"Felicity" and "Makarismos": Hobbes on Happiness and His Intellectual Sources

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Abstract: I argue that Hobbes recommends a moderate conception of human happiness as secure and calm satisfaction of desires, which makes large-scale achievement of happiness possible in the context of human co-existence. First, I call attention to the importance of "felicity" in Hobbes' political philosophy and survey its definitions in Hobbes' works to challenge the prevalent understanding of this concept as inherently expansive and competitive. Second, I consider "felicity" in the structure of Hobbes' political theory and argue that conceiving felicity as competitive and expansive is the cause of the impasse of the state of nature, while a moderate understanding of it, contained in the laws of nature, is the way to widespread improvement in felicity. In the last two sections, I speculate about the sources of Hobbes' conception of happiness and highlight the probable influences of Montaigne and of the Greek ethical lesson against understanding happiness as ever greater prosperity.

1. Felicity in Hobbes: A central concept neglected and misunderstood

The concept of "felicity" has suffered both neglect and misunderstanding in the study of Hobbes. The following view is influential: the foundation of Hobbes' political philosophy is the avoidance of *summum malum*, and there is in Hobbes no *summum bonum*, a concept too classical to find a place in one of the founders of modern political philosophy.[1] This is in spite of the fact that Hobbes repeatedly offers his understanding of *summum bonum* and "felicity," both in early

[1] See for example, Leo Strauss, *The Political Philosophy of Hobbes*, trans. Elsa M. Sinclair (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1952); Leo Strauss, "The Origin of Modern Political Thought (1937)" in *Toward Natural Right and History*, eds. J. A. Cohen and Svetozar Minkov (Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, 2018), 163–206; and Jürgen Habermas, *Theory and Practice*, trans. John Viertel (Boston: Beacon Press, 1974), 50–67.

works such as *Elements of Law* and *Anti-White* and in later publications such as *Leviathan* and *De Homine*. For example, in the English *Leviathan*, "felicity" is defined as "Continuall successe in obtaining those things which a man from time to time desires."[2]

Michael Oakeshott is the scholar who gives the most theoretical weight to Hobbes' concept of "felicity." He regards this concept as the ultimate pursuit of human beings and understands natural right in Hobbes' conception as the "natural right to felicity."[3] In Oakeshott's interpretation, as is in accordance with his insistence that glory is the most fundamental of all human passions, felicity is inherently expansive and competitive. Oakeshott argues that for Hobbes, one's "felicity is not absolute but comparative," and that "the competition is essential, not accidental." Moreover, if there are no other human beings to compete with, there is "no notable felicity."[4] This understanding of Hobbes' felicity as expansive and competitive has long been orthodox among scholars who pay attention to the concept. For such commentators, the pursuit of felicity is inherently the pursuit of power. To be sure, most do not explain the expansive and competitive character of felicity with an exclusive emphasis on the feeling of superiority, as Oakeshott does; rather, most supplement Oakeshott's argument with arguments from the necessity of accumulating power for securing the satisfaction of endless future desires in the context of human co-existence.[5]

And yet, despite the scholarly consensus on the competitive and expansive character of Hobbes' "felicity," the crucial definition of this key term (quoted above from the English

[2] Hobbes, *Leviathan: vol.2. The English and Latin Texts (i),* ed. Noel Malcolm (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), 96.
[3] Michael Oakeshott, *Hobbes on Civil Association* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1975), 40, 62, 81, 86.
[4] Oakeshott, 35–36, 82. How fundamental is the passion of glory in Oakeshott's interpretation? For him, the fear of violent death is a fear of shameful death, a fear of the dishonor of being overpowered by someone more powerful. This is probably an overly ingenious interpretation. Oakeshott, 82.
[5] See Yves Charles Zarka, *La Décision Métaphysique de Hobbes*, 2e edition (Paris: Vrin, 1999), 265–271, 293–313; Arash Abizadeh, *Hobbes and the Two Faces of Ethics* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2018), 131–164, 228–244; James J. Hamilton, "Hobbes on Felicity," *Hobbes Studies* 29, no. 2 (2016), 129–147.

Leviathan)—"Continuall successe in obtaining those things which a man from time to time desires"—mentions neither regard for other humans nor the accumulation of power. To flag how much has been read into Hobbes' "felicity" in the orthodox view, it is helpful to note that, taken strictly on its own terms, Hobbes' definition could just as well be applied to Rousseau's natural man from the *Second Discourse*, whose "modest needs are so ready to hand"[6]: "I see him sating his hunger beneath an oak, slaking his thirst at the first Stream, finding his bed at the foot of the same tree that supplied his meal, and with that his needs are satisfied."[7] Hobbes' definition of felicity in the English *Leviathan* is compatible with the calm satisfaction of moderate desires.

Interestingly, Oakeshott notices the modest implication of Hobbes' definition of felicity in the English *Leviathan*, when he complains that "Hobbes was guilty of defining human Felicity in such a manner that it is inherently impossible to be experienced by human beings as he understands them."[8] The problem, in Oakeshott's view, is that "felicity" as there defined is "a solution appropriate to the character of a more commonplace creature, one who merely desires 'success in obtaining those things which a man from time to time desires,' who wants to prosper in a modest sort of way."[9] And yet, by complaining about the inconsistency between Hobbes' definition of felicity and his understanding of human nature (as Oakeshott himself understands it), Oakeshott reveals the inconsistency between his own understanding of Hobbes' "felicity" and the literal definition offered in English *Leviathan*, a work of Hobbes' maturity and the most comprehensive expression of his political philosophy. This raises the question: Is there any

[6] Rousseau, *The Discourses and other early political writings*, ed. and trans. Victor Gourevitch (Cambridge University Press, 2016), 143.
[7] Ibid., 134.
[8] Oakeshott, 87.
[9] Oakeshott, 87.

textual evidence somewhere else in Hobbes' writings to support an understanding of his "felicity" as expansive and competitive?

We turn to a survey of Hobbes' discussions of felicity across different works in his corpus. In the early works *Elements of Law* and *Anti-White*, "felicity" is indeed inherently competitive and expansive. Thus, in addition to the definition in chapter 6 of the English *Leviathan*, with which we are familiar by now, in *Elements of Law*, "felicity" means "continual delight," and, in the famous comparison of the life of a man to a race, "continually to out-go the next before."[10] In *Anti-White*, which was in good shape in 1643, "foelicitas" is "iucunditas percepta ex continuato & placido progressu appetitionis à potentia ad potentiam ulteriorem," while "[p]otentia enim, nisi per comparationem, nulla est," and "gaudium, sive delectatio animi nihil aliud quàm triumphus quiadam animi, seu interna gloria, vel gloriatio eius de potentia & excellentia propria respectu alterius qui cum se comparat,"[11] both of which bear comparison with chapter 11 of English *Leviathan*, where it is "a continuall progresse of the desire, from one object to another; the attaining of the former, being still but the way to the latter."[12] In *De Homine*, *Summum Bonum*, *felicitas*, or *bonorum maximum* is "ad fines semper ulteriores minime impedita progressio,"[13] while in the Latin *Leviathan*, it is "Perpetuus in rebus Cupiditis bonus successus" in Chapter 6 and "progressus perpetuus est ab unâ Cupiditate ad alteram; & adeptio prioris Cupiti, ad adeptionem posteriororis Via est" in Chapter 9.[14]

[10] *Elements of Law*, VII.7, IX.21.
[11] Hobbes, *Critique du* De Mundo *de Thomas White*, eds. Jean Jacquot et Harold Whitmore Jones (Paris: Vrin, 1973), 416–417.
[12] Hobbes, *Leviathan: vol.2. The English and Latin Texts (i),* ed. Noel Malcolm (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), 150.
[13] Hobbes, *De Homine*, ed. Josep Monserrat Molas (Paris: Vrin, 2018), 132.
[14] Hobbes, *Leviathan: vol.2. The English and Latin Texts (i),* ed. Noel Malcolm (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), 97, 151.

As these examples indicate, "felicity" in Hobbes' early works is, to repeat, indeed inherently competitive and expansive, and the reason for this lies in Hobbes' understanding of delight or pleasure as fundamentally comparative: there is no pleasure without "out-going" and "gloria." In the late works, however, including the English and Latin *Leviathan* and *De Homine*, competitiveness is no longer salient and inherent in the conception of felicity. "Felicity" becomes at least compatible with an alternative conception as the "prospering in a modest sort of way" of a "commonplace creature."[15] In the mature works, then, there seem to be two ways to felicity: the way of the moderate and the way of power and glory.

2. Felicity of the moderate: Secure enjoyment of pleasure

Gabriella Slomp's examination of the change in the status of glory between Hobbes' early and mature works could help us understand the change in his understanding of "felicity." Slomp points out that glory is *the* fundamental passion in *Elements of Law*, *Anti-White*, and even *De Cive*, such that all the other passions are ultimately its variations. With the English *Leviathan*, however, glory is demoted from the "genus" of the passions to one "species" among others.[16] Under the early, glory-centered psychology, continual success in satisfying desires indeed necessarily means continual achievement of glory. The change in Hobbes' psychology releases "felicity" from the grasp of glory and unlocks the possibility of a moderate way to felicity.

One may still argue that, even if not all human beings are addicted to glory, anxiety about the future and the structural pressure from the context of human co-existence dictate that

[15] Expressions like "further," "progress," and the former desire being "the way" to the latter in the late definitions may still sound competitive and expansive. I argue, however, that they should be read as stressing the *continuity* of enjoyment of pleasure rather than its increasing intensity.

[16] Gabriella Slomp, *Thomas Hobbes and the Political Philosophy of Glory* (Macmillan Press, 2000), 84–86, 90–92. It seems to me that as a penetrating psychologist, Hobbes gradually tries to reconcile his psychological insights with his scientific method and mechanical materialism.

continual satisfaction of desires requires expansion of power and competition with others.[17] The anxiety and pressure of competition are no doubt most severe and salient in the state of nature, and I concede that in the state of nature, pursuit of felicity must take the form of pursuit of power. If we consider that the structural pressure of competition and anxiety about the security of future satisfaction in the state of nature are results precisely of each individual's pursuing their own "living well" by pursuing power, we find ourselves in a loop: in the state of nature, we have to pursue happiness through pursuing power, because all of us pursue happiness through pursuing power.

Is there any chance of breaking this loop? There is a clue in the definition of felicity in *De Homine*: "progress to ever further ends with the least impediment."[18] This is just a different expression of other late definitions, which emphasize the continual satisfaction of desires. On the most fundamental physiological level, satisfaction of desires means unimpeded vital movement. From this definition, we see that there are two things we can work on to promote our felicity: our "ends" and their "impediment." In the state of nature, the most significant impediment to one's end is others' pursuit of their ends. Consequently, one sets one's end to be ever more power so that one may overcome the impediment presented by others' pursuit of the same; in doing so, however, one exacerbates the impediment to everyone and frustrates all attempts at felicity. Since the major "impediment" to one's "ends" is everyone else's "ends," a universal modification of "ends" that makes them more compatible with each other would result in widespread improvement in felicity.

[17] See Yves Charles Zarka, *La Décision Métaphysique de Hobbes*, 2e edition (Paris: Vrin, 1999), 265–271, 293–313; Abizadeh, *Hobbes and the Two Faces of Ethics*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2018, pp. 131-164, 228-244; Hamilton, James J., "Hobbes on Felicity," *Hobbes Studies* 29, no. 2 (2016), 129–147.
[18] Hobbes, *De Homine*, ed. Josep Monserrat Molas (Paris: Vrin, 2018), 132.

This universal modification of "ends" is precisely the work of the laws of nature. As David Boonin-Vail stresses, the laws of nature in Hobbes are a list of virtues or human qualities to be internalized;[19] moreover, as F. S. McNeilly insightfully points out, what the laws of nature prescribe is essentially the character of the "moderate men" in *Elements of Law* and *De Cive*, who are satisfied with an equal share and do not claim more than others.[20] Finally, as Donald Rutherford argues, the laws of nature clarify the relationship between certain forms of endeavour and peaceful human co-existence in the civil state, where felicity is possible.[21] In sum, the laws of nature modify people's ends to be the ends of "moderate men" by shaping their endeavours into certain forms so that they can achieve moderate felicity—calm satisfaction of moderate desires. In Hobbes, the moderate way to felicity is recommended, while the way of power and glory is shown to be self-defeating.

3. Mundane happiness before Hobbes: Lucretius, Marsilius, Montaigne, and Bacon

So far, I have argued that Hobbes' "felicity" in his mature thought can be moderate and does not have to be competitive and expansive. Moreover, I have argued that he recommends the moderate way to felicity, which is more hopeful, unlike the way of power and glory, which is self-defeating. In this section and the next, I will support this argument with speculation about the intellectual sources of Hobbes' conception of felicity.

[19] Boonin-Vail, David, *Thomas Hobbes and the Science of Moral Virtue* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press), 1994.
[20] F. S. McNeilly, *The Anatomy of* Leviathan (London: Macmillan, 1968), 164. On "moderate men," see Hobbes, *EL* XIV.2-3; *De Cive*, I.4. For those laws of nature which prescribe the characters of the "moderate men," see Hobbes, *EL* XVII.1-3; *De Cive* III.13-17; *Leviathan* XV.21-26.
[21] Rutherford, Donald, "Hobbes on Moral Virtue and the Laws of Nature" in *The Battle of the Gods and Giants Redux*, *Brill's Studies in Intellectual History* vol. 248 (2015), 217–45; Rutherford, Donald, "In Pursuit of Happiness: Hobbes's New Science of Ethics," *Philosophical Topics* 31, no. 1/2 (2003), 369–393.

If we take a step back, we see that either of these understandings of Hobbes' felicity, as moderate or as expansive, is very different from the Aristotelian conception. Hobbes' emphasis on felicity's consisting in satisfaction of desires and on its dynamic character obviously target Aristotelian conceptions of felicity as the highest and self-sufficient end for human beings, the most complete actualization of human nature. Hobbes stresses that life is bodily motion,[22] in contrast to Aristotle's definition of life as the activity of the soul.[23] In Aristotle, the complete activity (ἐνέργεια) of a thing is to be and keep being in its inherent form, which is its inherent end.[24] For him, motion is incomplete activity, as it has not attained its end.[25] Life in Hobbes is even more radically separated from an end than Aristotle's motion: there is no end at all.

To be sure, Hobbes' radical revision of the Aristotelian conception of happiness has precedents. Lucretius' conception of human happiness as the calm enjoyment of natural pleasures, which are necessarily bodily in his materialistic universe, obviously differs from Aristotelian "activity" of the soul. It is often acknowledged that Hobbes' anti-teleological conception of nature and human nature is indebted to Lucretius' Epicurean philosophy. And yet, when James H. Nichols, Jr., in his illuminating commentary on Lucretius, stresses the difference between Lucretius' and Hobbes' conception of human happiness, he does so on the basis of the misleading assumption that Hobbes' felicity is inherently expansive. It is noteworthy that in explaining Hobbes' vision of mastering nature to indefinitely promote human happiness,

[22] *De Homine*, 132; *Leviathan*, 97.
[23] "The work of a human is an activity of soul in accord with reason, or not without reason" (Aristotle*, Nicomachean Ethics,* 1098a7). "We posit the work of a human being as a certain life, and this is an activity of soul and actions accompanied by reason, the work of a serious man being to do these things well and nobly, and each thing is brought to completion well in accord with the virtue proper to it—if this is so, then the human good becomes an activity of soul in accord with virtue, and if there are several virtues, then in accord with the best and most complete one" (Ibid, 1098a12–18)..
[24] See Aristotle, *Metaphysics* Θ.6 esp. 1049b28–34, K.9 1065b21–23; *On the Soul*, III.7 431a6–7.
[25] "Movement seems to be a sort of activity, but incomplete activity" (Aristotle, *Physics*, III.2 201b31); "for movement is a form of activity, though incomplete" (Aristotle, *On the Soul*, II.5 417a17).

Nichols' most convincing textual evidence comes from Descartes instead of Hobbes.[26] *Pace* Nichols, even if Hobbes is less concerned with "inner peace" than Lucretius, his interest in bodily security, effectual satisfaction of desires, and peaceful coexistence among human beings are strong theoretical reasons for him to adopt Lucretius' conception of happiness as calm enjoyment of limited pleasures.

In Marsilius' political philosophy, we find notions such as "civil felicity," "worldly living well," and "sufficient life." Such felicity is adapted to the limited earthly human condition. In contrast to heavenly beatitude, it cannot be self-sufficient or the highest. More specifically, it is concerned with the satisfaction of needs and the preservation of life and body in this life.[27] Taking as its premise the two-city structure of Augustine, Marsilius' notion of mundane happiness actually exiles concern with the highest and self-sufficient activity. As a consequence, Marsilius' "civil felicity" does not seem expansive, but rather signifies a retreat, for the sake of peace, from too high an ideal. Hobbes shares this end and would welcome such a moderate conception of "civil felicity." In fact, in *Anti-White*, Hobbes adopts a phrase reminiscent of Marsilius: "foelicitate mundana."[28]

Montaigne uses *contentement* to describe the ideal way of living. His exemplars of *contentement* are peasants, animals, and Native Americans. Montaigne's term refers to calm

[26] James H. Nichols, Jr., *Epicurean Political Philosophy* (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 1976), 183–190.
[27] Marsilius, *The Defender of the Peace*, ed. and trans. A. Brett (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), Discourse I chapter 1.7, 9, Discourse I chapter 4, 18–21.
[28] Hobbes, *Critique du* De Mundo *de Thomas White*, eds. Jean Jacquot et Harold Whitmore Jones (Paris: Vrin, 1973), 415.

satisfaction of bodily desires within the range of natural necessity.[29] Hobbes himself uses "contented life,"[30] together with "commodious living"[31] and "living well,"[32] to mean felicity.

It has also been argued that Hobbes' conception of felicity was influenced by Bacon's idea of "advancement."[33] Bacon shows a preference for advancement over preservation in considering felicity; this is, he writes, "because every obtaining of a desire hath a shew of advancement, as motion though in a circle hath a shew of progression."[34] Strauss hints at this Baconian influence when he says that Hobbes replaced "the traditional idea of beatitude" with "the modern idea of progress."[35]

I suggest, however, that the "felicity" Hobbes recommends is closer to Montaigne's *contentement* than to Bacon's "advancement." Montaigne anticipates Hobbes' challenge to Aristotle's teleological understanding of human life. For Montaigne, "life is material motion in the body, an activity, by its very essence, imperfect and unruly: I work to serve it on its own terms."[36] Like Hobbes, Montaigne highlights the "endless" character of life. To serve such life does not mean pursuing limitless "advancement"; rather, it means enjoyment of natural pleasure at each moment without vain pursuit of reputedly higher ends. On the other hand, while there is a *prima facie* connection between Bacon's "advancement" and Hobbes' "felicity," Hobbes seems

[29] Montaigne, *Les Essais,* eds. J. Balsamo, M. Magnien, C. Magnien-Simonin (Paris: Gallimard, 2007), 165, 458, 572.
[30] Leviathan, 254.
[31] Leviathan, 196.
[32] Leviathan, 234.
[33] James J. Hamilton, "Hobbes on Felicity," *Hobbes Studies* 29, no. 2 (2016), 129–147.
[34] Francis Bacon, *The Advancement of Learning*, in *The Major Works*, ed. B. Vickers (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), 251.
[35] Leo Strauss, "The Origin of Modern Political Thought (1937)" in *Toward Natural Right and History*, eds. J. A. Cohen and Svetozar Minkov (Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, 2018), 191.
[36] Montaigne, *The Complete Essays*, ed. and trans. M. A. Screech (New York and London: Penguin Books, 2003), 1118. For discussions of this anti-Aristotelian declaration, see Vincent Carraud, « *De l'experience*: Montaigne et la métaphysique » in *Montaigne : scepticisme, métaphysique, théologie*, sous la direction de V. Carraud et J.-L. Marion (Paris: PUF, 2004), 49–87; André Tournon, « 'Action imparfaite de sa propre essence…'» in *Montaigne : scepticisme, métaphysique, théologie*, sous la direction de V. Carraud et J.-L. Marion (Paris: PUF, 2004), 33–47.

to be skeptical about Bacon's grand project of "advancement." Bacon's project is to improve the human condition indefinitely through the advancement of our knowledge of nature and our technology for manipulating it. Hobbes shares Bacon's interest in and devotion to science, his view of knowledge as "maker's knowledge," and his humane enthusiasm for improving "man's estate"—all of which make it all the more significant that the study and application of natural science, the ultimate foundation of Bacon's "advancement," has almost no place in Hobbes' commonwealth. In the latter, there is no trace of anything like Salomon's House. Considering the close relationship between Bacon and Hobbes, this omission probably means a considered rejection. My speculation is that Hobbes rejects the ideal of "advancement" precisely because it would bring about the "advancement" of desires, which tend to lead to war rather than peace, and therefore to frustration rather than satisfaction. I suggest that Hobbes takes the side of Lucretius rather than Bacon in his attitude towards scientific-technological advancements.[37]

4. *Makarismos*: Warnings against understanding happiness as ever more power in ancient authors

In *Leviathan*, there is a concept related to felicity, *makarismos*: "that whereby they signify the opinion they have of a man's felicity is by the Greeks called *makarismos*, for which we have no name in our tongue."[38] *Μακαρισμός* is a verbal noun derived from the verb *μακαρίζειν*, which means to congratulate someone on having achieved felicity. A survey of cases of *μακαρισμός* in major Greek authors suggests that this word is closely related to an ethical lesson.

The verb appears in Herodotus. Seeing the whole of his powerful army, the Persian king "Xerxes declared himself a happy man [ἑωυτὸν ἐμακάρισε]; but after that he burst into tears"

[37] For Lucretius' attitude towards scientific-technological advancements, see Nichols, 173–174.
[38] *Leviathan*, 97.

(7.45). This change surprises his uncle Artabanus, and Xerxes explains that pity stole over him as he meditated on the shortness of the life of man. Artabanus answers that life gives even greater occasion for pity, as calamities and diseases make man often wish himself dead rather than alive, such that death can be a desirable escape from a life of wretchedness.[39]

The same word appears in an earlier episode in Herodotus. Asked by the Lydian King Croesus who is the happiest person in the world, Solon tells two stories, the second of which is that of Cleobis and Biton, whom Solon ranks as the second happiest. These brothers served as oxen to carry their mother to the temple for the festival of Hera in their home city of Argos and then died. The people at the temple *ἐμακάριζον* both them and their mother (1.31).[40] Solon's story is the prelude to his explaining to Croesus that, given the vicissitude of human fortune, an uneventful life of common people with a good ending is happy enough, whereas striving for continuous great prosperity is doomed to fail. In Herodotus, the hubristic Persian king Xerxes congratulated himself inappropriately; in contrast, the people of Argos in Solon's story acted more appropriately in congratulating the ordinary ones among them.

Μακαρίζειν also appears in the Melian Dialogue in Thucydides. The Athenian envoys tell the Melians: "And as for the opinion you have of the Lacedaemonians, in that you believe they will help you for their own honour, we bless your lack of experience of evil, but affect not your folly (μακαρίσαντες ὑμῶν τὸ ἀπειρόκακον οὐ ζηλοῦμεν τὸ ἄφρον)."[41] In other words, the Athenians make fun of the Melians' naïve belief in a just or even benevolent cosmos, which is incompatible with experience in the world. The critique of such naiveté is justified by what later

[39] Herodotus, *The Histories*, trans. D. Grene, (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1987), 7.45–6, 486.
[40] Ibid., 1.31.
[41] Thucydides, *The Peloponnesian War*, trans. Hobbes, ed. D. Grene (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1989), 5.105.3, 368. Greek text in Thucydides, *Historiae*, ed. H. S. Jones, (Oxford: Oxford University Press,1942). I have slightly modified Grene's translation.

happens to the Melians. The world of international relations is harsher than they thought. But a further irony is that the Athenians are also mistaken in the assumption underlying their arrogance, namely that the way to navigate in this world is to seek ever more power, expansion, and glory, as is shown by what happened later to the Athenian empire.

At the end of Book IX of Plato's *Republic*, where Socrates pushes Glaucon to see the desirability of a life directed by intelligence, Socrates asks Glaucon about "the man who has intelligence":

> 'And won't he also maintain order and concord in the acquisition of money?' I said. 'And, since he's not impressed with *what the many deem to be blessedness* [τοῦ τῶν πολλῶν μακαρισμοῦ], will he give boundless increase to the bulk of his property and thus possess boundless evils?'[42]

The many in Athens, at the height of their empire, are now infected with the mentality of Xerxes and have lost the sobriety previously displayed by their great legislator, Solon, and by the ordinary people at the Festival of Hera. While Plato's understanding of happiness is of course different from that of Herodotus, he shares the latter's critique of the understanding of happiness as "giv[ing] boundless increase to the bulk of his property."

In Euripides' *Bacchae*, when the god Dionysus has driven mad the hubristic Theban king Pentheus, who refused to recognize his divinity, and is about to lead him in female dress into the mountains where he will be torn apart by his own mother and other Maenads, the chorus laments Pentheus' folly in not recognizing that the gods, rather than the human king, have real strength (ἰσχὺν). The chorus comments that while countless human beings have countless hopes, some end in prosperity and some vanish away. In the end, the chorus congratulates "the one whose life is

[42] Plato, *Republic*, trans. A. Bloom (New York: Basic Books, 1968), 591d. Greek text in Plato, *Republic Books 6-10*, trans. Chris Emlyn-Jones and William Preddy (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2013). Emphasis added.

happy day by day."[43] Euripides' chorus seems to share Herodotus' skeptical attitude towards a king's great prosperity and recommends the moderate happiness of ordinary people.

Polybius uses *μακαρίζειν* several times. Twice he relates that in midst of war, people congratulate the dead as having escaped that miserable state.[44] Elsewhere (9.10), the same author criticizes the Romans for taking all the riches of Syracuse back to their own city after conquering it. He writes that the Roman Republic thus "involve[d] itself in that jealousy which is the most dangerous concomitant of excessive prosperity," upon which he offers an analysis of the danger in prosperity:

> For the looker-on never congratulates [*μακαρίζει*] those who take what belongs to others, without a feeling of jealousy mingling his pity for the losers. But suppose such prosperity to go on increasing, and a people to accumulate into its own hands all the possessions of the rest of the world, and moreover to invite in a way the plundered to share in the spectacle they present, in that case surely the mischief is doubled. For it is no longer a case of the spectators pitying their neighbours, but themselves, as they recall the ruin of their own country. Such a sight produces an outburst, not of jealousy merely, but of rage against the victors. For the reminder of their own disaster serves to enhance their hatred of the authors of it… [F]or it was impossible for them to aim at universal empire without crippling the means of the rest of the world.[45]

Like Herodotus, Polybius calls attention to the danger of prosperity. But while in Herodotus the danger comes from the grudge held by the gods, Polybius here offers a detailed rational explanation in terms of human psychology. *Makarismos* in Polybius points to the misery of life in the state of war and to the inherent danger of great prosperity in such a state.

Hobbes calls our attention to the Greek word *makarismos* right after his discussion of felicity in *Leviathan*. For Hobbes and readers familiar with Greek literature, the ethical lesson

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[43] Euripides, *Bacchae. Iphigenia at Aulis. Rhesus,* ed. and trans. David Kovacs (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2003), lines 911-912. "τὸ δὲ κατ᾽ ἦμαρ ὅτῳ βίοτος/ εὐδαίμων, μακαρίζω." The whole of the chorus' reflection: line 862-912.

[44] Polybius, *The Histories of Polybius*, ed. and trans. Evelyn S. Shuckburgh (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press,2012), vol. 1, 221–222; vol. 2, 531.

[45] Polybius, *The Histories of Polybius*, ed. And trans. Evelyn S. Shuckburgh (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press , 2012), vol. 1, 572–572.

against understanding happiness as ever greater power, as conveyed through the cases of *makarismos* in the authors above, must have been a salient one. Gods and fortune loom large in Herodotus' and Euripides' teachings, while the structure of human interaction and human psychology underlie those of Thucydides and Polybius. Despite these differences of emphasis, all four authors exemplify the ancient wisdom of recognizing the limitation of the human condition and thereby recommending moderation in the human pursuit of happiness. Their lesson is consonant with Hobbes' general teaching that the passion of glory and the reaching for ever more power lead to the deadlock of misery and conflict. I suggest that Hobbes might have learned from this Greek ethical lesson, and that he recommends a moderate understanding of felicity. There might be more Greek wisdom in Hobbes than we thought.