled by Fudge in relation with melancholy and other passions has

²³ Erica Fudge, Ruth Gilbert and Susan Wiseman (editors), *At the Borders of the Human: Beasts, Bodies and Natural Philosophy in the Early Modern Period* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1999); Erica Fudge (editor) *Renaissance Beasts: of Animals, Humans, and Other Wonderful Creatures* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2004); Erica Fudge, *Perceiving Animals: Humans and Beasts in Early Modern English Culture* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 2000); *Brutal Reasoning: Animals, Rationality, and Humanity in Early Modern England* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 2006).

²⁴ Fudge, *Renaissance Beasts*, op. cit. 9 and "How a Man Differs from a Dog" *History Today* (June, 2003): 38-44.

²⁵ Burton's criticism of the culture and ways of his time often refers to comparisons with animals to denote a person ruled by the passions and lacking in judgment. Just to take two examples out of the many in his book: "To see a man [...] fawn like a spaniel *mentitits et mimicis obsequiis* [with lying and feigned compliancy], rage like a lion, bark like a cur, fight like a dragon, sting like a serpent, as meek as a lamb and yet again grin like a tiger, weep like a crocodile, insult over some, and yet others domineer over him; here command, there crouch; tyrannize in one place, be baffled in another" (46). Or in another passage: "To see men wholly led by affection, admired and censured out of opinion without judgment; an inconsiderate multitude, like so many dogs in a village, if one bark, all bark without a cause" (48). Robert Burton, *Anatomy of Melancholy (A Selection)* edited by Lawrence Babb (Michigan: Michigan State University Press, 1965).

²⁶ Fudge is here parsing Laurent Joubert's *Treatise on Laughter* (1571). See: Fudge, "How a Man Differs from a Dog" op. cit., 42 and "Learning to Laugh: Children and Being Human in Early Modern Thought", *Textual Practice* 17 (2) (2003): 277-294. It is worth noticing that the contrast between Fudge's and Skinner's analysis of laughter in the period is striking. Quentin Skinner, "Why Laughing Mattered in the Renaissance: the Second Henry Tudor Memorial Lecture" (Delivered 10 March 2000, University of Durham) in *History of Political Thought*, Volume 22, Number 3 (2001): 418-447.

²⁷ Babb and Hefferman hold that the notion of *melancholia canina* can already be found in the work of the late fifth and early sixth century medical compiler Aetius of Amida in his work *De Melancholia ex Galeno, Rufo, Posidonio, et Marcello, Sicarmii Aetii Libellus*. Though the original term can be traced back to Marcellus in the fourth century A.D. See: Babb, op. cit. p. 44 and Carol Falvo Hefferman, "That Dog Again: 'Melancholia Canina' and Chaucer's 'Book of the Duchess'", *Modern Philology*, Vol. 84, No 2, (Nov. 1986) p. 187. Also Benjamin calls attention towards the figure of the dog in Albrecht Dürer's famous painting *Melancholia I*. See Walter Benjamin, *The Origin*, op. cit., 152.

²⁸ Burton, *Anatomy of Melancholy (A Selection)*, op. cit., 72-73.

²⁹ For a theoretical development on the zone of indistinction between human and animal see Giorgio Agamben, *The Open: Man and Animal*, Trans. by Kevin Atell (Palo Alto: Stanford U. Press, 2003).

³⁰ I am referring here to the already classic book by Arthur Lovejoy, *The Great Chain of Being* (Cambridge and London: Harvard University Press, 1976).

not become part of Hobbes's studies, not even in the work of contextualist historians. With a few exceptions,³¹ Hobbes's relationship with melancholy has remained absent from the work of commentators in general, and from the work of contextualist historians in particular. Whether in the shape of religious melancholy, love melancholy or lycanthropy (wolf madness), melancholy was an ever present state of mind in Hobbes's formative years.³²

To be sure, contemporary inattentiveness to the unstable grounds of Hobbes's conception of human nature contrasts with the reaction of Hobbes's contemporaries who, from the Aristotelian scholastic Archbishop John Bramhall to the Cambridge Platonist Ralph Cudworth, reacted against what they perceived as an unacceptable animalization of man in Hobbes's political theory.³³ Bramhall took issue with Hobbes's portrayal of human beings in the natural state and argued that "if God would have had men live like wild beasts, as lions, bears or tigers, he would have armed them with horns, or tusks, or talons."³⁴ To Bramhall's indictment Cudworth added "[h]e that does not perceive any higher degree of perfection in a man than in an oyster [...] hath not the reason or understanding of a man in him."³⁵ The tone of these XVII century critiques of Hobbes contrasts with the humanist self assurance in Hobbes scholarship today. Hobbes's contemporaries saw in his work an animalization of man that was, to them, provocative. Why is this no longer provocative to us?

2. Hungry like a Wolf: Savages, Wolves, Dogs and Melancholics

Contrary to Bramhall and Cudworth, I read the figurations of animality in Hobbes with a perspective informed by Benjamin and Derrida. Thus, instead of reacting against what they perceived as a debunking of the *dignitas* of human life, I trace the melancholic consequences of ascribing non-politicality to animals and to the animality of the human being. This exclusion of animality from the realm of politics will generate a series of lycanthropic beings, forms of creaturely life that oscillate between humanity and animality and reveal -and resist-

³¹ See: Mauro, Simonazzi, "Thomas Hobbes on Melancholy" in *Hobbes Studies*, Vol. XIX (2006): 31-57; Gianfranco Borrelli, "Prudence, Folly and Melancholy in the Thought of Thomas Hobbes" in *Hobbes Studies*, Vol. IX (1996): 88-97.

³² Lawrence Baab, *The Elizabethan Malady: A Study of Melancholia in English Literature from 1580-1642* (Michigan: Michigan State University, [1951] 1965); Angus Gowland, *The Worlds of Renaissance Melancholy: Robert Burton in Context* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006); Burton, *Anatomy of Melancholy (A Selection)*, op. cit.

³³ Common law lawyers such as Sir Matthew Hale should also be added to the objectors to Hobbes's portrayal of man as beast. For an interesting discussion of the reactions against Hobbes's animalization of man see Ashcraft: "Hobbes's Natural Man" op. cit. This topic is also discussed in Mintz, *The Hunting of Leviathan*, op. cit., 80-109.

³⁴ Bramhall in Ashcraft, "Hobbes's Natural Man", op. cit. 1100.

³⁵ Cudworth in Mintz, *The Hunting of Leviathan*, op. cit. 97.

- the inner workings of Hobbes's intervention. One of the embodiments of these lycanthropic tendencies will be the recurrence of the figure of a certain excessive voracity, of a wolfish kind, not only to refer to several instantiations of human politics but also to account for human's distinctive "lust of the mind" or appetite for knowledge.

My argument, however, should not be read as a straightforward vindication of animality or as favoring a full reentrance of the animal nature in the realm of politicality. Contrary to neo-darwinians, I do not rely on evolutionist biology to establish an unproblematic continuity between animal nature and politics. Instead, I focus on the lycanthropic tendencies unleashed by the impossibility of fully excluding animality from the realm of the political. If Hobbes conceives the natural condition of man to be a "fierce" and "brutish" existence (DC: 118; L: 89), where there is a "war of all against all" (DC: 118) and life is "solitary, poor, nasty, brutish and short" (L: 89), contemporary Darwinians seem more open to the wonders of animal nature. Darwinians like Arnhart coincide with Aristotelians in taking issue with the dichotomy between nature and culture (artifice) allegedly proposed by Hobbes. For instance, Arnhart rejects this dichotomy by prioritizing only one of its terms: nature. Hence, the author re-launches the Aristotelian argument about the politicality of ants, bees, wasps and cranes with the aid of a darwinian naturalist grammar. According to Arnhart, social cooperation in animals arises as an "extension of the natural impulses to sexual coupling and parental care of the young"³⁶ and is achieved through complex relations of cooperation, reciprocity, conflict and learning that can be found in non-human and human animals alike. Ultimately, however, Arnhart acknowledges a difference in the unproblematic continuity between animal nature and politics. He admits that "symbolic communication and conceptual abstraction" allow humans to interact beyond face to face relations and that "only human beings can translate their expectations of reciprocity into formal rules and institutions."³⁷ Based on this complexity of the human being Arnhart concludes with Aristotle that "human beings are *more* political than other political animals" (emphasis added).³⁸

Hence, according to Arnhart, animality is political because nature is political, but human animals are *more* political. According to him, the difference between the politicality of non-human and human-animals is only a matter of degree, not of kind. However, Arnhart misses the complexity of Hobbes's argument. Hobbes theoretical move cannot be reduced to favoring the artificial construction of a commonwealth (culture) based on a simple dichotomy

³⁶ Larry Arnhart, "The Darwinian Biology of Aristotle's Political Animals" *American Journal of Political Science*, Vol. 38, No. 2 (May: 1994) 466.

³⁷ Arnhart, "The Darwinian Biology of..." op. cit. 469.

³⁸ Idem.

between nature and culture. Rather, as Agamben argues, “[s]overeignty presents itself as an incorporation of the state of nature in society, or, if one prefers, as a state of indistinction between nature and culture.”³⁹ It is precisely this ambivalence, this indistinction between nature and culture, or even between nature and history, which is characteristic of Hobbes’s theoretical gesture. Hobbes incorporates nature and animality in his argument *via negativa*, as the natural-animal condition to be left behind, but this incorporation or embodiment (*in corpore*) can only be achieved by certain excessive voracity,⁴⁰ of a wolfish kind, that is repeated in several instances of Hobbes’s argument.

The trope of voracity is often accompanied by references to savages that live in the natural condition. Thus, Hobbes argues that in the state of nature, unlike the harmonious and coordinated labor of ants and bees, humans do not enjoy a stable and long lasting accord. Instead, in *The Elements of Law*, Hobbes argues that the pathos of brutish “hostility and war” is such that “nature itself is destroyed, and men kill one another.” In this particular book, the example of “savage nations” is that of the “old inhabitants of Germany.”⁴¹ Later on, in *De Cive* and *Leviathan*, Hobbes provides examples of the natural condition which reinforce the pathos of animalistic discord by referring more than once to the “brutish” existence led by the “savage people in many places of America” (89; cf. DC: 118).⁴²

The frontispiece of *De Cive* adds up visual eloquence to Hobbes’s “politics of wild men”, as Richard Ashcraft puts it.⁴³ Its lower right quadrant portrays a figure of natural liberty barely dressed with leaves, holding an arch and a longbow. According to Skinner, the figure resembles John White’s watercolors of the life of Native Americans which were used to illustrate Thomas Hariot’s report on the original inhabitants of Virginia.⁴⁴ In the background, it depicts a group of savages hunting down one of their own kind with clubs and arrows.

³⁹ Giorgio Agamben, *Homo Sacer*, op. cit. 35. For an excellent reading of Agamben’s take on Hobbes see: Luc Foisneau, “Souveraineté et animalité: Agamben lecteur de Hobbes” in Thierry Gontier (ed) *Animal et animalité. Dans la philosophie de la renaissance et de l’âge classique* (Louvain: Edition Peeters, 2005) pp 231-244.

⁴⁰ On sovereignty and voracity see Yves-Charles Zarka, “Le souverain vorace et vociferant” in *Derrida Politique, Cités*, N 30 (2007/2): 3-8. On the simple but often ignored idea that the frontispiece of *Leviathan* depicts a sovereign who has devoured its subjects see: Norman Jacobson, “The Strange Case of the Hobbesian Man” in *Representations*, No. 63 (Summer, 1998) p. 1.

⁴¹ Thomas Hobbes, “De Corpore Politico or the Elements of Law” in *The English Works of Thomas Hobbes of Malmesbury, Vol. IV* (London: Elibron Classics, 2005) 84-85.

⁴² In this sense Hobbes does not seem to be far from the Spanish Catholic theologians of his time who engaged in intricate and technical discussions to determine whether Native Americans were humans or animals. On the complexity of these disputes see Antony Pagden, *The Fall of Natural Man: the American Indian and the Origins of Comparative Ethnology* (Cambridge: Cambridge U. Press, 1987), especially chapter 4.

⁴³ Richard Ashcraft, “Leviathan Triumphant: Hobbes and the Politics of Wild Men” in Edward Dudley and Maximilian E. Novak (eds.), *The Wild Man Within: An Image in Western Thought from the Renaissance to Romanticism* (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 1972) pp. 141-182.

⁴⁴ The book by Hariot is *Briefve and true report of the new found land of Virginia in 1590*. See Quentin Skinner, *Hobbes and Republican Liberty*, op.cit. 101.

Further in the back, the frontispiece shows two human figures squatting next to what appears to be a human limb in a trestle, presumably being prepared for cooking. In addition, a feline predator is included in the back of the scene, beyond the fences that surround the village, conveying the general idea that, in the natural condition of man, the only law is to eat or be eaten. Thus, the lower right quadrant of the frontispiece corresponds to the idea of a war of all against all but this correspondence is built upon the depiction of scenes of predatory behavior in which the options are reduced to hunt or be hunted; eat or be eaten, by other creatures.⁴⁵

Interestingly enough, Hobbes did not limit the trope of a predatory, wolfish disposition to a description of the natural condition of man. He also used it to examine the tension between peoples and monarchs. In the famous Epistle Dedicatory of *De Cive*, Hobbes restates the characteristic apprehension of the Roman people against monarchs exemplified in their rejection of the legendary tyranny of the Tarquins (DC: 89). Hobbes argues that it was “the speech [...] of the [Roman] public” that “all kings are to be reckoned amongst ravenous beasts” (89). However, in the next line Hobbes makes a caveat and assigns a similar disposition to the Roman people itself which, according to Hobbes, was a “beast of prey” as well (89). Hobbes is alluding here to the Roman hunger for conquests and riches which brought “the Africans, the Asiatics, the Macedonians, and the Acheans, with many other despoiled nations, into a specious bondage” (89). Although informed by Roman politics and history, the trope of predatory behavior makes an oblique commentary on the tension between the English people and its monarchy. In these passages, Hobbes is singling out the hunger for conquests of the Roman people in order to temper, or perhaps question, not only the grounds of their anti-monarchic disposition, but also that of his contemporaries. The message seems clear: not only kings are predatory also peoples can be hungry like wolves.

The same trope of a wolfish and predatory disposition is used by Hobbes to address politics among nations. In the same Epistle Hobbes goes on to quote Pontius Telesinus who, after an encounter with the Roman general and dictator Sulla, allegedly cried out to his army that Rome and Sulla were to be razed “for that there would always be wolves and depredators of their liberty, unless the forest that lodged them were grubbed up by the roots” (DC: 89). The reference to the judgment by Pontius Telesinus, a commander of the

⁴⁵ It is worth noticing that, in contrast with the “eat or be eaten” landscape depicted on the lower right quadrant, the lower left quadrant of the frontispiece shows the peacefulness of human agriculture. As Pagden has pointed out, agriculture was often brought about by Spanish theologians in their debates about whether American Indians were fully human. Agriculture was one of the defining features of a civilized “human” community, together with the embrace of Christianity. See Pagden, *The Fall of Natural Man*, op. cit. 91, 142.

Sammite forces fighting the Romans, prepares the famous argument that follows: “that man to man is a kind of God; and that man to man is an arrant wolf” (89). Hobbes tells us that the first dictum is true “if we compare citizens amongst themselves,” namely, if we consider the interaction among men who belong to the same political community. Conversely, Hobbes also asserts that “if we compare cities” men will interact by “deceit” and “violence”, the result of which he equates with “brutal rapacity” (89). In this context, Pontius Telesinus’s accusation of the Romans and its leaders as wolves and depredators of liberty seems to refer to the rapacious brutality deployed among nations, which lack a common sovereign and thereby remain in a state of nature.

But the *canis lupus* is not the only canine that collaborates with the rich imagery of Hobbes’s writings. If the wolf metaphorizes the predatory disposition to be found in the natural condition, in the interaction among nations, as well as in the relation between peoples and monarchs, other canine figures are required for an elucidation of crucial human capacities such as mental discourse or imagination. For instance, when Hobbes elaborates on the meaning of regulated mental discourse (or train of thoughts) (L: 20-21) he establishes a difference between humans and beasts. According to Hobbes, humans and beasts share a regulated train of train of thought by means of which, given a certain effect, “the causes, or means that produce it” are sought after (21). However, he holds that what makes humans’ mental discourse distinctive is that it “seek[s] all the possible effects” that can be produced by a thing, and imagines the variety of uses that they could have (21).

According to Hobbes, this seeking or hunting out of all possible causes or effects of a given phenomenon contrasts with the economy of bodily passions characteristic of animals. He argues that the train of thought of animals is regulated only by sensual passions like “hunger, thirst, lust, and anger” (L: 21); therefore animals will only seek for causes and effects to the extent that they are concerned with satiating these basic set of passions. On the contrary, Hobbes describes humans as possessing a passion that is “hardly incident to the nature of any living creature that has not other Passion but sensual” (21). Hobbes also argues that the basic appetites for food and other sensual pleasures tend to “take away the care of knowing causes” or at least to exhaust them, and that human curiosity is distinctive due to the “perseverance of delight in the continuall and indefatigable generation of Knowledge” (42). Hobbes refers to this qualitatively different passion exclusive to humans as “curiosity” or “lust of the mind” (21; 42).

Although it is difficult to grasp the precise nature of this “lust of the mind” in Hobbes, I propose to think of this oxymoronic expression as a peculiar kind of human hunger, namely, as

a hunger for knowledge. This hunger or appetite seeks to exhaust the effects of a given cause and investigate its applications beyond the imperatives of subsistence and immediate bodily satisfaction. This hunger therefore marks a surplus in the human, an overzealous “seeking” or “hunting out” that is not caught up in the moment and exceeds bodily needs to provide for an insatiable type of appetite. In other words, humans show a voracity of a different kind, of an intensity that is foreign to animals, or so it seems.

This intense voracity is also related with time. If animals are caught in the moment, or in the immediacy of their bodily appetites, human hunger is oriented towards the future. Humans want to know, or at least to be able to foresee, what will happen to them in the times to come; they are not satiated with present well being but want to know if they will be able to maintain it tomorrow. Hence, in another exploration of the human’s wolfish disposition, Hobbes argues in *De Homine* that “man surpasseth in rapacity and cruelty the wolves, bears, and snakes that are not rapacious unless hungry and not cruel unless provoked, whereas man is famished even by future hunger.”⁴⁶ Thus, when human curiosity is unleashed it not only goes backwards, hunting out for the causes of a given effect, but it also goes forward, with a curiosity for the future that is unknown to other animals and that often can only be fulfilled by prophecy. Hobbes seems to suggest that when humans worry about the future they are even more voracious than wolves.

If humans are more voracious than wolves concerning the future, they seem to act like dogs when searching and retrieving memories from the past. Paradoxically, the more Hobbes elaborates on the logic pertaining to the “human” train of thought or imagination, the more he gets entangled with animals, in this case, with a dog. Moreover, he gets entangled with a spaniel, a hunting dog and a royal dog; a canine that has been around kings and philosophical disputations for quite some time. But let us recall Hobbes’ argument, for it is about recalling that a dog will be called upon.

Hobbes has already established that humans and animals share the “train of regulated thoughts” that seeks “the causes or means that produce” a certain imagined effect (L: 21). He then goes on to argue that this regulated thinking is no other than “seeking” and calls it “Invention”, “Sagacitas” and “Solertia” (21). By calling this basic regulated thinking *sagacitas* Hobbes is stepping into a distinction which had already been invoked in a famous disputation concerning dogs that included King James, a monarch very fond of these creatures. James I visited Cambridge in March 1615 and witnessed a disputation, or a mock

⁴⁶ Hobbes, “On Man” in *Man and Citizen*, op. cit. 40.

debate, between two scholars on whether dogs could make a syllogism.⁴⁷ During the debate, John Preston, the defender of the logical dog position, argued that dogs organized their thoughts in propositions. Based on dog's behavior in hunting expeditions, probably a spaniel or a hound, the scholar argued as follows in favor of the logical dog: "*The hare is gone either this way or that way; smells out the minor with his nose, namely, She is not gone that way; and follows the conclusion, Ergo this way, with open mouth*" (emphasis in the original).⁴⁸ To this argument the scholar defending the position against logical dogs replied that they possess sagacity but not sapience regarding preys, and that they are *nasutuli* (from *nasus*, nose, but also acute and sagacious) but not *logici*. Thus, the distinction was made between *sagacitas* and *logos*, between the capacity to trace a scent according to the needs of the belly and the ability to organize the train of thoughts logically, as in a syllogism. King James finally pronounced himself in favor of the logical dog, and this is suggestive, although not at all surprising to someone like Derrida who presupposes a "mutual fascination" and a "narcissistic resemblance" between sovereign and beast.⁴⁹

In any case, Hobbes seems to contradict King James' judgment on the logical dog by calling the seeking or hunting out of the causes and effects (shared by humans and beasts) *sagacitas* (L: 21). Hobbes's argument proceeds by calling our attention to the action of Remembrance or *Reminiscentia*, in relation to the hypothetical case in which "a man seeks what he hath lost" and his mind rushes back to remember the circumstances in which he could have missed it (21). Hobbes does not give us traces of what kind of thing or object man—for it is a *man* who is searching here, neither a woman nor a beast—is after in this case, but he tells us what happens in man's mind in its effort to retrieve it. Hobbes explains that a man's mind "runs back, from place to place, and time to time, to find where, and when he had it" (21-22). Hobbes proceeds by explaining that occasionally the hunting out of the causes of this loss object is not totally blind because "a man knows a place determinate [...] whereof he is to seek" (22). Hobbes provides us with three images to illustrate this circumscribed search: it occurs "as one would sweep a room to find a jewel"; "as a man

⁴⁷ See: John E. B. Mayor, "King James I on the Reasoning Faculty in Dogs," *The Classical Review*, Vol. 12, No. 2 (Mar., 1898): 93-96 and Karl Josef Holtgen, "Clever Dogs and Nimble Spaniels: on the Iconography of Logic, Invention, and Imagination," *Explorations in Renaissance Culture* 24 (1998) pp. 1-2. The scholar defending the position of the logical dog was John Preston whose biography *The life of the Renowned Doctor Preston, writ by his Pupil, Master Thomas Ball, D.D., Minister of Northampton, in the year 1628* includes the details of this debate. This biography is available at: http://www.archive.org/stream/lifeofrenowneddo00ballrich/lifeofrenowneddo00ballrich_djvu.txt, accessed on 05/28/2009.

⁴⁸ Mayor, "King James" op. cit. 94.

⁴⁹ Jacques Derrida, *Séminaire la bête et le souverain. Volume I (2001-2002)* (Paris: Galilée, 2008) 59.

should run over the Alphabet, to start a rime” or “as a spaniel that ranges a field, till he finds a scent” (22). I suggest that the use of a spaniel as a metaphor for the working of human’s memory and imagination is quite suggestive and requires a careful examination.

Something very complex is taking place in this set of passages by Hobbes. Hobbes had already asserted that Imagination and Memory are just one thing often named differently in different contexts (L: 16), and conceded that both humans and animals have regulated train of thoughts or imaginations, which he also called *sagacitas* (L: 21). He then proceeded to elaborate on “Remembrance”, or “calling to mind”, namely, on a form of memory oriented towards retrieving or recuperating “our former actions” (22). Since all impressions in the mind are made by corporeal bodies of some sort, memory and imagination deal with “decaying sense” (16). In this context, the use of the spaniel as a metaphor of “calling to mind” seems all the more suggestive: an acute scent, a big and sensitive nose, cannot be more adequate for the search, classification and retrieving of *decaying* sense. Also, since this regulated train of thoughts involved in Remembrance is a kind of “hunting out” of the causes (actions or events) which provoked the object to be lost, the inclusion of a metaphor based on a hunting dog seems all the more appropriate. The trail left by decaying sense can be followed best by a laborious dog trained for hunting.

However, this spaniel remains caught in a difficult position in the argument. On the one hand, as a beast, it lacks passions other than sensual, and is therefore hindered from exhausting “all the possible effects” that can be produced by a cause. On the other hand, also as a beast, it shares with humans the train of regulated thoughts referred as *sagacitas* and is therefore capable of seeking out the causes of an event. When Hobbes explains this sub-type of Remembrance, or circumscribed search, he commences his argument with expressions such as “sometimes a man seeks...” and “sometimes a man knows a place [...] whereof he is to seek” (L: 22). These expressions make clear that Hobbes is thinking about the workings of the *human mind* and the metaphor of the spaniel will be used in this context. In other words, when a man is trying to remember or calling to mind the circumstances that caused this or that object to be lost, he does it “in the same manner as a Spaniel ranges a field” (22).

It is worth noticing that this metaphor only works one way. A spaniel ranging the field to catch a scent is not acting *like* a man when he is remembering or calling to mind former thoughts or actions. Even if these two “actions”, remembrance and the spaniel catching a scent, could be included conceptually in what Hobbes calls *sagacitas*, and remain at the level of what is shared by humans and beasts, the conceptual horizontality does not grant

metaphorical reciprocity. Hobbes cannot say that spaniel catch a scent in the same way that men search and retrieve their thoughts, actions and events in their minds. Only the spaniel is captured in the analogy, not man. This capturing is problematic precisely because of man's distinctive and indefatigable hunger for knowledge, which is established by Hobbes a few lines before. In this case, the metaphor transfers meaning from the spaniel to the human mind; the spaniel illuminates the workings of men's minds adding eloquence to Hobbes's argument. However, if a spaniel is included by analogy into the workings of the human mind it will always remain an illogical dog, a dog that man has captured and domesticated to talk about its own mental discourse or logos, never a dog that interrupts its captivity to question the grounds of our own distinctive mental discursive logic. In sum, it is a dog which has been devoured by human's hunger for knowledge, our peculiar kind of predatory behavior.

Paradoxically, Hobbes himself is behaving like a spaniel at the very moment he calls to mind a spaniel catching a scent to refer to the workings of the human mind. As a man, Hobbes has suffered the effects of upright posture and would require an animal supplement for hunting prey to eat. *Homo erectus* can barely follow a scent. It is out of this lack or weakness that man has therefore developed the ability to catch other types of scents, or to follow other types of traces in the field of culture, and to retrieve a variety of cultural prey. Leviathan itself left its own wake and was hunted down, since at least one author contemporary to Hobbes declared his will to catch it. Hobbes can therefore range a field of studies trying to catch a quote, but in this case, when he does it, he is back where he started, his imagination captured by a spaniel which in turn has to be re-captured, in a never-ending process. Since Hobbes suggests that man's hunger for knowledge is indefatigable, beyond bodily hunger, man is never satiated in his chase. This leaves man in a paradoxical position: it searches for knowledge as if he was chasing his own tail.

And this is precisely what Hobbes is doing, like a spaniel, when he follows the scent trail left by authors who focus on the workings of human imagination before him. As a spaniel, or as a "Bear to be baited" (as Charles II would have it), Hobbes follows the scent trail left by the spaniel in order to recapture its meaning for the mental discourse of man. According to commentators like Hölzgen, spaniels were often used by late Renaissance and early modern thinkers to convey the logic and properties of the human mind "that search out and 'retrieve' ideas"⁵⁰ such as reason, imagination and memory. Hölzgen argues that similar spaniels can be found in authors like Juan Huarte, Robert Burton and, after Hobbes, John

⁵⁰ Karl Josef Hölzgen, "Clever Dogs and Nimble Spaniels" op. cit. 1.

Dryden. In the context of a discussion of oratory qualities, Huarte argues in his book *Examen de ingenios para las ciencias* (Examination of Men's Wits, 1575) that a good orator has to possess high imagination, like a hunting dog that searches for the game and brings it to hand. Burton, the author of the *Anatomy of Melancholy* (1621), a book present in the Hardwick Library of the Cavendish family used by Hobbes,⁵¹ compares himself to a spaniel to illustrate his "running wit", his "unconstant, unsettled mind" which "like a ranging spaniel [...] barks at every bird he sees, leaving his game."⁵² After Hobbes's reference, Dryden continues the series: "wit in the poet, or Wit writing [...] is no other than the faculty of imagination in the writer, which, like a nimble spaniel, beats over and ranges through the field of memory."⁵³

But it is precisely memory what seems to fail Hobbes in 1656, five years after the publication of *Leviathan*, when he refers to the difference between humans and beasts once more. In the context of a polemic with Archbishop John Bramhall, Hobbes is accused of comparing, in his notion of the natural condition of man, "the murdering of man with the slaughtering of brute beasts."⁵⁴ Bramhall argues that humans are qualitatively different from animals insofar as they are, contrary to wolves or lions, created with a free will. Hobbes replies that "Man excelleth beasts only in making of rules to himself, that is to say, in *remembering*, and in reasoning aright upon that which he *remembereth*. They which do so, deserve an honour above brute beasts" (emphasis added).⁵⁵ In this new version of the argument, memory and rule making are the only talents that place humans above animals but, if the argument in *Leviathan* still holds, when humans are recalling or remembering they do it "in the same manner as a spaniel ranges a field." Thus, the logic of memory leaves Hobbes in a paradox: in the precise moment that humans remember the rules that enable them to excel over animals they are behaving like spaniels.

Thus, this spaniel is undergoing a double domestication. On the one hand, it is being used as a hunting dog for royal enjoyment and as an aid in the display of kingly power over nature, life and death. On the other, it is being appropriated to exemplify the workings of human imagination and memory. This can only generate a melancholic dog which mourns the lupine origins of its natural liberty. Extreme melancholy leads to madness, Hobbes argues (L: 54), and mad dogs, as well as melancholic men, are not foreign to Hobbes's intellectual

⁵¹ Skinner, *Hobbes and Republican Liberty*, op. cit. 11.

⁵² Burton, *Anatomy of Melancholy*, op. cit. 17.

⁵³ John Dryden, *Selected Poems* (London: Penguin, 2002) 31.

⁵⁴ Hobbes, *The Questions Concerning*, op. cit. 185.

⁵⁵ Idem. 186.

preoccupations. In fact, Hobbes draws on the figure of a mad dog to refer to the democratic writers critics of royal power.

As I have already shown, in the Epistle Dedicatory of *De Cive* Hobbes uses the trope of a wolfish, predatory disposition to address the relation between monarchs and people among the Romans. In *Leviathan*, however, Hobbes draws on a rabid canine in the context of a critique of the influence of the Greek and Latin writers for understanding contemporary 17th century English politics. Hobbes tells us that these authors spread out the opinion that “the Subjects in a Popular Common-wealth enjoy Liberty; but that in a Monarchy they are all Slaves” (L: 226). By doing so, they postulate as lawful to kill a king, though “they say not Regicide, that is, killing of a King, but Tyrannicide, that is, killing of a Tyrant” (226).

Hobbes believes that books which justify the killing of kings are venom to the health of a monarchy, and compares them to “the biting of a mad Dogge” whose effects work in man as if it “endeavoured to convert him into a Dogge” (L: 226). In other words, according to Hobbes a subject under a monarchy is not a slave because “he is not hindered to doe what he has a will to do” (146): subjects of a monarch are not chained. However, out of the *fear* of being enslaved men act as if they were mad dogs. Here Hobbes refers once more to a concern akin to Burton, a confessed melancholic himself, about the necessity of establishing the difference between a man and a dog.⁵⁶ If King James was able to defend the position of the logical dog, Hobbes is accusing democratic writers of being mad dogs, whose melancholic yearning for the Greek and Latin democratic and republican ways threatens to spread like venom in the bodies of other human beings, turning them into mad dogs as well. In this context, it might be pertinent to ask whether Hobbes is suggesting that we should think of democratic writers as spaniels which go mad and, instead of aiding the king in the display of its royal splendor, snarl at him, reversing the chase and threatening to hunt him down. If this is the case, the model of a good citizen is the domesticated spaniel which collaborates in the hunt and is loyal to his master, not the unpredictable rabid dog that yearns for the lupine origins of its natural liberty and turns into a wolf of other men; in this case, of the sovereign. It seems that being a logical dog is always better than going mad or melancholic, and being a logical dog is, logically, being on the side of the king.

Burton’s monumental book on melancholy examines the symptoms of hydrophobia right after dealing with lycanthropy. Even in hydrophobia we are faced again with the symptoms of a lycanthropic disposition. The laborious spaniel that accompanies kings in hunting lodges

⁵⁶ Burton, *The Anatomy of Melancholy*, op. cit. 147. See also Fudge, “How a Man Differs from a Dog”, op.cit.

and works as a figuration of human memory turns into a hydrophobic and out of control canine which bites out of causeless fears. Hydrophobia, Burton tells us, can also produce lycanthropic effects since the syndrome includes barking and howling: hydrophobic men act as if they have been turned into dogs or wolves.⁵⁷ Among these layers of melancholy it becomes difficult to establish whether we are still in front of humans or animals, or what kind of form of creaturely life is taking shape under Hobbes's argument.

Hobbes's argument, however, transitions from hydrophobia to tyrannophobia: So when a monarchy is once bitten to the quick, by those Democratically writers, that continually snarle at that estate; it wanteth nothing more than a strong Monarch, which nevertheless out of a certain Tyrannophobia, or feare of being strongly governed, when they have him, they abhorre (L: 226).

Here Hobbes is not just making a point against democratic or republican writers, he is also making a point about causeless fears -of water, of tyrants--, being fear a passion that is particularly significant to Hobbes, and which is intrinsically related to melancholy. The democratic venom takes the form of a phobia, of a pathological fear of a tyrannical rule that is ungrounded since, as Hobbes suggests, men are still free under a monarchy. Hobbes himself brings up the issue of "causeless fears" (L: 54) in the midst of a brief characterization of the melancholic man. If both man and beast share the *sagacitas* of hunting out for the causes of any given event, melancholy becomes a passion that complicates not only humans' voracity for knowledge, but also the *sagacitas* of "hunting out" for the causes of things. Hobbes makes us face a passion, melancholy, that produces fears that have *no cause* and which therefore cannot help but to interrupt the hunt and question our indefatigable hunger for knowledge.

Interestingly enough, the traces of causeless fears lead us back from melancholy to the question of animality and the wolf man. According to Hobbes in *Leviathan*, melancholy leads to madness by means of a great "dejection of mind" (L: 54). It consists of a "haunting of solitudes, and graves; in superstitious behaviour; and in fearing some one, some another particular thing" (54). The allusion to the haunting of graves seems typical of the peculiar kind of melancholy that I have been referring to as lycanthropy or wolf-madness, which was a

⁵⁷ Burton, *The Anatomy of Melancholy*, op. cit. 142.

subject of great interest in the period.⁵⁸ According to Burton lycanthropy includes “howling about graves and fields in the night”, as well as the feeling or experience of actually turning into an animal.⁵⁹ This description of the melancholic lycanthrope in Burton and Hobbes coincides with Webster’s description of the werewolf in the play *The Duchess of Malfi*, published in 1623. One of Webster’s characters describes the werewolf as “[s]teal[ing] forth to churchyards in the dead of night/ And dig[ging] dead bodies up”⁶⁰.

Conclusion

I intended to establish the multifarious ways in which melancholy undoes and brings us back to the human-animal divide beyond Hobbes’s efforts at reinscribing it in terms of the politicality of human life and the non-politicality of animal life. We are thus reminded of my initial claim regarding Hobbes’s argument: his failure at controlling the non-politicality of animal life. If Hobbes claims that animals are not political and, at the same time, that humans are animals, we face the problem of whether the animality of the human-animal, as a figuration of non-politicality, can be controlled and of whether human politicality can be secured.

I showed that the exclusion of animal life from politics brings about a kind of melancholy that struggles to undo this exclusion and which permeates the logic of Hobbes argument in several instances. I called this kind of melancholy lycanthropy and presented the ways in which a concern with this peculiar form of melancholy was not only present in Hobbes’s vocabulary but also in the *logic* of his arguments. Moreover, I believe my insights on

⁵⁸ Caroline Oates, “Metamorphosis and Lycanthropy in Franche-Comté, 1521-1643” in Michel Feher et. al. (eds) *Fragments for a History of the Human Body. Part One* (New York: Zone Books, 1990); Charlotte F. Otten (editor) *A Lycanthropy Reader: Werewolves in Western Culture* (Syracuse, N.Y.: Syracuse University Press, 1986).

⁵⁹ Burton, *The Anatomy of Melancholy*, op. cit. 72. It is worth noticing that the relation between Burton and Hobbes has been largely overlooked by the literature. Hobbes should have known of the existence of Burton’s *The Anatomy of Melancholy* because in 1651, year of publication of *Leviathan*, the sixth edition of Burton’s book was published. Moreover, the historian and Hobbes scholar Noel Malcolm has also shown that Hobbes sent two of his books to Burton (the translation of Thucydides and his *De mirabilibus peccis*) and that Burton was an acquaintance of Robert Payne (Oxford don and chaplain of the Earl of Newcastle) who was also an old friend of Hobbes. See Noel Malcolm: *Aspects of Hobbes* (London: Oxford University Press, 2002) 96. It is possible that this relation has been overlooked because commentators have assumed that Burton and Hobbes belong to separate realms of scholarship: the former to the history of psychiatry and the latter to political thought, and that therefore their paths never crossed, nor should they be linked by scholars in political theory. However, this disciplinary distinction was not always so obvious. Simonazzi indicates that Hobbes was included in Richard Hunter and Ida Macalpine, *Three Hundred Years of Psychiatry 1535-1860: A History Presented in Selected English Texts* (London: Oxford University Press, 1963) as a forerunner of modern psychiatric studies and, I would add, Burton was included as a political thinker in J.W. Allen, *English Political Thought: 1603-1660* (London: Methuen, 1938). See: Simonazzi, “Thomas Hobbes on Melancholy” op.cit. 34.

⁶⁰ John Webster, *The Duchess of Malfi*, edited by Kathleen McKluskie and Jennifer Uglow (Bristol: Bristol Classical, 1989) Act 5. Scene 2, 160.

the lycanthropic dimension in Hobbes's political theory intersect with the argument by Yves Charles Zarka, who referred to the melancholic man as anti-political.⁶¹ What Zarka does not say, however, is that the melancholic man should be thought as anti-political only if we accept the identification of humanity and politicality in the terms proposed by Hobbes. In this sense, the melancholic is anti-political not only because its lycanthropic symptoms question the establishment of a clear-cut division between human and animal but also because causeless fears interrupt the indefatigable hunting out of causes and effects characteristic of human voracity for knowledge. The melancholic is anti-political because it interrupts the logic of Leviathan, it undoes the *logic* to bring back the *nasutuli*, it forces the way in of the animal in the realm of political reason.

To conclude, the status of this unstable threshold between humanity and animality can be addressed by drawing on a revealing passage from Hobbes' *De Cive*. In the process of discussing three possibilities of leaving the commonwealth and returning to the natural condition (rejection; commonwealth falls under the power of the enemy; lack of successor) Hobbes writes "And by these three ways, all subjects are restored from their civil subjection to that liberty which all men have to all things; to wit, natural and savage; for the natural state hath the same proportion to the civil (I mean, liberty to subjection), which passion hath to reason, or a beast to a man" (DC: 204).

From my perspective, what is revealing in this passage is not the relation of proportionality assigned to the four sets of oppositions, but the assumption that the notions which comprised them are comparable. Thus, caught in the relation of proportionality are, on the one hand, the "natural state", "liberty", "passion" and "beast" and, on the other, "civil state", "subjection", "reason" and "man". Thus, I take Hobbes to be pointing to a certain elective affinity in the tension among these polarities. Once Hobbes suggests a resemblance between these notions any unchecked irruption of the beast in man resembles the re-emergence of the natural condition in the civil state, the emergence of liberty in subjection, and the emergence of the passions in reason. The elective affinities between these notions seem to map up into my argument on lycanthropy.

If we follow Hobbes's argument the melancholic lycanthrope seems to trump at least two elements of the first set of resemblances: a) melancholy leads to madness and therefore *interrupts the use of reason*; b) melancholy leads to the emergence of the beast in man and,

⁶¹ Yves-Charles Zarka, "The Political Subject" in *Leviathan After 350 Years*, Tom Sorrell and Luc Foisneau (editors) (Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press, 2004) 171.

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to put it bluntly, *interrupts humanity* by means of lycanthropy. If both reason and humanity are called into question by melancholy it might not be far-fetched to assume that the other two remaining resemblances, subjection and the civil state, might also be affected by this condition. It seems that the melancholic lycanthrope brings with it a certain awareness of the natural liberty lost in the commonwealth or, in other words, of the non-politicality assigned to animal existence. The fact that the melancholic is at the verge of becoming an animal might mean that, by doing so, it yearns to recuperate a part of itself that was lost (or interrupted?) by the subjection imposed by man, reason, and the civil state.