Chapter : II

The Mental World of the Individual

In Hobbesian political thought, philosophy is simply knowledge, acquired by reasoning, either proceeding by synthesis to the effects of anything from their causes, or by analysis to the possible cause of a thing from its effects. This method of first analyzing a phenomenon into its constituents and then putting them together by synthesis so as to account either for the original phenomenon or for others like it was probably adopted from the resolutive-compositive method of the school of Padua and Galileo. Hobbes was thus an ancestor of the modern positivist enterprise which attempts to understand everything in scientific terms.

The subject matter of philosophy is bodies, which are of two kinds:

(1) the one is termed as natural bodies;
Hobbes is a methodological mechanist. He seeks to construct a unified science, proceeding from a study of body in general to a study of that particular body, man, and then to a study of man-made artificial bodies, the Commonwealth. What unifies Hobbes's philosophy is motion, which is Hobbes's conceptual key to the understanding of all reality.

Hobbes is a materialist in the strictest sense. The world consists of matter in motion. Inanimate matter requires an external force to alter its motion. Living things are different, in that their motion can be changed by a cause within themselves. So the outwardly observable movements of an organism can be affected by the internal movements which we do not normally see.

Hobbes, therefore, thinks of animal behaviour, including human behaviour, as a form of matter in motion, caused by internal physiological motion in the organs of
the body. Such internal physiological motion he calls 'vital motion', i.e., motion that constitutes life. The externally observable movements of the organism, which are caused by vital motion, he calls 'animal motion' or 'voluntary motion'.

This, then, is how Hobbes applies the materialist hypothesis to the concept of life, to the behaviour of organisms as well as to inanimate matter.

Hobbes groups together "the course of the blood, the pulse, the breathing, nutrition etc. as vital motion of the living world. These motions are maintained in all living beings without interruption from their generation to their death".

All animals possess, in addition to vital motion, voluntary motion "as to go, to speak, to move any of our

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1 *Leviathan* ; op.cit., Ch.VI, p.23.
2 Ibid., Ch.VI, p.23.
limbs, in such manner as is first fancied in our minds.\textsuperscript{3} Human action is voluntary motion. Human passion is the beginning of voluntary motion. We may trace the origin of voluntary motion to sense perception.

An instance of matter in motion comes into contact with an organ of the body. This causes a change in the movements of the organ, which in-turn causes a change in the movements of the nerves. The motion in the nerves continues to the brain and the heart; and since the heart has its own system of forceful motion, the impact of the new motion communicated from the outside body meets with resistance (just as the impact of one moving matter on another brings out a resistance in the second moving matter). The resistance of the heart, Hobbes describes as a "counter-pressure, or endeavour of the heart, to deliver itself, which endeavour, because outward, seemeth to be some matter without."\textsuperscript{4} That is to say, the internal organ exerts force outwards to counteract the

\textsuperscript{3} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{4} Ibid., Ch.I, p.3.
force coming inwards. Now this 'endeavour' or movement outwards, because it is outwards, "seems" to be something outside.

"And this seeming, or fancy, is that which men call Sense; and consisteth, as to the Eye, in a Light, or Colour figured; To the Ear, in a Sound; To the Nostrill, in an Odour; To the Tounge and Palat, in a Savour; And to the rest of the body; in Heat, Cold, Hardnesse, Softnesse, and such other qualities, as we discern by Feeling. All which qualities called Sensible, are in the object that causeth them, but so many several motions of the matter, by which it presseth our organs diversely."\(^5\)

Sensible qualities, therefore, are really nothing but motion, either in external bodies or in the percipient, and they inhere not in the outside world but in the subject who perceives them. We suppose the objects of sense to be without, because this motion is directed

\(^5\) Ibid.
outward. Thus, consciousness, for Hobbes, is mere "appearance", a by-product of the physiological movements inside the body. What goes on in the body is real; what we call mental experiences are simply appearances of bodily motion. Mind or conscious experience is not real at all; it is appearance. What is real is bodily matter in motion.

Having given a materialist account of sensation or perception, as an appearance of physiological motion, Hobbes can proceed to build up a picture of cognitive experience founded upon sensation. As Hobbes argues, sense is "the original". "The rest are derived from that original." 

That which is in motion continues in motion until altered by some other force. Thus the motion of sense continues after the removal of the external object, and this continued motion, gradually diminished by other

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6 Ibid., Ch.I, p.3.
pressures, is imagination or fancy. This imagination, mental imagery, "is nothing but decaying sense; and is found in men, and many other living creatures". Memory is just another name for the same thing, and we call it memory when we attend to the fact that the images simply are the fading remnants of sense. "When we would express the decay, and signify that the sense is fading, old, and past, it is called Memory. So that Imagination and Memory, are but one thing, which for diverse considerations hath diverse names." Again, "Much memory, or memory of many things, is called Experience". Further, "the imagination that is raised in man (or any other creature induced with the faculty of imagining) by words, or other voluntary signs, is that we generally call Understanding; and is common to Man and

7 Ibid., Ch.II, p.5.
8 Ibid.
9 Ibid.
9 Ibid.
All conceptions are derived either directly or indirectly from sensation. The simplest kind of thinking is having a mental image of what is being thought about. More complicated kinds are when one conception succeeds another in a sequence. The succession of one thought to another is called 'mental discourse'. "By consequence, or trayne of thoughts, I understand that succession of one thought to another, which is called (to distinguish it from Discourse in words) Mentall Discourse." 11

This mental discourse is of two sorts. The first is "Unguided, without Designe, and inconstant; Wherein there is no Passionate Thought, to govern and direct those that follow, to it self, as the end and scope of some desire, or other passion". 12 In this case, the thoughts are found to wander, seemingly inconsistent with one another,
as in a "dream". "The second is more constant; as being regulated by some desire, and designe." This, Hobbes argues, "is nothing but Seeking, or the faculty of Invention, which the Latines call Sagacitas, and Solertia: a hunting out of the causes, of some effect, present or past; or of the effects, of some present or past cause".13

The general utility of speech is to transfer our mental discourse into verbal, "or the Trayne of our Thoughts, into a Trayre of Words". "The manner how Speech serveth to the remembrance of the consequence of causes and effects, consisteth in the imposing of Names, and the Connexion of them."14

Without speech, man tends to forget his former thoughts and he cannot perform certain mental operations or reach universal conclusions. We can turn now to Hobbes's account of the conative and effective faculties.

13 Ibid., pp.9-10.
14 Ibid., Ch.IV, p.13.
Resistance in the heart directs the motion of imagination outward once more. This outward motion is the first beginning of voluntary motion, called Endeavour. "The small beginnings of Motion, within the body of Man, before they appear in walking, speaking, striking, and other visible actions, are commonly called Endeavour."\textsuperscript{15} In so far as the motion of imagination helps vital motion, endeavour is directed toward the object which is the cause of imagination and so is called "appetite" or "desire". "Endeavour when it is toward something which causes it, is called Appetite, or Desire."\textsuperscript{16} Desire is really physiological movement, which causes bodily movement. When bodily movement is towards a thing, we give to it the name of 'desire' or 'appetite'. In so far as the motion of imagination hinders vital motion, endeavour is directed away from the object, and is called aversion. "When the Endeavour is fromward something, it

\textsuperscript{15} Ibid., Ch.VI, p.23.

\textsuperscript{16} Ibid.
is generally called Aversion." That is, when the bodily movement is away from a thing, we call it 'aversion'. Desire or appetite and aversion are specific forms of 'endeavour'. It is worth noting that the Latin words from which appetite and aversion are derived have definite connotations of moving towards or away from a thing, of seeking and of turning away. Hobbes read and wrote Latin with ease, and the connotations of Latin terms often influence the way in which he understands a concept.

The several passions of man are species of desire and aversion. Thus action, which consists in voluntary motion, arises from the passions, internal motions of desire and aversion. This action is directed towards those objects whose effects enhance vital motion, and away from those objects whose effects impede vital motion. Man—and indeed all animals—are thus conceived

\[17\] Ibid., Ch.VI, p.23.
by Hobbes as self-maintaining mechanisms, engines whose motion is such that it enables them to continue to move as long as continued motion is possible.

We should next see how desire and aversion are connected with pleasure and pain. From the brain, the motion of imagination proceeds to the heart, which is the seat of vital motion. Coming into contact with vital motion, it must either help or hinder it. "When it helpeth it is called delight, contentment, or pleasure, which is nothing really but motion about the heart, .......but when such motion weakeneth or hindereth the vital motion then it is called pain."\(^{18}\) Hobbes holds that the feelings of pleasure and pain are the mental appearances of the vital processes.

Consequently, whenever something happens which impedes the vital processes, the impeding appears in the mind as a painful feeling, a warning of danger. On the

\(^{18}\) Ibid., p.25.
other hand, whenever something happens which assists the vital processes, this change appears in the mind as a feeling of pleasure, a sign that life or vital motion is going along well. So the object of a desire is thought of as pleasant and similarly, the object of aversion is thought of as painful or unpleasant.

Hobbes defines good and evil also in terms of desire and aversion. What we call good is simply the object of desire, and what we call evil is simply the object of aversion. Thus, "Whatsoever is the object of any man's Appetite or Desire; that is it, which he for his part calleth Good: And the object of his Hate and Aversion, Evill".\(^{19}\) Hobbes further clarifies that "these words of Good, Eville.....are ever used with relation to the person that useth them: There being nothing simply and absolutely so; nor any common Rule of Good and Eville, to be taken from the nature of the objects themselves; but

\(^{19}\) Ibid., Ch.VI, p.24.
Thus, Hobbes's account of good and evil is formally subjectivistic, but not selfish. We seek to obtain what we call good and to avoid what we call evil.

Men can desire incompatible things or can alternate between desire for and aversion from something, and so can have a quick succession of desires or of aversions. This train of desires and aversions and of thoughts about the consequences of action (or abstention therefrom), Hobbes calls deliberation. "When in the mind of man, Appetites and Aversions, Hopes, and Fears, concerning one and the same thing, arise alternately; and diverse good and evil consequences of the doing, or omitting the thing propounded, come successively into our thoughts;......the whole summe of Desires, Aversions, Hopes and Fears, continued till the thing be either done, or thought impossible, is that we call Deliberation."21

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20 Ibid.  
21 Ibid., p.28.
The capacity to deliberate is no less in other living creatures than in Man. Hobbes calls will "the last Appetite in Deliberating". "In Deliberation, the last Appetite, or Aversion, immediately adhering to the action, or to the omission thereof, is that wee call the Will." Living creatures, other than men, that have "Deliberation" must necessarily also have "Will". According to Hobbes, the will is simply a name for that endeavour which immediately precedes an action.

Hobbes thinks of the will as the result of a balance of forces. He is, of course, dealing with action in mechanistic terms, in terms of the laws of the mechanics of matter in motion. He is, therefore, a determinist.

When there is a conflict of endeavours, a conflict of forces, each impelling in contrary directions, the action that a man finally takes will be determined by the balance of forces. There cannot, therefore, be "free

22 Ibid., pp.28-29.
will", i.e., the possibility of acting against the greatest weight of inclination. What we call the will is simply the last desire or aversion that shows itself, just before the overt animal motion takes place, it is the particular instance of endeavour that is the immediate cause of the action. That is why Hobbes calls action 'animal motion or voluntary motion'.

Hobbes argues that mental discourse consists of thoughts "that the thing will be, and will not be, or that it has been, and has not been, alternately". This, according to Hobbes, is "Opinion". Further, "the last Opinion in search of the truth of Past, and Future, is called the Judgement". It is called the "Resolute and Finall Sentence of him that discourseth".

Hobbes, however, argues that no discourse can result in "absolute knowledge of Fact", past, present or future. This kind of knowledge is nothing else, but sense and

23 Ibid., Ch.VII, p.30.
24 Ibid.
memory, "as when we see a Fact doing, or remember it done". No man can know by discourse, "that this, or that, is, has been, or will be". Man may only infer that "if This be; That is; if This has been, That has been; if This shall be, That shall be". This kind of knowledge implies conditional knowledge, which is "Knowledge of the consequences of words", and is commonly called Science. This is the knowledge required in a Philosopher; that is to say, of him who reasons.25

When discourse is put into speech, and begins with definitions of words, and proceeds by connection of the same into general affirmations, and of these again into Syllogisms, the end or "last summe" is called the Conclusion.26 But when a man's discourse begins not at definitions but either at some other contemplation of his own, then it remains an opinion only.

Hobbes considers virtue generally, "in all sorts of

25 Ibid., p.31.
26 Ibid.
subjects" as "somewhat that is valued for eminence; and consistent with comparison". But if all things were equally present in all men, nothing would be "prized" or considered special. So, "By Vertues Intellectuall, are always understood such abilities of the mind, as men praise, value, and desire should be in themselves". Hobbes groups them together as "good wit", though he cautions that the word 'wit' may be used also to distinguish one ability from another.27

Accordingly, 'wit' may be of two sorts--natural wit and acquired wit. Acquired wit is that which is acquired by method and instruction. It is nothing but reason, based on the right use of speech, which in turn, produces the Sciences. Natural wit is acquired "without Method, Culture or Instruction". It is "gotten by use onely, and Experience", and consists in two qualities; "celerity of imagining, (that is, swift succession of one thought to

27 Ibid., Ch.VIII, pp.32-33.
another); and steady direction to some approved end". On the contrary, a slow, sluggish imagination leads to that mental condition which is commonly called "dulness", signifying slowness of motion.28

According to Hobbes, the causes of the differences of wits, "are in the Passions: and the difference of Passions, proceedeth partly from the different Constitution of the body, and partly from different Education". Wits, therefore, are different, because passions are different, and passions are different not only because of "the difference of men's complexions" but also because of the differences in their customs and education.29

Hobbes identifies the passions that most of all cause the differences of wit, "as the Desire of Power, of Riches, of Knowledge, and of Honour". These again, "may

28 Ibid., p.33.
29 Ibid., p.35.
be reduced to the first, that is Desire of Power".30 This is because riches, knowledge and honour are only several forms of power. Hobbes argues that a man who has no great passion for any of these things may be termed as "indifferent". Though such a man may be a good man, in the sense that he may not cause offence to anyone, yet he cannot possibly have much capacity for judgement.

The basic terms of evaluation elaborated above are an integral part of the individual psychology in Hobbesian thought. These are of first importance to an understanding of the relation between his psychology and his politics. One cannot but appreciate the ingenuity of Hobbes's psychology, built up as it is on the basis of a strictly materialist metaphysics and in accordance with Hobbes's recommended method of proceeding by way of definitions and the consequences of definitions.

There is no denying that Hobbes's account of

30 Ibid.
psychology and of human motives is over-simplified, but it is a remarkable attempt to build up the whole picture from as few premises as possible. Hobbes not only makes psychology simple. He also tries to reduce psychology to physiology and physiology to physics. Everything is matter in motion, and the motion takes place according to the simple laws of mechanics.