

Human nature as capacities in Hobbes's political theory

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The author:

Alexandra Chadwick completed her doctoral research at Queen Mary, University of London. From 2016-17 she was a Max Weber Fellow at the European University Institute in Florence. In September 2017 she took up a three-year postdoctoral research position in the Department of the History of Philosophy, University of Groningen. While in Groningen she is revising her doctoral thesis for publication (provisionally titled *Mind, soul and human nature: Materialist psychology in the philosophy of Thomas Hobbes*), and beginning a comparative project on Hobbes and Hume. Her interests include the implications of 'materialist' psychologies for moral and political philosophy, ideas of human nature in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, and the legacy of medieval faculty psychology in the early modern period. She is a committee member of the European Hobbes Society, and assistant editor of *Hobbes Studies*.

The paper:

This paper seeks to identify Hobbes's theory of human nature, understood as a theory of the universal, unalterable, and collectively unique features of human beings. I argue that discussions of Hobbesian human nature have mistakenly focused on particular motives, or (as we might use interchangeably in Hobbes's psychology) particular desires which Hobbes has been thought to attribute to all human beings. However, this interpretation is not supported by Hobbes's text, which emphasises the malleability of human motivation. Instead, I propose an alternative 'capacities' model of human nature, which fits Hobbes's text and context. The capacities model enables us to reconsider some fundamental questions about his political theory. I further suggest that it recovers an element of thinking about human nature which has been obscured by an exclusive focus on motives.